



No. 42 **NEWSLETTER** Spring 1999
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WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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Retiring Chairman's message

I never did remember much about the "management" training that I was given at various times during my 40 years in industry. Being a technical guy, I got my kicks from tackling the many and varied technical problems that came my way, the management bit was just something that had to be done to make the wheels go round. But I did enjoy working with all sorts of people, all the many characters that inhabit the complex social structure of a modern industrial company.

However there was one management training tenet that remained firmly fixed in my mind, a rule for every newly appointed manager - "Identify your replacement." Thus it was that when Ian Duncan approached me asking to be shown what the West Midlands had to offer in the way of butterflies, a little "flag" was raised

in my mind. Ian is a Geologist by profession, a long-time birder and is deeply committed to the cause of conservation, and when the day arrived for our tour of local butterfly sites, good fortune smiled upon us. It was a warm, sunny July morning, we walked the Malvern Hills transect and various other sites round about and every possible species that could be seen was seen, and not only seen but positively flaunted! He was hooked! A confirmed butterfly man! The little "flag" now became an illuminated sign and the rest, as they say, is history.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my couple of years in the Chair. I have enjoyed the involvement with the conservation aspects of the job (and hope to continue with them) and I've even enjoyed most of the other "making the wheels

go round" aspects of the job, but especially I've enjoyed being involved with people, the characters who make up our happy band, and we do have some characters!

Thanks to everyone who willingly did the little jobs (and big ones) that I asked them to do, those who phoned to pass on some interesting bit of information or to share in some moment of lepidopteral pleasure. Thanks also to those who

didn't moan when I got it wrong and to those who said "Well done!" on the occasions when things went well. I know that you will all give Ian the same support that you have given me and that being so, the West Midlands Branch will soar to new heights of excellence over the next few years.

p Digby Wood

Chairman's Message, Spring 1999

Butterfly Conservation is obviously in the midst of some major changes; David Attenborough has become the new president; Stephen Jeffcoate the new national chairman and I have become chairman of the West Midlands Branch. The national changes are well covered in the latest edition of Butterfly Conservation News, so I think I should begin with a short explanation of how I have become your chairman.

I had been a "sleeping" member of Butterfly Conservation for a number of years i.e. my only involvement was receiving the newsletters. My 1997 membership was due for renewal, and I was uncertain whether I should re-join, when I received a letter from Richard Southwell suggesting I survey a number of tetrads near my home for the Millennium Atlas. Around the same time I met Digby who offered to take me on his Malvern Hills transect. We agreed a date which turned out to be a perfect summer day. We, of course, saw lots of butterflies – **High Brown Fritillary**, **Silver-washed Fritillary** and **White Admiral**, to name a few. I was truly caught up in it, particularly as, at the same time, I was enjoying surveying my local tetrads. As you can guess, I re-joined Butterfly Conservation.

I tell this story as I think it has considerable bearing on the society and its members. But for a couple of direct contacts with society members I am sure I would not be enjoying my role with Butterfly Conservation today. There must be lots of people out there who have let their membership lapse and have thus missed out on the full enjoyment of lepidoptera (I say lepidoptera, as I think moths can bring as much pleasure as butterflies). We endeavour to contact and welcome all new members to our Branch; however if you have not been contacted or would like to become more involved please give me or any committee member a call.

We are trying to be a friendly and enthusiastic society and are keen to involve as many society members as possible in our activities. It is worth pointing out that about half the committee have joined in the past 18 months. On that subject, I would like to welcome the following new committee members: Jim Chance – coordinator for Birmingham; Dave Jackson – coordinator for Staffs and Mark Farmer – the summer events organiser. Mark has already put a great deal of effort into organising this year's programme which promises to be interesting and exciting. I would urge you to attend some of these events which range from visits to local reserves to a trip to Scotland for Atlas recording. One further committee matter, as Phil Hopson stood down at the AGM, I would like to record our appreciation of all the work he put in over the years.

As you are aware, this is the last year of recording for the Atlas. Plans are well advanced to have this published at the end of 2000. Please try to fill in the blanks in our area so that we can achieve as comprehensive coverage as possible. It will allow us to identify the priority areas for conservation and provide an invaluable basis for future studies. Richard Southwell or the regional coordinators will be contacting some of you on a local basis. We also enclose with this newsletter information on the recording status to date.

We intend to have a full review of the results and the plans for the year at the Spring meeting on April 24th. Please use the enclosed sheets to record your data as they greatly assist the operators putting the information into the computer.

I must point out as well that this year is the 20th anniversary of the setting up of the West Midlands Branch. In 1979, this Branch was the first regional Branch to be established, and a number of the founders are still actively

involved. Both Mike Williams and Ron Hatton are still on the committee – I think they both deserve a special tribute for all their hard work and “endurance” over 20 years. We would like to organise a special event for next year for our 21st birthday – any suggestions?

Before concluding, there is one other person I would like to thank – Digby Wood. Digby has been involved with Butterfly Conservation for

many years and in recent years, very active with the West Midlands Branch. His enthusiasm and charm have helped build up the Branch to its present vibrant state. I am pleased to say Digby is staying on the committee and has agreed to a “floating” role, helping wherever possible. I hope I can continue where he has left off.

⌋ Ian Duncan

Events

Spring Meeting Saturday April 24th

The Spring Meeting will be held at Bishops Wood Environmental Centre (see map) on Saturday April 24th at 6.30pm. Mike Harper will give a talk on day-flying moths. Andy Nicholls and Richard Southwell will outline the progress of Branch recording for the Millennium Atlas and the action needed to achieve the fullest coverage this year. Members are encouraged to bring slides (maximum 10). There will also be a quiz, a raffle and refreshments.

Gardens for Butterflies - 1999 Events

May 7th, 8th and 9th

Malvern Hills Spring Garden Show

The National “Gardens for Butterflies” campaign continues in 1999 and we have again been asked to organise the display at the Malvern Hills Spring Show. We need 3 or 4 volunteers for each day of the show, i.e. Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th May. If you are unable to manage a whole day then offers of half days may well be useful.

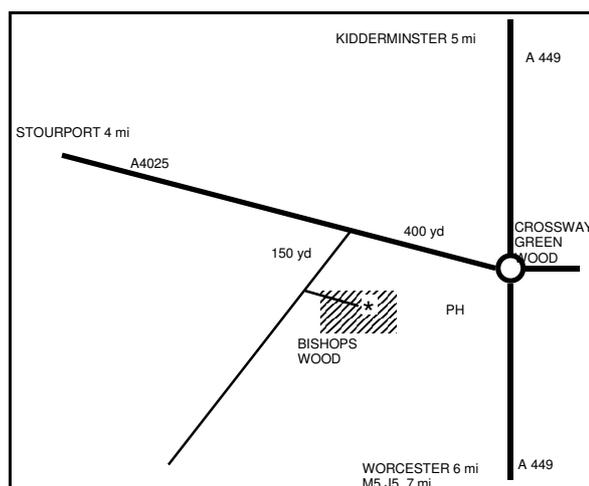
It is an excellent Show rivalling the Chelsea Show and it provides us with the opportunity to meet hundreds of gardeners. We also usually manage to get an hour or so off to see the rest of the show. If you would like to help please ring Digby Wood on 01905 830391, and please do it soon, because several volunteers left it too late last year and were disappointed.

⌋ Digby Wood

July 17th - 18th

Notcutts Garden Centre, Stratford Road, Shirley, Solihull B90 4EN

Volunteers needed to help man the West Midlands Branch stand during this weekend. Saturday 9.00am - 6.00pm, Sunday 10.00am - 4.30pm. Any one who could spare an hour or two would be very welcome. Contact Jim and Christine Chance (0121 427 1706).



August 22nd

Garden open day, Eudon Mill, Eudon George

There will be a Garden Open Day at Eudon Mill on August 22nd at 2.30 pm. There will be a guided tour of the garden. See Diary for details.

⌋ Leader Rex Lane Harvey

Frank Lancaster describes a typical moth night, see Diary of Events for dates – Ed.

A Night Out with a Difference

I detect a quiet ground swell across the West Midlands in the World of Moths. It has been reported to me that three members have been presented with Moth Traps for Christmas. Further more there are now readers wishing to gate crash the Wyre Forest Millennium Project now in its third year - you will be more than welcome.

The programme is well rehearsed:-

- (1) Assemble at dusk and set up 6/8 Moth Traps at strategic locations.
- (2) A short break for coffee, (bring own flask and torch), whilst listening to the night calls

of the forest, before visiting and emptying the traps.

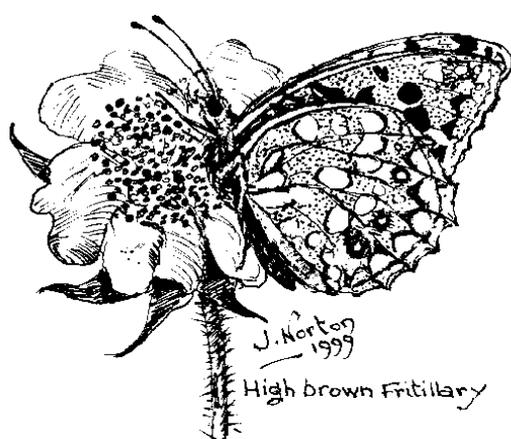
- (3) Depending on climatic conditions, the evening draws to a close at approximately 3.00 a.m.

Permission is needed to visit this site: it is therefore essential that, should you wish to join the moth night, please contact me on 01299 266168.

p Frank Lancaster

Brown Fritillary Conservation Day

The **High Brown Fritillary** did very badly in the Malvern Hills last year. You may recall that the annual count dropped to an all-time low of 9, having fallen from a reasonable 61 in 1996, then to



34 after the cold, wet end to June in 1997. The reason for this catastrophic fall was almost certainly the dull, damp weather in May and June last year. We hope for better things this year and we can help to sway the balance by optimising the egg laying conditions on the breeding site by some timely bracken cutting.

We meet at the Gullet Quarry, car park (OS map 150) at 10 am on Sunday June 13th. Please be there, this could be make or break year. See Diary page 28, for more details.

p Digby Wood

Field trips

July 2nd - 5th.

Scotland – Glen Clova, Balmoral Estate

An opportunity to visit the Balmoral estate. Atlas recording. The aim is to survey this remote area for **Mountain Ringlet**, **Large Heath** and **Northern Brown Argus**. Several pairs of Golden Eagle, Peregrine, Short Eared Owls, Black Grouse and Twite. Wildcats and red squirrel are often seen. A vehicle will be available to take us into the hills. Warm clothing

and stout boots.

Owing to the high cost of hiring transport, it has been decided, if possible, to share cars and the cost of fuel for the journey. Booking for accommodation - see enclosed form and Diary page 28 for details. Closing date 1st May.

Blackmoor Copse Sunday July 18th, £10 per person. **Purple Emperor**, **White Admiral**, **Silver-washed Fritillary** and **White Letter Hairstreak**. Bring lunch. See enclosed booking form and Diary page 28 for details. Closing date July 3rd.

Goring Gap and Kidlington Hill Saturday August 14th. £10.00 per person. **Adonis Blue** and **Silver-spotted Skipper**. Bring lunch. Stout shoes. See enclosed booking form and Diary page 29 for details. Closing date July 31st.

Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Trips:

Gloucester Branch has sent details of five field trips May 15th, May 22nd, May 29th, July 17th and August 14th. Warwickshire Branch has a butterfly walk in Birmingham July 17th. See page 29 for details.

Apley Estate

Lord Hamilton has granted Butterfly Conservation full access to his 6000 acre Apley Estate, situated immediately north of Bridgnorth, this year to undertake a full survey of its butterfly populations. The area appears to have great potential given the fact that **Dark Green** and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** colonies were discovered last year nearby over less promising terrain. No records currently exist, so this initiative will benefit the Millennium Atlas and also the Estate who will be supplied with a report if the project is successful. The possibility of a concurrent moth survey is also being explored.

Pioneering volunteers are needed to assist Rex Lane Harvey for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The Estate Office is issuing Butterfly Conservation with a full access permit for the flight period whilst we in turn have guaranteed to conduct a controlled exercise that takes account of local sensitivities. Surveying will only take place in sunny conditions, therefore it is not possible to organise visits in advance through announcements in the newsletter.

Interested? Please contact either Rex or myself and we will contact you when a trip is to take place giving 48 hours notice. Please note that visits could well be on weekdays not necessarily at the weekend.

p Rex Lane Harvey 01746 789693
Richard Southwell 01384 397066 (after 4pm)

Educational tours at Stratford Butterfly Farm

The Stratford-upon-Avon Butterfly Farm has an educational programme which caters for a wide range of age groups and abilities. Guided tours can be booked for groups of over 10 people, for which discounts on the current entry price are available. If there are over 30 in a group, then it would be split between two or more guides. Tours can be taken every day of the year except Christmas Day (we need one day off a year). The busiest time of year is June, when most schools have their trips. At this time of year, due to the workload, only an hour tour can be taken (we see 25,000 school children each year). At other times a tour lasts an average of one and a half hours.

Groups range from under 5' s nursery classes to old age pensioner clubs, from people with severe learning difficulties to postgraduates from universities, and from the local school to foreign students from any part of the world. Basically each group is given the same tour but the amount of detail delivered by the guide depends entirely on the desire of the group to absorb information.

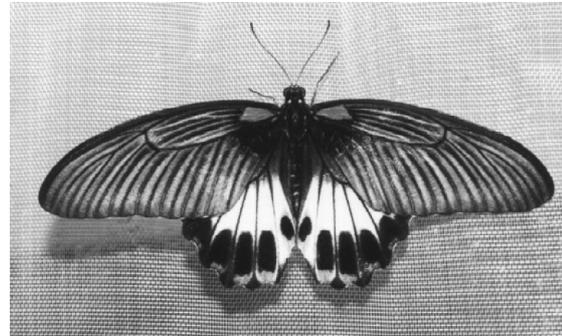
A typical tour would consist of the following :-

Introduction

The group is gathered into the Education Room and told to take off coats etc. due to the heat that they will experience once inside the greenhouse. The guide will then introduce him/herself to the group and give a short introduction to the Butterfly Farm. If the group needs to be split, the first part will be taken off on tour and the rest will be kept entertained by their guide until the first base is clear. It can get difficult to keep an excited bunch of 7 year olds interested while they wait for two or even three groups to pass through the first section. Many schools now bring the whole school at once rather than just one class due to the high cost of coach travel.

Depending on the topic that is being studied by the class, we can play various games with them whilst they wait to go on their tour. A class studying rain forests would play the deforestation game, where the loss of animals due to fragmented habitats is illustrated. A class studying mini-beasts may play rainbow valley, which shows how green and brown caterpillars are better camouflaged than red or yellow ones. There are several other topics which we can also demonstrate, sometimes the games are so

successful that the children have to be stopped so that they can start their tour proper.



Fruit Table

The first stop on a guided tour is the Fruit Table. Here, the group is given a chance to acclimatise to the conditions of the tropical house while they have a good look around. There are large fruit juice drinking butterflies sitting on the rotting fruit which is on the fruit table. This is a good place to go through the anatomy of butterflies: the antennae; eyes; proboscis; legs; wings etc. can be pointed out and the function of each explained. After a chance for questions, the group is moved on to the next room.

Caterpillar Area

In the Caterpillar area the life cycle of butterflies is demonstrated, with living examples of eggs and caterpillars. The first half of the tour ends at the Emerging cage where the terms pupa, chrysalis, cocoon and metamorphosis are explained, with reference to the items on display in the cage.

Back in the Main Flight Area, the group is divided up into small parties so that each can become rain forest explorers. They are given ten minutes to find at least 10 different species of butterfly, 2 different species of fish, at least 1 bird and an iguana. After ten minutes, the guide collects the whole group together to see if they have achieved this goal. He may then help find some of the animals that may have been hiding, before moving on to the second half of the tour.

Insect City

In the Insect section, the group gets a chance to look at many different types of insects and other creatures. The differences between complete and incomplete metamorphosis are shown, as is the differences between different orders of

insect. By counting the legs of the other invertebrates in this room the six legged nature of the class insecta can be reinforced. Towards the end of this room, there are a few vertebrate displays and the spineless nature of mini-beasts can be demonstrated against these backboned animals. If the group is well behaved, then one or two of the more docile animals in the room can be taken out of their cages for holding.

Arachnoland

The tour ends in the spider area where a whole range of different spiders and scorpions are kept. The most dangerous ones are in a double skinned and alarmed tank. Here the difference between a spider which has two parts to its body and 8 legs can be shown against an insect that has three body parts and 6 legs. One of the scorpion displays has a sun bed lamp above it so that when a button is pressed it lights up and the normal fluorescent light goes out. This shows the true ultra violet colour of scorpions that we cannot normally see, but many other animals

can.

At the end of this room, there is a chance for any questions from the group and most school parties get asked various questions by the guide to ascertain that some learning has been achieved during the whole tour.

When this is complete, if the group has been very good, the arachnophobes are invited to leave for the gift shop while the brave souls left behind can get much closer to a tarantula.

Thus ends a typical educational tour around the Butterfly Farm. In the middle of the summer term there is probably another group waiting to get into spider room and another waiting to start their tour with the guide who has just finished. (All guides also have a full time job to do elsewhere in the Butterfly Farm).

p Richard Lamb

Supermoth is it a bird?

Supermoth. It always causes great excitement whenever it is seen. Mike Ecob phoned to tell me about his sighting at the end of July and then about a month or so later to tell me about his friend Pat Duffy. "I knew what he'd seen even before he told me, because of the excitement in his voice" he said. The **Hummingbird Hawk Moth** never fails to impress as it darts from flower to flower, its long proboscis probing each bloom for nectar and all the while emitting an audible hum. Our forefathers reacted similarly, J.W.Tutt (British Moths-1896.) described it thus:

"With the rapidity of lightning something crosses between us and the flower, we see something hovering and quivering over one of the masses of bloom. Ah! You stretch your neck forward to look at it, to see what it is! It is gone like a shadow, like a flash, more quickly than it came. Stand a little closer. Hold your breath and do not stir. Another shadow passes between you and the flower. You do not move, and you see a quivering body and wings; wings moving so rapidly that they are almost invisible, and causing a hum, pitched on such a high note that it is almost inaudible, and you begin to wonder what must be the rate of vibration necessary to produce that hum. You inadvertently move, and the insect is gone immediately. Another wait and it reappears, and this time you mark two sparkling eyes brilliant as diamonds, and a

tongue surely reaching down into the flower." I fear Mr Tutt got a little carried away with the hum. The sound of the **Hummingbird Hawk Moth** is at the bottom end of the audible range i.e. low frequency, insects like mosquitoes



Hummingbird Hawkmoth

occupy the top end of the frequency range.

The little note in the Winter Newsletter produced 5 more reports, so the complete list of sightings with their nectar plants is shown overleaf.

Many thanks to all who wrote in. One authority states that there are on average about 50 sightings per year in the UK, so 7 in the West

30 June	Shirley Price	Wolverhampton	Valerian.
30 July	Mike Ecob	Stourport	Geranium
30 July	Ian Duncan	Malvern Hills	Buddleia
Early Aug	R A Summerfield	Halesowen	Valerian
Summer	D R Twist	Clun	Valerian
End Aug/Early Sept	Dorothy Osborne	Leominster	Buddleia
Early Sept	Patrick Duffy	Bewdley	Geranium

Humming Bird Hawkmoth sightings West Midlands 1998

Midlands would seem to be a fair share. You will see that the sightings are from all over the region and are spread from June to September.

The **Humming-bird Hawk Moth** breeds all over the warmer parts of Europe and is generally a migrant to the UK. It is a very powerful flyer penetrating as far north as the polar regions and up mountains as far as the vegetation persists. It reached North America some 30 years ago. It would appear that it is able to hibernate either as a moth or as a pupa provided that there is no frost. Therefore in southern regions the moth can be seen on the wing as early as February or March and there are occasionally such reports from Cornwall. However most sightings start in June when the main emergence from the overwintering pupae takes place. If we have had an exceptionally mild winter, some of these may be from our own southern counties, but in general they are continental migrants.

Several of the sightings were on Red Valerian (*Centranthus Ruber*) sometimes known as Pretty Betsy, a garden perennial that has "escaped" and naturalised itself on walls, banks and rocky

places. It's a good butterfly and moth nectar plant and is rated among Margaret Vickery's "Top Ten" in "Gardening for Butterflies". She observes that the pink flowered forms attract more butterflies than the white or red forms. Our native Valerian (*Valeriana Officinalis*) is a different plant although related to Red Valerian. One wonders if it is also attractive to these **Hawk Moths**. The attraction of Buddleia comes as no surprise, but Geranium certainly does (I assume that this refers to the Pelargonium.)

There is another much more common moth that has the same hovering/darting behaviour, and that is the **Silver Y Moth**. It is also a migrant and can be very common indeed in some years, but it is much smaller than the **Humming-bird** and has prominent silver coloured "Y" s" on its fore wings and flies quite silently. The **Humming-bird** has one further feature of note, on the tail end of the abdomen are several tufts that look like the tail feathers of a bird adding to its Humming-bird like appearance. Look out for it this summer, it really is a super moth.

p Digby Wood

Butterflies Lead the Way

In 1985 the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust was presented with a great opportunity and a great financial problem. L. G. Harris - the Harris Brush Company - decided to sell their large woodland holding. Amongst their woods were many of outstanding wildlife interest with records of rarities from the early 1800's to the present day. Eventually, after negotiations with many people and organisations, we were able to purchase two of the jewels in the Harris crown - Trench Wood and Monk Wood.

These purchases were only possible because we received many grants and donations, and the close co-operation of Butterfly Conservation including financial help. The Trust and Butterfly Conservation became joint owners of Little Monk Wood and both organisations are closely and jointly involved with conservation work in both Monk Wood and Trench Wood reserves. We

also had a great joint celebration when Gordon Benningfield came to open Monk Wood Reserve!

More recently the Trust and Butterfly Conservation have jointly purchased Grafton Wood, again with the aid of many contributors, with its exciting colony of Brown Hairstreaks. The advantages of these co-operative ventures are many. Between them both organisations reach a far bigger pool of help and expertise - volunteers, administrative and scientific - than either could alone, and this is excellent news for conservation work in the woods.

Co-operation between the Trust and Butterfly Conservation does not stop there! Mike Williams, a leading light in Butterfly Conservation, has recently been elected to the Trust's Council along with Ian Duncan who also

has his feet deep in both organisations. Many people belong to both Butterfly Conservation and the Trust and even if they do not they work with each other on both the jointly owned reserves and many others. We don't always agree (this obsession with coppicing!!) but we do succeed in improving the woods for butterflies and many other species.

There is also a cross-over in other fields. The Trust has given much publicity and support to the Butterfly Millennium Atlas through its Newsletter and the Worcester Biological Records Centre Newsletter. Many Trust members have sent in records from outlandish tetrads in far flung corners of Worcestershire! Although there are still holes, the coverage of Worcestershire for the Atlas is (so far) much better than other Midland Counties! There's a challenge!.

I am personally delighted with the partnership which has evolved between the Trust and Butterfly Conservation - it benefits us both, and

much more importantly, it improves wildlife conservation in our county. Wildlife conservation was, until recently, based largely on plants, for obvious reasons. In the last few years the crucial importance of invertebrate conservation has at last been recognised. Butterflies are glamorous and fairly easily recognised invertebrates. But the understanding of their complex life cycles for example, blues and hairstreaks, and habitat requirements should lead to a better appreciation of the needs of the vast array of invertebrates (over 30,000 species) in Britain. Many invertebrates are in serious decline: if butterfly conservation can help reverse the trend then long live the partnership between Butterfly Conservation and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.

Between us we can make it happen!

p Harry Green
Vice-President Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Moths of the Wyre Forest Royal Ordnance Site

Although the Wyre Forest has received regular attention from Lepidopterists, recording of this huge area has always been patchy and many parts remain unrecorded, especially in the Shropshire Wyre. In consequence, I was most enthusiastic when I heard of plans to conduct a survey of moths of the Royal Ordnance compound at Postans Plain in the north-eastern sector of the Forest; so one night early in June 1997 I arrived at the compound to meet a group of fellow moth enthusiasts and have a first look at the site, which is normally out of bounds to the public.

The Royal Ordnance compound consists of a large clearing straddling a shallow valley and surrounded by mature, mostly oak, woodland through which runs the site's boundary fence. Within is an open hillside which is kept closely mown by the site staff and which supports an acidic heathland community with abundant low heather plants. Surface drainage makes parts of the hillside treacherous under foot; the slope drains into a shallow stream which bisects the compound and is flanked by a belt of lush herbage, and a dam on this stream has created a small pool. Around the site offices and outbuildings there is regenerating scrub consisting chiefly of birch, willow and bramble.

It was quickly obvious that the Royal Ordnance site is an ideal one for a moth survey; there are several electricity power points scattered around the compound which, with the "dalek-style"

extension leads on hand, allow us to run half a dozen mercury vapour traps across a wide area. In addition, Royal Ordnance has its own bright outdoor lighting under which we can stretch white sheets. The result is as much pulling-power as is possible to imagine for catching moths.

The survey team consists of ten or so members of Butterfly Conservation and friends, from Worcestershire, Shropshire and the West Midlands, who meet on the first Friday of each month in season to purvey the "black arts" of moth trapping. We made five site visits in 1997 and six in 1998 and to date have recorded about 275 species, of which 70 are microlepidoptera. We have found on this site a moth fauna every bit as rich as anywhere in the Wyre, with an impressive range of species local or uncommon in the Midlands.

The best represented element of the Royal Ordnance compound's moths is that of mature deciduous woodland with oak, birch, poplar and willow being the major larval foodplants. The mouth-watering list of moth species of this habitat type is long and includes the **Angle-striped Sallow**, **Alder Moth**, **Marbled** and **Lunar Marbled Browns**, **Barred Hook-tip**, **Olive**, **Satin Lutestring**, **Oak Nycteoline**, **Brindled White-spot**, **Blossom Underwing**, **Frosted Green**, **Maiden's Blush**, **Clay Triple-lines** and **Blotched Emerald**. Not only are the species themselves impressive, but they are

sometimes in amazing numbers; we have lured Lobster Moths on several occasions, and have single-night maxima of twenty **Green Silver-lines**, 25 **Brindled Pugs** and over 40 **Great Prominents**.

Almost as well represented in our traps are moths of the woodland floor herbage. Some of these have very specific foodplants such as the **Speckled Yellow** (on Wood Sage) and **Rivulet** and **Small Rivulet** (on Red Campion); but many more feed on a range of herbaceous plants and grasses, and include **Grey Arches**, **Slender Brindle**, **Purple Clay**, **Single-dotted**, **Cream** and **Satin Waves**, **Little Emerald** and **Marbled White-spot**. Larvae of the **Fanfoot** and **Common Fanfoot** feed on withered leaves; the latter has declined nationally so alarmingly in recent decades that it is decidedly uncommon, with the Wyre as its stronghold in our region.

The open heathland and grassland in the compound undoubtedly adds to the diversity of species on site. We catch **True Lover's Knots** a-plenty about the heather, and the **Scarce Footman's** numbers belie its name! **Narrow-winged Pug**, **Neglected Rustic**, **Feathered Gothic**, **Plain Wave**, **Straw Dot**, **Antler**, **Small Purple-barred** and **Small Elephant Hawk** are all characteristic of this habitat. In the damper, lush valley bottom we often find **Common Wave** about the willows, and the **Ear Moth**, **Small Wainscot** and **Red Chestnut** occur in damp grassland.

The last main habitat type reflected in the moth fauna of Postans Plain is coniferous woodland. Although this is not well represented in the compound itself a conifer plantation abuts its southern border and is doubtless the source of our several records of **Pine Carpet**, **Spruce Carpet**, **Barred Red**, **Bordered White**, **Larch Pug** and **Tawny-barred Angle**.

As my personal interest is in the Lepidoptera of Shropshire I have been particularly pleased to add several significant records to the county list from our work on the Royal Ordnance site. **Black**

Rustic in 1997 was a first for the Shropshire Wyre and the discovery of good numbers of **Marbled White-spot** shows that it still breeds in the county - there had previously been only one record since the turn of the century. A **Black Arches** and a **Waved Black** were only the second and third county records respectively.

Although none of the macros recorded so far in the survey have been firsts for Shropshire, two micros were: *Cochylis roseana*, whose larval foodplant, Teasel, grows locally in abundance, and *Scoparia ancipitella*, a rather little-known Pyralid. In general the diversity of microlepidoptera reflects the same habitat types as that of their larger cousins: that is, deciduous woodland (e.g. *Phyllonorycter roboris*, *Aleimma loeflingiana*, *Phycita roborella*); heathland and grassland (*Neofaculta ericetella*, *Acleris hyemana*, *Agriphila geniculea*); damp habitats (*Bactra lancealana*, *Evergestis pallidata*, *Perinephela lancealis*); and coniferous woodland (*Rhyacionia buoliana*, *Dioryctria abietella*). However, some micro species represent habitats not exploited by the macros; so we have encountered for example *Pyralis farinalis*, whose larva feeds on cereals and cereal waste, *Blastobasis lignea* which lives on decaying organic matter such as bird-droppings, and *Elophila nymphaeata*, the **Brown China-mark**, which has an aquatic larva and which, judging from its regular appearance at our lights, lives in good numbers in the pond.

There is much still to be done at Postans Plain: 275 species hardly represents half the potential moth fauna of the Royal Ordnance site. Nonetheless, we have achieved much already in our two survey seasons; for which, thanks to all who have taken part in the survey, to Frank Lancaster for initially securing us access to the site, and to the staff of Royal Ordnance themselves for their patience, help and interest in our strange nocturnal activities!

p Godfrey Blunt 11th January 1999

Silver-washed Fritillary -Valezina

It was July 16th 1998 and Gunter and I were walking our usual once a week Transect at Wigmore Rolls. We had previously seen some **Dark Green/High Brown Fritillaries** there and today I carried a small net to try and make a positive identification if we saw any again. We did see one only, which I was able to catch and identify with certainty as a **Dark Green**.

Near the end of our walk, when Gunter was on his way to the car, I saw a larger butterfly the colouring of which I had not seen before. It flew into the trees, but as I waited, it quickly returned to the path and settled on a dandelion. Triumphant and very gently I was able to place the net over it and hold it in my hand. I then

realised what it was, remembering that I had seen a photograph of it on the front cover of an old "Butterfly Conservation News" (Spring 1993 No. 53). I was able to carry it to Gunter for him to confirm my find. It was a female **Silver-washed Fritillary** in the form VALEZINA.* I then released it and hopefully, if it was able to breed, I shall see more in 1999.

**Valezina*

On the upper side, the ground colour is greenish grey, with black markings. On the underside the hindwing is similar to that of the normal form but the ground colour of the forewing is pinkish grey. Variations occur in the shade of green and the amount of white on the upper side.

⌋ Beryl Petters

Letters

From Mark Farmer

The role of Field Trips

These events have important educational and conservation aims. For some they are an opportunity to see and recognise, perhaps for the first time, living butterflies in their natural habitats. We are fortunate, within our region, to have a large percentage of British species. To view the remainder and appreciate their special habitat requirements longer trips are needed. Knowledge and understanding of these requirements are vital to improving the survival

prospects of our butterflies.

However I feel the main value of field trips to the Branch is that they help to knit people together as a group. Also it gives new members the chance to become involved and learn about the importance of recording and conservation tasks.

⌋ Mark Farmer

P.S. I would be delighted to receive any suggestions for future field trips especially in the Staffordshire area, particularly if you would be willing to lead the party.

REVIEW

Ordnance Survey Street Atlas Birmingham and West Midlands

A new street atlas with OS grid reference

In the autumn of 1998, Ordnance Survey published a new street atlas of the West Midlands postal area. It could be a really valuable help to those like me, and hopefully lots of others, who intend to be tetrad-bashing in Birmingham and the surrounding areas, especially this last year before the millennium. It gives continuous coverage from Cannock to Redditch and Stourbridge to Coventry, all at 3.5 inches to the mile. The overwhelming virtue of this street atlas is that it **gives grid reference lines** throughout this area as well as street names, and all the usual street map details. For butterfly recorders around Birmingham this is a wonderful luxury. Christine and I found these grid lines, combined with the very large scale, tremendously useful when entering your record form data on the computer and this year it will travel everywhere with us.

The Street Atlas shows all roads, from motorways to minor, footpaths, parks, canals, railway stations, building lines and almost all the features on the standard 1.25 inch to the mile (1:50000) as well as many which are not. Many useful landmarks in addition to street names, such as parks and stations also appear in the index (with postcodes and 0.5 km² reference).

Die-hards will however bemoan the loss of contour lines and a few features, such as electricity pylons.

Each page lines up exactly with the adjacent ones, in normal OS style (no overlap). I found this to be annoying on occasions in a street map. As the 100 km square grid reference letters (SO, SP etc.) do not appear on the standard map pages, you have to be sure of your location to at least this accuracy!

The OS West Midlands Street Atlas is in colour and comes in three styles:

- Large hardback at £12.99
- 7"x 10.5" spiral bound at £9.99
- Pocket-sized paperback at £4.99

I find that the spiral bound version is reasonably portable, adequately large and always lies flat, even with the pages doubled back. It can be obtained from local bookshops or by phone on 01933 443849.

⌋ Jim Chance

Minutes of the Annual General meeting

Held at Three Villages Hall, Grafton Flyford, on 21st Nov. 1998

1 Apologies for Absence

None. Fifty members present with Digby Wood in the Chair.

2 Minutes of Last AGM

These were approved and there were no matters arising.

3 Chairman's Report

This had been a poor year for butterflies but a good year for the West Midlands Branch.

The following highlights were reported:

- Two butterfly identification courses held were in Worcester Museum.
- Millennium Atlas meetings were held in Shropshire, Staffordshire and Herefordshire.
- The official opening of Grafton Wood took place.
- 32 conservation days were organised –the importance of health and safety on these occasions was emphasised.
- There were 9 field trips and 7 moth nights.
- Under the Gardens for Butterflies scheme numerous activities took place including 3 days at the Malvern Spring Garden Show and Howard Hughes's talk at the Ludlow Festival and 8+ talks to outside organisations.

The Chairman thanked the committee members for all their hard work throughout the year. The Chairman then announced that he was standing down and that Ian Duncan had agreed to take over the position.

Ian Duncan then thanked Digby for all his efforts on behalf of the society and presented him with a gift as a mark of appreciation.

4 Treasurer's Report-Terry Smith

The Treasurer tabled the 1998 accounts, summarised below; these were approved by the meeting. The Branch accounts presented to this year's AGM showed a surplus of income over expenditure of £542.51 and a balance carried forward of £4513.99. The total income for the year was over £9000, including grants towards conservation projects. Expenditure was £8500. Running costs of the Branch increased, partly due to the expenditure required to keep the Branch van on the road. Expenditure on conservation exceeded £4000 for the year. In answer to a question, the Treasurer agreed to review the amount of money held in the current account.

5 Conservation Officer's Report-Mike Williams

The main points were as follows:

- Regional Action Plan – Species champions had been appointed for all the priority species with the task of coordinating conservation

actions. New sites had been discovered for several species and funding had been received from English Nature for **High Brown Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary** and **Large Heath** surveys. These surveys had highlighted the need for urgent action to address (a) the deterioration of bracken stands on the Malvern Hills affecting the **High Brown** and (b) the impact of flooding on **Large Heath** larvae at Whixall Moss.

- The importance of bracken as a habitat for fritillaries was stressed. In this regard the publication of "Brackens for Butterflies" was timely and the role of Jenny Joy in its production was gratefully acknowledged.
- Grafton Wood had the potential to become a showcase reserve for Butterfly Conservation. The management plan was almost complete and conservation work had started. Members were urged to attend the work days held every second Sunday of the month at the wood. A transect had been started in 1998 and 24 species were recorded.

6 Recorder's Report-Andy Nicholls

Up to the end of 1997 6,500 records, covering 850 squares had been processed. This year to date a further 1,500 records covering 340 squares had been received. Members were reminded that 1999 was the last year of recording for the Atlas and that records would have to be submitted by late autumn to ensure inclusion in the publication.

7 Moths Officer Report-Jeff Andrews

In an attempt to increase awareness towards moths it was planned to produce a guide to the commoner moths in the West Midlands. It was also intended to produce a computer database of all the moth records in the area.

8. Millennium Atlas Coordinator's Report-Richard Southwell

All participants were thanked for their contributions.

Good progress was being maintained however more recording in both Staffordshire and Shropshire was required. The target was 100% of the entire area.

9 Election of Committee

The meeting approved the re-election of Ron Hatton, Richard Lamb, Jeff Andrews and Bob Bishop. Mark Farmer and Dave Jackson were elected as new members to the committee. Phil Hopson, who was standing down was thanked for the valuable contribution he had made over the years.

10 AOB

There being no other business the meeting closed and after tea Tom Brereton gave a very

Millennium Atlas Coordinators speak

The Final Push

The last season of the Millennium Atlas beckons. I know members won't let the project down and I must thank all of you for your efforts to date. Most recording has happened over the last two seasons, which have seen variable weather at best, but it proves what can be done. Look at Andy Nicholls's analysis for confirmation. It will also give you a good lead where to record this year and what species to look out for, particularly overlooked species in well recorded areas.

Giving special mentions for outstanding performance is always dangerous for two reasons. Everyone's records are important, also I don't know your individual circumstance. However, I do feel the following need special mention for their coverage of under-recorded tetrads judged by either numbers of tetrads or volume of species per tetrad. **Jeff Andrews** - Hereford, **Jean Armstrong** - Salop, **Peter Darch** - Worcester, **Bill Davidson** - Salop, **John Dodgson** - Birmingham, **Colin** and **Helen Dolding** - Worcester, **Keith Heaven** - Salop, **Terry Knight** - Worcester, **Andy Nicholls** - Hereford, and **John Wills** - Birmingham.

The good news is that an organisational infrastructure is now taking shape throughout our Branch. This will greatly benefit the Atlas project in 1999 and hopefully butterfly populations post - Millennium.

Hereford has Jeff Andrews and Andy Nicholls as local leaders, what about another volunteer?

Shropshire is taking off and now has three coordinators. Jean Armstrong in the south west, John Brayford covering Shrewsbury and west, and Rex Lane Harvey in the south east. Let's all wish Jenny Joy the best of luck and thank her for her efforts in the County and the motivation she has given to members in the well recorded Telford area. Well done also to the novice recorders who responded positively to my requests to cover four tetrads. Cheshire Branch has also committed to record in some areas adjoining their county following a workday attendance at Prees Heath. We very much appreciate their involvement in north Shropshire, an area where it appears impossible to find anyone to take on the two vacant posts of local coordinator.

Staffordshire: David Jackson, who only joined the Branch last summer, has volunteered for the

role of county coordinator and has already put significant effort into networking with various recording groups, including raising our profile with the Wildlife Trust. He needs the commitment of every Butterfly Conservation member living in the county in what is currently the worst recorded area in our Branch. He is writing to every member suggesting tetrads to be covered. Do support him like Worcester and Shropshire have. Any takers for a coordinator in the Stoke area?

Birmingham is reasonably well covered and Jim Chance is now the local coordinator. The task here is to increase the species count per tetrad. However if you do intend to walk the wildlife sanctuaries that abut the canal system I strongly advise you to go in an organised group! Those living in the Sutton Coldfield area do consider recording in nearby Staffordshire, David Jackson certainly could do with your assistance.

Worcester goes from strength to strength. The objective is 100 % coverage with every tetrad logging ten or more species. An average count of sixteen species for each tetrad in the county would put you near the top of the U.K. Premier League. Digby Wood is the coordinator for the southern half of the county and is targeting the Pershore - Inkberrow - Broadway triangle. My task is in the north with particular attention given to the area west of Abberley, glorious countryside but few records and fewer local members. County Biological Record Centre members have been urged to help us with recording in these areas. Let's hope they respond positively.

Final thought: all you members who have stayed on the sidelines why not volunteer your services to the local coordinator. When the Millennium Atlas is published next year it will set new agendas of what can be achieved in the conservation movement. I defy anyone to look at the Atlas without trying to find evidence of their own contribution. Recording is teaching all of us what the real conservation issues are and also what the individual can do about improving the situation in local areas. We really can affect local Biodiversity. The future bodes well for Butterfly Conservation and our West Midland Branch, indeed we might eventually want to call ourselves Butterfly Abundance Society.

Ⓟ Richard Southwell, Branch Coordinator

Regional Round-up

Herefordshire

Recording in Herefordshire is going well. Individual members will be contacted with details of areas needing special coverage this year.

↳ Jeff Andrews and Andy Nicholls,
Herefordshire Coordinators

South West Shropshire

Enthusiasm is supposed to be a good thing, but when it is not equalled by knowledge it can get you into trouble. I should have learnt this lesson with my enthusiasm for birds, but I didn't, and now here I am in the same pickle with butterflies.

The Clun Wildlife Trust had a talk by Harold Hughes in September 1997. This interested all and left some of us inspired. Then we had a visit from Jenny Joy and Andy Nicholls. The expression on Andy's face when he saw a **White Letter Hairstreak** told me that he was feeling the same as I did when I saw young goosanders on the Clun River. My passion began to focus on butterflies. We were off. Now the empty tetrads around Clun have been getting darker and darker.

We've revelled in the delicate magic of the **Green Hairstreaks** dancing and settling among the thistles, of fragile **Wood Whites** flitting low over edges of rides, of **Silver-washed Fritillaries** in our gardens, of unexpected **Wall Browns**, **Dark-green Fritillaries** and a **White Admiral**. We are now poised, anxious and awaiting the next season, hoping it will be a better year for butterflies and that even more recorders will join in for the last year of the Millennium Atlas.

Most of you know I am contacting you directly to see what can be done in our area but I am delighted with our recording efforts in 1998. A great many thanks, I look forward with optimism.

↳ Jean Armstrong, South Shropshire
Coordinator

Shrewsbury and West

Late last year I was approached by Richard Southwell and asked to co-ordinate the Millennium Atlas recording for Shrewsbury and West Shropshire. Shortly after this, I received the membership list of nine people in 'my' designated 600km² area. Subsequently I have also discovered that one member has moved and that I owe another member money.

Reviewing the challenge of getting all those tetrads recorded, I was feeling sorry for myself.

Then I spoke to Rex Harvey and discovered I didn't know I was born! At least I had membership. Enlisting some help recording seemed to be the next sensible step and a letter to existing members was duly posted. Acting on an idea from Richard Southwell, I contacted Shropshire Wildlife Trust. They have agreed to send out 'fliers' recruiting recorders with their newsletter in early April.

In addition, the Countryside Volunteer Centre in Shrewsbury has agreed to 'sponsor' the production costs of this flier and also mail it in 'Shropshire Stile' magazine. Total readership of these two publications combined is about 3500. Touch wood for a positive response.

Personally, I had a fragmented year recording last year. My work on Rights of Way meant I was flitting about all over the county. Records were collected as and when sightings occurred and therefore were most often of the commoner species.

I found nothing really notable except a few **Walls**, *Lasiommata megera*, in the Oswestry area. This was a pleasant surprise (to me at least). A romantic Valentines Day walk deteriorated into a recording session as **Peacocks**, *Inachis io*, and **Tortoiseshells**, *Aglais urticae*, showed during a sunny afternoon on Wenlock Edge. (Sorry Paula).

Interestingly, in chatting to a Shropshire 'countryman', I was told of sightings of **Purple Emperors** in the Longnor area some thirty years ago and **Dingy Skippers** at Lyth Hill in the 70's. Knowing the gentleman involved well I have no reason to doubt his word or identification skills.

Anyway enough of these ramblings I'm off to get to grips with my new edition of Skinner to see what moths are likely to be flying at the moment. Here's to a halcyon summer, good luck and happy recording.

↳ JP Brayford, Shrewsbury and West
Coordinator

South East Shropshire

My interest in our country's butterflies and moths began over 40 years ago, when my friend Tony Pickles suggested that we start a butterfly collection. I had from a very early age loved the outdoors and had been introduced to our natural history from my first days at primary school, as the head had a passion for the subject.

I moved to Shropshire about three years ago, from Cradley Heath in the West Midlands (before that I spent most of my life in Kent until 1990) and began to run two mercury vapour moth traps in our extensive gardens, submitting my records to the county museum. 1996 was a very good year and my records for that first year have turned up seven new species for the county. Some of them were migrants, but others notably the **Waved Black** and the **Clouded Buff** gave me quite a surprise.

As far as butterflies are concerned we have about 22 species as regular visitors to the garden. I am not unhappy with this, but I do think that our modern farming methods are robbing us of many species that were common in my youth.

Thanks to the efforts of Richard Southwell, I am greatly looking forward to being able to "get into" the local Apley Estate in the coming season. For I am sure that this area will give up much useful information regarding local butterfly and moth species. Any like minded members living in the area would be most welcome to assist in this unique opportunity to gain access to an area that has been closed to the general public for many years.

p Rex Lane Harvey, South East Shropshire
Coordinator

Staffordshire

Whilst talking to Phil Drabble recently, I asked him if he could remember the last time he had seen a **Pearl – bordered Fritillary** around Bagot's Park near to his home. He could not recall, adding that most of the Park had now been "agriculturally developed", but suggested that I speak to John Herbert who had carried out surveys in the area on his own and with the late County Recorder Richard Warren. Mr. Warren's 1975 text recorded **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** at Bagot's Park at least up to the 1960's. I asked John what he thought the chances were of locating them now? His response was "probably nil". I fear that this delightful insect is now lost to the County and other species like **High Brown Fritillary** and **Grizzled Skipper** may also be on their way out. Atlas records would allow us to take steps towards helping to protect our remaining vulnerable species and to monitor populations in general. In the County mapping table, so to speak, we are potential wooden spooners and any butterfly records will be much appreciated.

I have listed below, the main areas where there is a real need for you to help - It's hard to believe that no records for **Large** or **Green-veined**

Whites or **Small Tortoiseshells** have been submitted from some of these sites, let alone uncommon species. Just think, you will be putting part of your county on the map! Who knows, you may locate a hitherto unrecorded and important colony.

A tetrad is just four 1 km squares on an O.S. map. Do not be put off by the requirements of working to tetrads or providing a map reference. If you have any difficulties in doing so, I will help with references if you contact me. Please do go to the following areas, with or without maps, preferably with of course, and send Andy Nicholls your records. If you haven't recorded before, you should have a lot of fun searching on warm sunny days for our winged wonder sprites around the lovely country lanes, disused railway lines, canal towpaths and woodlands.

I am optimistic that together we can fill the gaps for the Atlas. Please let me know if you require recording sheets and are willing to record in specific areas, so that I may arrange visits to sites not covered.

Records for all species are requested from the following districts:

Knotbury to Flash.

Between Kidsgrove, Biddulph, Biddulph Moor, Stanley and Tunstall. Werrington, Brown Edge and back to Biddulph.

Leek to Cheadle and north to Colshaw and around Warslaw and Alstonfield. Bloor to Wooton, Mayfield and Ellastone.

Uttoxeter down to Blithfield, Bagot's Park and Stow-by-Chartley.

All outlying districts around Rugeley - Hamstall Ridware, Abbot's Bromley, to Alrewas. Barton under-Needwood, Tattenhall, Dunstall, down to Fradley, Longdon and Armitage.

Tamworth and all outlying areas to Croxhall, Clifton Campville, Thorpe Constantine to Whittington.

Lichfield to Tamworth, Drayton Bassett, Shenstone, Stonall, Wall and Hammerwich. Stafford to Gnosall Heath, Weston Jones to Adbaston, Eccleshall and Great Bridgeford. Stafford south and east to Penkridge, Colwich, Shugborough and up to Stow-by-Chartley.

Wolverhampton all outlying districts to Pittingham, Burnhill Green.

Weston-under-Lizard to Belvide reservoir.

p David Jackson, Staffordshire Coordinator .

Birmingham

Could I encourage all of you WMBC members in the Birmingham area to send local butterfly records for inclusion in the Millennium Atlas. What do we in the city contribute? Many records

of common butterflies, certainly. A look at the 1998 Birmingham records from you all shows hardly any totally unrecorded tetrads, but many containing very few recorded species. By far the most recorded butterfly was the **Orange Tip**, observed in 90% of Birmingham tetrads, are you surprised? - I am. The lowest record of the widely distributed butterflies was the **Ringlet** at about 10% of tetrads. Are these records valuable? I know for certain that they are, far beyond the millennium.

Half-way up our stairs is a photograph of a **Wall Brown**, in our garden, from 1985. Nobody sees them now in our region. Which species are currently declining (or increasing) in Birmingham - the **Ringlet**? Or is your impression different? We could tell the experts before they have found out the hard way.

Probably the key to collecting butterfly records in Birmingham is garden observations. I wonder if I could persuade some of you to ask *reliable* and interested people that you know to keep notes of what they see. The essential information is Species, date of observation, numbers and location? If recorders care to send me casual records, I would be pleased to turn road names etc. into grid references for Andy Nicholls, using the new Ordnance Survey street map of the West Midlands (review, p 10). Our Christmas card list has been an invaluable database, including some potential butterfly recorder friends. Please send Andy Nicholls or me all the records that you can by September; good use will be made of them - best wishes for the season.

Ⓟ Jim Chance, Birmingham Coordinator

South Worcestershire

It is easy to become complacent, on the 10km square basis Worcestershire appears to be complete, but sharpen up the focus to 2km squares (tetrads) and the holes begin to appear, and as for 1km squares.....! So let's get down to filling in those last dozen patchy areas. To give you a lead they are listed below..

10km square	Recording area
--------------------	-----------------------

- | | |
|------|---|
| 7050 | Teme valley/A44. From Knightwick east to Lulsley, Broadwas and Cotheridge. |
| 8050 | West of Worcester. Rushwick north to the Broadheaths, Shoulton and Moseley. North of Worcester, Iaines, Fernhill Heath and Hindlip. |
| 9050 | South of Worcester. Norton east to the Wolvertons, Peopleton and Bishampton. |
| 9040 | East of Pershore. Stoulton south to |

Wadborough Besford and Defford. West of Pershore. Little Comberton north to Crophorne and Fladbury. North of Pershore. Wyre Piddle, Lower Moor and Throckmorton. South of Pershore. Eckington, Great Comberton and Birlingham.

- | | |
|------|--|
| 7030 | South of the Malverns. Pendock, Berrow, Birtsmorton, Rye Street and Chase End Street. |
| 8030 | South East of Malverns. Eldersfield, Hardwick Green, Cold Elm Gullers End and Marsh End. |
| 9030 | Bredon area. Bredon, the Westmancotes, Bredons Norton and Overbury. |

I can't believe that there are no **Whites** or **Small Tortoiseshells** out there. If you have a chance to visit any of these last remaining areas, do make a note of what you see so that Worcestershire stands out of the Millennium Atlas as being 100 % recorded.

Ⓟ Digby Wood, South Worcester Coordinator

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Redditch

The involvement of the Redditch Group of the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust with Butterfly Conservation's Millennium Atlas project was almost accidental. After a number of years with the group, I had been involved in all of the usual local group activities, i.e. fund raising, work parties, organisation of local talks, as well as some quite adventurous field trips to all parts of the country. However, I felt that the activity which was missing was species recording, and this is an area where local knowledge would be advantageous.

I voiced the idea of a local recording effort in a committee meeting early in 1995, and fellow member Martyn Hodgson suggested that I could organise a local butterfly survey. The philosophy was that birds are well recorded under a number of schemes and the next easiest group are the butterflies (which to our knowledge were not widely recorded). He wrote to Butterfly Conservation for advice and got an enthusiastic response giving details of the Millennium Atlas project and some recording forms. I was encouraged by the fact that, according to recent records (or the lack of), Redditch was considered to be virtually butterfly-free. So here was a unique opportunity to make a difference and the Redditch Butterfly Survey was born. The Local Group committee were immediately "volunteered" and tetrads allocated to them.

Despite our lack of experience, within weeks we were all finding species we had not seen in

Redditch before, e.g. **Purple Hairstreak**, **White Admiral**, and **Marbled White**. There were also reports of a single **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and a single **Wall Brown**. Both were positive sightings in areas where the species had been seen before, but sadly, neither species has been recorded in the area since. I would have guessed that we would find between 15 and 20 species in the area, so a total of twenty six, with only half the area visited, was more than I had believed possible. Beginners luck was well demonstrated at a work party at Ipsley Alders Marsh. On a Sunday morning in September, most of the recorders were treated to the sight of a **Camberwell Beauty** flying around in the willows. At the end of the season, it was very satisfying to find that the "butterfly free zone" was now (temporarily) Worcestershire's butterfly capital!

Repeated articles in our local newsletter and a talk by Mike Williams, produced several new recorders for 1996, and coverage of the area was increased significantly. Further inspiration came from a meeting with Richard Southwell who was in the planning stages of organising the rest of Worcestershire. Richard gave me lots of encouragement and showed me how a survey should be organised! By the end of the season, although we were unable to repeat the **Camberwell Beauty**, **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** or **Wall Brown**, experienced eyes had picked up **White Letter Hairstreaks** in several sites and the lucky few found **Clouded Yellows** drifting through the area.

Another two recorders volunteered for 1997 and the remaining areas were surveyed. Some of the third year "veterans" had been thinking of potential sites all winter and this resulted in the discovery of two sites for **Brown Argus** (the 29th species) and a very large previously unknown

colony of **Marbled Whites**. This also led to a significant discovery of orchid species. By the end of 1997, the coverage of Redditch and the rest of the SP06 tetrads in Worcestershire was very nearly complete. Butterfly Recording in 1998 was seriously hampered by the dismal weather, and few species were added to any of the tetrads. However there is still a keen rivalry to find the thirtieth species in Redditch. So far, no **Brown Hairstreak** eggs have been found, and all of the **Small Skippers** really are **Small Skippers**!

The group now has surveyed 19 tetrads, all but one of which has records for more than 10 species. 12 of the tetrads have more than 15 species and 7 have more than 20. Although I could have predicted good results for the butterflies, I could never have predicted the spin-offs from this work. This was an introduction to recording for most of us, and fortunately coincided with the relaunch of recording activity at the Worcestershire Biological Records Centre (WBRC). Currently, at least five of the butterfly recorders are actively involved with the WBRC, with interests including plants, snails, dragonflies, grasshoppers, woodlice, and spiders, as well as butterflies. Four of the recorders are also involved with BTO Breeding Bird Atlas work, and a number of us are still attempting to fill gaps in butterfly recording outside the area. I would not say that this has happened as a result of the Butterfly survey, however in some cases, it probably speeded up the process.

The whole project has provided immense satisfaction for me, and I would like to thank anyone who has been involved with the survey in any way. The final satisfaction will come from identifying "our" dots on the maps in the Millennium Atlas!

Conservation Corner

Record turnout at winter workdays!

An unlikely headline I know, but true for all that. A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to our conservation programme over the winter which has seen excellent progress made on a number of sites. Particularly encouraging has been the turnout at our new reserve at Grafton Wood where over 40 volunteers turned up at the January workday, including a large number of local residents from nearby villages and a group of Worcester scouts. Another success was the New Year Whitbread Action Earth event at Monkwood where, in addition to hot soup and mincepies, we were treated to a glass of ten year old malt whiskey courtesy of the warden Paddy Harrison (could other reserve wardens please note). At Trench Wood in October, free tee shirts were handed out to participants as part of Yellow Pages Make a Difference day and baked potatoes from the bonfire were also well received (another hint for reserve wardens). Last but not least, after the disappointments of the previous year, we had a good turnout at Prees Heath for our annual heather management day which went very well. Special thanks are due to our friends from Butterfly Conservation Cheshire and Peak District Branch who turned out in force and contributed so much to the success of the day.

Good news for the Marsh Fritillary

In last summer's Branch Newsletter, reference was made to the new survey commissioned by English Nature to assess the potential of sites near to the only surviving colony of **Marsh Fritillary** in Gloucestershire to provide suitable habitat. Previous ecological work on the **Marsh Fritillary** by Martin Warren and others has shown that the butterfly flourishes best where there is a network of colonies in close proximity to one another and tends to die out where sites are isolated. The survey carried out by an organisation called Conservation Consultancy looked at around a dozen sites in the immediate vicinity and assessed them according to the presence and density of the larval foodplant Devil's bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, the average sward height, the number and type of grazing animal and actual field size including the percentage of *Succisa* cover. Three sites were identified which it is suggested could, with appropriate management, be made suitable. Initial contact with at least one of the owners seems encouraging and the next stage is to look at ways in which the sites in question can be brought into the best possible condition. This will involve dealing with scrub encroachment and stepping up levels of grazing. At the same time,

if the aim in the West Midlands Regional Action Plan of establishing a metapopulation structure for the butterfly is to be achieved, we will need to look at ways of providing better links or stepping stones between sites. In the longer term, the decision will need to be made as to whether we can rely on natural colonisation taking place or whether artificial establishment is appropriate.

Wyre Forest

Over the years, the West Midlands Branch, largely through the efforts of Frank Lancaster, has developed an excellent working relationship with staff of Forest Enterprise which has brought about tremendous dividends for butterflies especially the woodland fritillaries. A number of new sites within the Forest have been opened up for butterflies and, in many cases, these have been linked by a series of wildlife corridors. Coppicing has been re-established and there are now an estimated 25 miles of rides which are subject to a mowing regime aimed at improving butterfly populations. Butterflies to benefit include not only the nationally important **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, for which Wyre Forest is now one of its foremost strongholds, but also regionally important species like **Small Pearl-bordered**, **Silver-washed**, **Grizzled Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak**. **Grizzled Skipper**, in particular, seems to have benefited from the cutting of wildlife corridors in some parts of the Forest and especially from the work undertaken in the vicinity of the Royal Ordnance testing station, which has also been the location for an ongoing moth survey also co-ordinated by Frank (see separate article). A recent meeting during the summer with Severn-Trent facilitated by FE has resulted in a change to the mowing regime along the pipeline which we hope will benefit the **Green Hairstreak** which was seen ovipositing on young gorse in this vicinity during 1998. Much of the credit for these many improvements lies with Jerry Gissop from Forest Enterprise who has been extremely receptive to the various suggestions for changes in management practices put to him. Jerry has now been promoted to a new job with FE in the Forest of Dean and we would like to both thank him for his past co-operation over the years at Wyre and wish him well in his new position.

Update on Species Champions and Transect recorders

Two further changes to the list of species champions published in the 1998 summer newsletter. Dave Jackson is now assisting Ian Duncan with work on the **Pearl-bordered**

Fritillary while Neil Thompson, assisted by Mike Slater, has been appointed by Warwickshire Branch to act as **Small Blue Champion** to replace Margaret Vickery. We are grateful to John Tilt, the reserve warden, for taking on the Grafton Wood transect.

Provisional Atlas

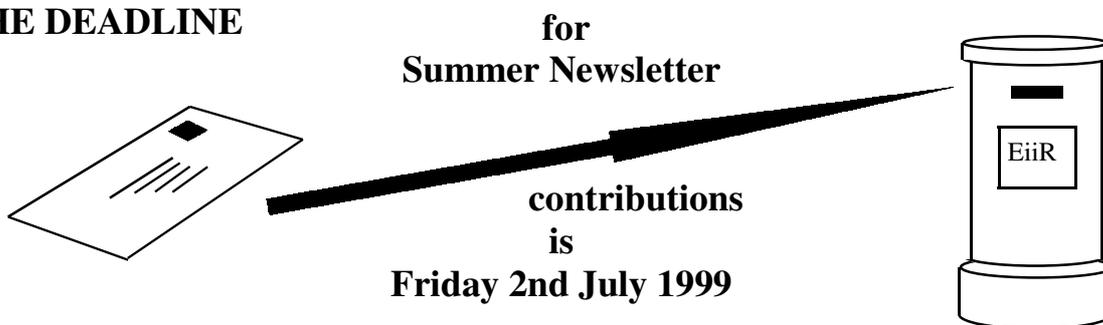
With this newsletter, members will be receiving a copy of the Provisional Atlas for butterflies recorded within the Branch area since 1995. This has been a mammoth effort on the part of the Branch and we owe a huge debt of gratitude not just to Andy Nicholls and Richard Southwell but to all those who have contributed in some way whether by inputting data, by targeting under-recorded squares or by simply sending in their records on time and on the proper recording form. The publication of a Provisional Atlas at this juncture is intended a working tool to encourage recorders to fill in any missing squares during this final season of the Millennium Atlas project. After the end of September it will be too late for any further records to be included. We are keen for the final atlas to be as comprehensive as possible, so please study the maps for each species carefully and if you can visit any under-recorded squares this summer please do so. If you intend to travel some distance we may even be able to help with

petrol expenses but please talk to Andy first. It is not just the rare or local species that we are targeting, there are a number of species like **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Small White** which should occur in every single tetrad but are not yet mapped so please, please send in your records. Despite the tremendous effort put in by many members, the Millennium Atlas can only be as good as the information received and we need a real push in 1999 to make sure the final publication is as accurate and comprehensive as possible.

West Midlands Branch to get key of the door

The West Midlands Branch was the first Butterfly Conservation branch to be formed back in 1979 and celebrates its 21st birthday next year. A number of special events and celebrations are being planned by the Branch committee and we would very much welcome suggestions from members. It would also be good to hear from our more longstanding members of their memories of the early years of the Branch for publication in the newsletter. One proposal that we have already received is for an overseas trip, possibly to the Pyrenees, and if any members are interested in this please let me know so I can start the advance planning.

THE DEADLINE



Hand-written articles will be transcribed and returned for checking. Printed documents are less prone to transcription errors and can often be scanned in. Laser printed 14 point copy usually scans perfectly, 12 point is OK but 10 point is hopeless. Text on 3.5" disc is best of all but please send unformatted text (e.g. saved as a **.txt** file under MS Word) as some formatted texts received recently have proved to be incompatible with my system. Limiting file compatibility seems to be the latest marketing ploy. Extra safe is to use a simple editor, such as Notepad (under Accessories in Windows) or Edit (MSDOS). Please label your disc with your name.

Pictures will normally be scanned in and should be black and white. (The final reprographic process for printing off the newsletter does not do justice to 'grey scale' or colour). Note that, unlike text, pictures cannot be modified by me (except for size adjustment).

Copyright: Pictures for publication must of course be free of copyright restrictions.

Spelling: I will try to correct obvious spelling mistakes unless this affects the writer's style but, in the cause of achieving a consistent format, will use the Word UK dictionary spelling where there are several options.

p Christine Chance

Health and Safety

Guidelines for health and safety during activities organised by Butterfly Conservation will be received from Head Office in due course - in the meantime we reproduce those adopted by the Devon Branch:-

"There are important responsibilities laid upon us to do what we can to ensure your safety at events organised by Butterfly Conservation. Please take a little time to read, consider and act upon the following points at any of our events:

- Wear appropriate foot wear for the conditions expected underfoot.
- Wear appropriate clothing for the conditions to be expected. Protect yourself against Cold, Heat, Sun, Rain, Wind and Thorns.
- Consider what precautions you should take to prevent being bitten or stung by insect, plants, snakes or animals.

APRIL

- 2 **April Wyre Forest Moth night.** Contact Frank Lancaster for details 01299 266168
- 24 **April Spring Meeting at Bishops Wood Environmental Centre.** at 6.30 pm (see page 3 for map and further details).

MAY

- 1 **May Trench Wood Bird ringing event.** 5.00 am .Meet in car park Sale Green Dunhampstead Road. OS Map 150 GR SO 929587
- 2 **May Grafton Wood Bluebell Walk 11.00 am.** Meet at Three Parishes Hall. Refreshments afterwards. OS Map 150 GR SO 963557 Leader John Tilt 01386 792458
- 3 **May Monkwood Bluebell and Spring Flower Walk 11.00 am.** Meet at reserve car park There will be a charge of £1 for adults and 50p for children. OS Map 150 GR SO 803603 Leader Claire Turner 01886 888504
- 7 **May Wyre Forest Moth Night.** Contact Frank Lancaster for details 01299 266168
- 8 **May Monkwood Caterpillar Crawl and Moth Night. 8.00 pm** An evening of moth trapping and identifying night-feeding butterfly and moth caterpillars. This event will go on until approx. midnight. Dress warmly , bring torch. A charge of £1.00 includes a glass of mulled wine. Wildlife Week Event. Meet at reserve entrance on Sinton Green - Monkwood Green Road OS

- Children must be adequately supervised by an adult.
- Dogs must be kept on a lead. Seek permission from the leader before bringing your dog.
- Listen carefully to instructions given by the leader at the beginning of the event.
- Beware of branches swinging back onto you after being passed by the person in front.
- Beware of carefully dug rabbit holes, dug to twist your ankle.
- Inform the leader if you intend to leave early.
- Keep up with the party.
- Carry a drink - you may be away from your car for several hours.
- Observe the country code at all times.
- Enjoy yourself.

Site specific hazards will be outlined by the leader at the start of the field trip."

Map 150 GR SO 803603 Leader Jeff Andrews 01432 870301

- 15 **May Prestbury Hill** - Gloucestershire Branch see page 28
- 22 **May Daneway Banks** - Gloucestershire Branch see page 28
- 23 **May Monkwood Beetle Drive. Photographing Butterflies and Beetles 11.00 am.** Meet in car park This will go on until approx. 4.00 pm. There will be a charge of £1 for adults and 50p for children. Bring your own lunch. OS Map 150 GR SO 803603 Leader Kevin McGee. Further details contact 01299 824860
- 29 **May Rodborough Common and Daneway Banks. 10.00 am.** Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak and others. Bring lunch. Meet at Bear Inn between Roman Camp and Houndscroft at southern end of Rodborough Common. OS Map 162 GR SO 846027 Leader Mark Farmer 01242 621008
- 29 **May Newent Woods** - Gloucestershire Branch - see page 29
- ### JUNE
- 4 **June Wyre Forest Moth night** contact Frank Lancaster for details 01299 266168
- 6 **June Wells Cottage, Norchard, Crossway Green, Stourport-on-Severn. 11.00 am** Off A449 Worcester

Kidderminster Road. Environmentally Friendly Farm Bring lunch OS Map 138 GR SO 846684 Leader Mike Southall 01299 251467

12 June Haugh Wood Moth Night 9.30 pm
Meet in car park. OS Map 149 GR 593365
Leader Jeff Andrews 01432 870301

12 June Wyre Forest, Earnwood Copse 11.00 am. Fritillaries and Grizzled Skipper. Bring lunch, cycling/walking 5 miles + OS Map 138 GR SO 745784 Leader Frank Lancaster (walkers) 01299 266168, Mike Williams (bikers) 01299 824860 A National Bike Week Event.

13 June Malverns, Bracken bash and Fritillary hunt. 10.30 am Meet at Gulleys Quarry car park (bottom of minor road running westward across Castlemorton Common). OS Map 150 GR SO 762381 Leader Digby Wood 01905 830391

26 June Prees Heath and Whixall Moss 11.00 am Silver - studded Blue. Bring lunch. No smoking on sites. Stout shoes, wellingtons for Whixall. Insect repellent for horseflies. Meet at Prees Heath A49 car park. Map 126 GR SJ 558368 Leader Peter Boardman

JULY

2 July Wyre Forest Moth Night - contact Frank Lancaster for details 01299 266168

2 – 5 July Balmoral Estate, Highlands Scotland
Mountain Ringlet and large Heath, Atlas recording. See page 4 for further information. Warm clothing - boots for rugged walking. Contact Mark Farmer for details and see enclosed booking sheet. Deadline for booking May 1st.

10 July Bircher Common 10.30 am Fritillaries. Meet at Highwood End gate at bottom of lane passing Croft Castle. Bring lunch. OS Map 138 GR SO 458658 Leader Andy Nicholls 01432 275834

10 July Trench Wood Glow worm & Moth Night 9.30 pm Meet in Trench Wood car park Sale Green Dunhampstead Road. OS Map 150 GR SO 929587

11 July Atlas Recording. Manifold Valley 1 11.00 am Meet Wetton Low off track that leads to Castern Wood. Brown Argus Nearest Rly Stn Stoke - on - Trent. Strong boots. OS Map 119 GR SK 120539 Leader Phil Hopson 01902 620189

16 July Bredon Hill Moth Night 9.30 pm. 6

From Bredon Village OS Map 150 SO 945381 take road to Kemerton (east) after 1/4 m take second left to Westmancote. Go through the village and keep straight on until road becomes a stone track. Cherry Tree Cottage on right. Park on tarmac on left hand side just before cottage. If lost phone 01684 773073. Leader Ian Duncan 01684 568415

17 July Radnor Wood 10.30 am. White Letter Hairstreak and Silver – washed Fritillary. Meet off A49 at Craven Arms on B4368 Clun Road. Park approximately 1 mile on right hand side after Clunton. OS Map 137 GR SO 321812 Leader Jean Armstrong 01588 640689

17 July Birmingham University Botanical Gardens (Winterbourne), Warwickshire
Branch see page 29

17 July Lower Woods and Wetmoor,
Gloucestershire Branch see page 29

18 July Coach Trip Blackmore Copse,
Purple Emperor, Wiltshire Summer Specialities. Bus pick up Worcester Coach Station 7.30 am, Bromsgrove Bus Station 8.00 am. Bring lunch. Contact Jan Smith 0121 430 3945 (use enclosed booking form). Closing date for this trip is July 3rd. Leader Mark Farmer 01242 621008

24 July Haugh Wood Moth Night 9.30 pm.
Meet in car park. OS Map 149 GR 593365
Leader Jeff Andrews 01432 870301

25 July Atlas Recording - Wye Valley walk, Chase Wood and Penyard Park. 10.30 am
Meet Ross on Wye car park. Bring lunch, stout shoes 5 mile + walk. OS Map 162 GR SO 593239 Leader Andy Nicholls 01432 275834

28 July Trench Wood 2.30 pm White Admiral and White letter Hairstreak. Meet at Trench Wood car park Sale Green Dunhampstead Road. OS Map 150 GR SO 929587 Leader Ken Thomas 01905 381394

AUGUST

August Monkwood Butterfly and Dragonfly day. There will be two guided walks one at 11.00 am and one at 2.00 pm. These will both start from Monkwood car park. A charge of £1.00 for adults and 50p for children will be made. Leader Mike Averill

August Wyre Forest Moth Night contact

Frank Lancaster for details 01299 266168

Frank Lancaster for details 01299 266168

7 August Brown Hairstreak Conservation Day. 10.00 am Meet Three Parishes Village Hall – old clothes, gloves. Stay as long as you like. OS Map 150 GR SO 978553 leader Mike Williams 01299 824860

7 August Ravenshill Reserve Moth Night 9.30 pm. Meet in reserve car park OS Map 150 GR SO 539739. Details contact Ian Duncan 01684 568415

14 August Coach Trip Goring Gap and Kidlington Hill. Downland specialities Adonis Blue, Silver spotted Skipper. Bring lunch - stout shoes. Bus pick up Worcester Coach Station 8.30 am and Bromsgrove Bus Station 9.00 am Details from Jan Smith (use booking form enclosed). Closing date for this trip July 31st

14 August Stinchcombe Hill - Gloucestershire Branch see below

22 August Eudon Mill, Eudon George. 2.30 pm Garden open day - guided walk. . Take B4364 Ludlow Road from the A458. After 2 miles (Down Inn) turn left for Middleton Scrivens & Eudon George. After 1/2 m, (past cottages) turn left along farm track (sign board in hedge) park in courtyard. OS 138 Map GR SO 689897

29 August Grafton Wood 11.00 am Brown Hairstreak and Purple Hairstreak. Meet Three Parishes Hall car park off A422 Worcester to Stratford Road. Bring lunch. OS Map 150 GR SO 963557

SEPTEMBER

3 September Wyre Forest Moth Night contact Frank Lancaster for details 01299 266168

3 – 5 September International Symposium, Oxford. Details see Butterfly Conservation News.

19 September Monkwood, Fungal Foray and Feast. 10.30 am. Meet in reserve car park. This will go on until about 2.00 pm. Leaders Diane and Tim Bateman who will also cook our finds afterwards – just the edible ones! Charge of £2.00 per person. Booking is essential and should be made with HQ at Smite by Thursday September 16th.

OCTOBER

1 October Wyre Forest Moth Night contact

Gloucestershire and Warwickshire have asked us to publicise the following field trips:

Gloucester Branch

15 May, Prestbury Hill – Bill Smyllie and Masts reserves 11.00 am. A look for early species such as Green Hairstreak, Dinky and Grizzled Skippers. Meet on the minor road to Cleeve Common by the main gate to the reserve (OS map 163 GR. S0 993245). Leader Andrew Daw (Daytime phone 01454-207800)

22 May, Daneway Banks and Siccaridge Wood 11.00am. Duke of Burgundy and Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Bring a picnic lunch and meet at lay-by near bridge at bottom of hill (OS Map 163 GR S0 939034). **Please do not park in Daneway Inn car park.** Leader Christine Tracey (01285-760621)

29 May, Newent Woods 2.00pm. Wood White. Meet outside the village hall at Clifford' s Mesne (OS Map 162. GR SO 699232) Leader Simon Barker (01531-821057)

17 July Lower Woods and Wetmoor, 2.00 p.m. White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary. Meet at Lower Woods Lodge (OS Map 172 GR ST 746881), access up gravel track opposite Inglestone Farm to Gloucester Wildlife Trust' s 700 acre woodland reserve. Leader Chris Bolton (01454-294500)

14 August Stinchcombe Hill 2.00 pm . for Chalkhill Blue and possibly even Essex Skipper! Meet in the public car park on the hill (OS Map 162 GR ST 744984) Leader Chris Wiltshire (01453-545509)

Warwickshire Branch

17 July 2.00 pm University of Birmingham Botanical Gardens and SSSI. (Winterbourne) Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham. Meet with Warwickshire Branch in the car park. Details Sarah Wager (0121 354 5822)