



No. 47

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2000

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Contents

Chairman's notes.....	cover
West Midlands Branch AGM.....	3
Advance notice: National members' day and AGM	3
Advance notice: West Midlands Branch Spring Meeting	4
Appeals to everybody.....	4
Reports on trips	5-13
Guide to moth identification: Silver-Y.....	13
Conservation in the wider countryside.....	13
Two firsts for Staffordshire	14
Surprises in Slovenia.....	14
New members	15
Instructions for contributors	16
Letters.....	16
Conservation Corner	17
Health and safety.....	20
Dates for your diary	20

Chairman's notes

Committee Changes

As you all know, Mike Williams has decided to stand down as Branch Conservation Officer after 20+ years. He feels, understandably that it is time for someone else to take over the post. We paid tribute to Mike's achievements in the last newsletter and at the AGM, however I would like to thank him very much again for the tremendous effort he has put in on behalf of Butterfly Conservation. I am glad to say that Mike will be continuing on the committee where we can still take advantage of his knowledge and skills.

We are conscious that the West Midlands Branch covers a large area and we are keen to

devolve more of the activities down to a county level. Last year we appointed county coordinators and we have decided to structure the conservation function on the same basis. I am delighted to say that Jenny Joy has agreed to take on the overall conservation coordination role and in particular to be responsible for Shropshire. In addition, I am very pleased to say that Trevor Bucknall has agreed to take on Worcestershire, Dave Jackson Staffordshire and Andy Nicholls Herefordshire.

Anchor Meadow

Well done Dave Jackson, Peter Newell and all the members who assisted in the Anchor Meadow planning debate in Walsall. Thanks to

the representations of Dave and Branch members, the developers altered their plans to allow two thirds of the **Dingy Skipper** site to remain undisturbed. This clearly demonstrates the impact local members can have on local planning issues. Please do remain vigilant and lobby local authorities if you become aware of developments threatening important wildlife sites.

New Hawne Colliery

Another member working very hard to influence planners is Dave White (see previous Branch newsletter). He is rallying support in Dudley for a change to the development plans for the site at New Hawne Colliery. As this is a site where Dave walks a weekly butterfly transect he has very good data to present to the authorities concerning the conservation value of the site. Keep up the good work Dave.

BBC Countryfile Programme

Thanks to the efforts of Richard Southwell the BBC Countryfile programme featured the butterflies of the Wyre Forest in June. Local member Frank Lancaster starred in the programme which provided some excellent publicity for the society and highlighted the close co-operation between Butterfly Conservation, Forest Enterprise and British Aerospace.

Gift Aid

Enclosed with this newsletter, you will find a form which allows you to pay your membership subscription through Gift Aid. I would urge you to complete and return this form to Head Office. It will allow the society to reclaim £6 in income tax for every subscription at **no extra cost** to members.

Transect Software

This has taken longer than expected to produce but I expect to receive the CDs with the software, very shortly. The software runs under Windows, is user friendly and, I am sure,

will be of great assistance to transect walkers. If you are a transect walker and would like to receive a copy on CD or floppy please can you let me know.

I am trying to organise a training session (maximum 2 hours) on the use of the software. November 18 and 25 are possible dates at a venue in the Worcester area. Again, please let me know if you would like to attend.

Old Records

With the Millennium Butterfly Atlas due to be published next Spring we are keen to compare the 1996-2000 records with historical data for the West Midlands area. If you have any old records, especially pre 1970, please can you send them to me.

Field Trip Organiser

For the past two years Mark Farmer has been our field trip organiser. In that time we have had some memorable trips and recorded over 50 of the species on the British list – not bad in 2 years. Mark has now decided to stand down and as a result we are seeking a new organiser. It is an interesting job and allows you to arrange trips to see the butterflies you would like to see! If anyone is interested please give me a call. I would like to thank Mark very much for organising so many great trips – we will miss his drive and enthusiasm

Branch AGM

I do hope you will be able to attend the AGM on November 4 in Shropshire (see details elsewhere in newsletter). Jenny Joy's talk on the Butterflies and Moths of Shropshire should not be missed.

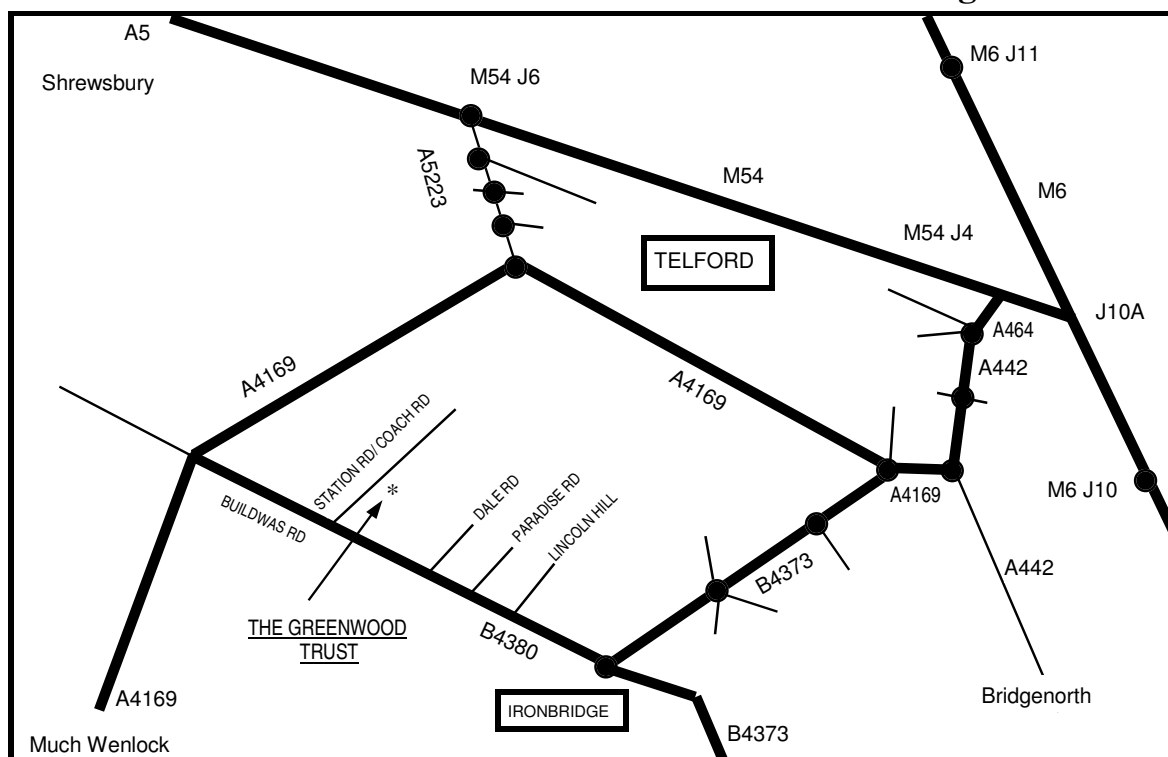
Looking forward to seeing you then.

v Ian Duncan

**The deadline for articles for the Spring Newsletter is
Monday 5 February 2001**

Coming Events

West Midlands Branch Annual General Meeting



The Branch AGM will be in Shropshire on Saturday 4th November at 2.00 pm at Woodland College, Greenwood Trust, Ironbridge. The guest speaker will be Jenny Joy, who lives in Shropshire, and will talk on

the Butterflies and Moths of Shropshire. The Greenwood Trust is about 1 mile west of the centre of Ironbridge, just off the B4380 Buildwas Rd. in Station Rd. See map above.

Advance notice – National Members Day and AGM

National Members Day and AGM will be held on Saturday 24 February 2001 at the Great Hall, Exeter University in Devon. There are three confirmed speakers; Dr. Jeremy Thomas – the renowned Large Blue expert, Dr. Jim Asher who has pioneered the Millennium Atlas for butterflies, and Martin Warren, National Conservation Officer, who has an in depth knowledge of Devon's rare fritillaries.

The AGM will take place between 10 am - 5 pm. During this time there will be a wide variety of stalls including booksellers and representatives of wildlife societies.

The Devon Branch of Butterfly Conservation is planning that the AGM will be part of a more major event. Following the AGM, and also at The Great Hall, Exeter University, we are holding a Wildlife Barn Dance from 8 pm to 11.30 pm. A lively band has been booked,

a bar is available and the price of the ticket, at £12.50, includes a varied buffet catering for all tastes. The following day, Sunday 25 February, we are planning a boat cruise of the Exe estuary at approximately 10.30 am. to view Avocets, other waders and wildfowl. Tickets for this will be £5 for the guided 2 1/2 hour trip. A bar and refreshment will be available on the boat which has an enclosed and heated area.

If you are interested in any of the ticketed events could you please contact Mr. Ken Tyson on 01363 – 772261 or at 19 Oakfield Rd, Crediton, EX17 2DL.

Further literature concerning the events will be distributed in January but the Devon Branch would appreciate knowing numbers of people who are interested well in advance.

Advance Notice – West Midlands Branch Spring meeting

The venue for the 2001 Spring meeting is the RSPB reserve at Sandwell Valley, starting at **2.00pm on Saturday 31 March 2001**. For those who would like to take in a spot of bird watching at Sandwell Valley before the meeting, the following birds may be seen in

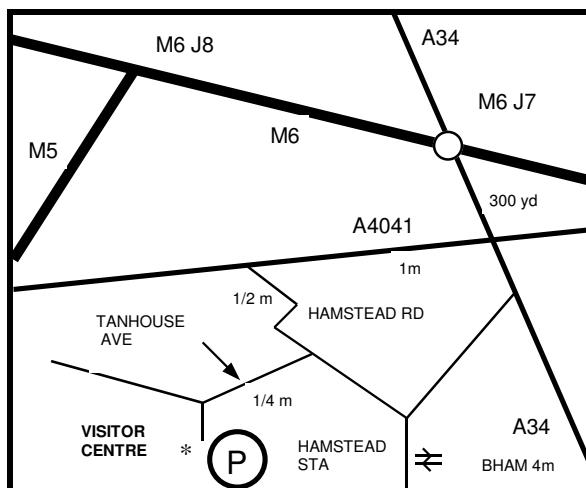
March:

Pochard, Tufted Duck, Widgeon, Shoveler, Goosander, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Snipe, Green and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Moorhen and Coot. More details in the next Newsletter.

How to get there

By car: Leave the M6 at junction 7, travelling south along the A34 towards Birmingham. Turn right at the traffic lights (Scott Arms P.H.) onto the A4041 (Newton Rd.), travelling west. After 1 mile, turn left onto Hamstead Rd.(B4167). After a further 1/2 mile, turn right into Tanhouse Avenue and follow RSPB sign to turn left to the Visitor Centre and car park.

By public transport: Hamstead railway station is on Hamstead Rd. about 1 mile from the Visitor Centre. A number 16 bus (not 16A) runs from Birmingham city centre, past Hamstead railway station and along Hamstead Rd. past the end of Tanhouse avenue. The entry to the reserve is opposite no. 23 Tanhouse Avenue.



Sandwell Valley Nature Centre GR SP935028

Appeals to everybody

From the Branch Recorder

Hopefully, everybody is preparing their butterfly records for the year 2000, ready to send to me, preferably by early December. I have received quite a few already. Having seen some of the previews of the Millennium Atlas, out next Spring, I can only say that your data is more useful and impressive than I could possibly have imagined. Please keep it coming next year.

v Jim Chance

A Work Party Appeal

This appeal goes out to every one, please come and support us on our work days; all are welcome especially new members. The work is as taxing as you want to make it, and lasts as long as you wish. You are welcome to attend at any of our venues or dates.

The work is enormously rewarding, be it coppicing, ride widening, or scrub clearing. Tools and gloves are provided, and some of our reserve wardens even serve hot baked potatoes for lunch! Apart from the health benefits of physical work, and fresh air, a great

sense of satisfaction can be attained when you return a year or two later, when suddenly you realise that what was a dark overgrown area of woodland is now sunny, full of flowers, and teeming with insects and you made it happen!!

It's also a great way to meet like minded people, and make new friends.

v Trevor Bucknall

Video footage wanted

The Peak District National Park's Millennium Awards scheme have very kindly given me funding to put together teaching aids for local primary and secondary schools in the Staffordshire Moorlands to encourage butterfly conservation. For the secondary school resource package I would love to include a video showing 10 British butterflies. This is to teach observation and identification skills. However I have no footage! I need about 30 seconds of footage for each butterfly. As long as it is a British butterfly it doesn't matter which species. I can edit from full size VHS tapes but 8mm video tapes on which the original footage is shot, would be ideal. Can you help me out?

All tapes would be returned and postage costs reimbursed.
Jan Hale, 10 Park Avenue,
Cheadle, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs. ST10 1LZ
Tel: 01538 753159
e-mail: audrey.hale@breathemail.net

Attention all writers

Now that we are "out of season" why not put down your butterfly net and pick up a pen? We need people to write to the Newsletter about experiences (the butterfly that got away!), suggestions (topics for meetings, new sites for field trips or day coach outings), or articles on any aspect of conservation, butterflies, moths etc.

Thank you to all the people who have contributed to this issue.

v Christine Chance

Thanks to field trip leaders

Thanks are due to all those who volunteer to lead the field trips. Without their enthusiasm and commitment such a varied programme would not be possible.

v Mark Farmer

Reports on trips

Prees Heath and Whixall Moss 25 June unexpected Jewels

The average motorist driving along the A49 would not be blamed for passing off Prees Heath as a bit of waste ground. However, we discovered this is far from the truth. A group of around 20 people congregated, coming from places as far afield as Sheffield, Nottingham, Droitwich Spa and Stratford-upon Avon. The sun was shining and spirits livened as we realised what a gem this 'piece of waste ground' is. We soon found the reason for so much interest on the part of our Branch of Butterfly Conservation: the **Silver-Studded Blue**. Other lepidoptera included: **Small Heath, Large White, Large Skipper, Common Blue, Meadow Brown, Burnet Companion, Cinnabar, Silver Y**. A **Burnet Moth** caterpillar also had many onlookers. The plant life was also abundant, including Mouse-ear Hawkweed, Perforate St. John's Wort, Hare-foot Clover, Bugle, Hairy Tare and Common Catsear.

Prees Heath is a real jewel of a site that must be passed by thousands of people unaware of its existence. It is well worth a visit.

Unfortunately by 2 p.m., our allotted visiting time to Whixall Moss, the sun had gone in. Our target species for this site was the **Large Heath** butterfly, but we were only granted an unconfirmed fly-past. No sight either of the very rare Great Raft Spider (you need to know exactly where to look for this). However, all was not lost! The highlights of this visit were

perhaps the Round-leaved Sundew, Stonechats, a Hobby, 4-Spotted Chaser dragonflies as well as the nesting Curlews heartily trying to distract our attention from their young as we came in sight of them. The only other butterfly was the **Large Skipper**.

Again this site, complete with an interesting working history, is well worth a visit. Make sure you take a map and a compass though! Also, you do need a permit from English Nature. The spectacle of this site is wonderful, but the sheer vastness can be a little daunting.

v Corinna and Neil Gregory

Castern Wood – 1 June

Just four of us braved the inhospitable weather thinking we were on a fools errand. Not so! At the agreed meeting time, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust members, Val Riley and John Stanley decided to take David Jackson and myself to a nearby site in search of floral delights – as the light drizzle did not bode well for butterflies. We climbed the steps leading up to Thors cave at Wetton – in the Manifold Valley and whereupon Val showed us two plant rarities – Nottingham Catchfly and Jacob's Ladder. The wet conditions prevailed but Val's botanical expertise was addictive and we compiled a list of the flora for the vicinity including Rockrose, Cowslip and Wild Thyme. John Stanney found a solitary **Meadow Brown** (our only butterfly at this site) hidden amongst the wet grasses.

Undaunted by the persistent light rain and overcast conditions, we decided, afterwards, to try our luck at Castern Wood. Five species were found on site, nearly all singletons, except for good numbers of **Meadow Brown** –however we did succeed in locating the target species, with four very fresh **Northern Brown Argus** being seen and photographed. The site is also known for its **Chimney Sweep** moths – seen in double figures.

Thanks are due to Val and John for making the day botanically very rewarding – the **Northern Brown Argus** was simply a bonus.

v Philip Hopson

Bircher Common 15 July - The Last High Brown Fritillary

After days of cloud and rain, 15 July dawned bright and sunny without a cloud in the sky. This was the day when Andy Nicholls was going to lead a walk on Bircher Common to look for fritillaries, **High-browns** in particular. Unfortunately he had to work in the morning and asked Guenter and myself if we could help out. As the weather had been so poor during the week we did not expect many people to turn up, but when we arrived at the common there were about 20 people there, including 10 from the Suffolk Branch, Butterfly Conservation, who were staying at Ludlow for a few days.

We set off without much hope as this year we had seen only one **High Brown Fritillary** nectaring on thistles, which I managed to net and mark with a felt tipped pen. Our companions were very impressed with the lovely views from Bircher Common, but although we saw **Tortoiseshells**, **Ringlets**, **Meadow Browns** and **Gatekeepers**, no Fritillaries were found. We returned to the car park after one and a half hours and, in lovely weather, enjoyed as picnic lunch.

Andy arrived at 12.30 and led them on another walk further up the Common to look for any other colonies of **High Browns**. Unfortunately their only find was a **Painted Lady** and so they returned to a patch of thistles where Guenter and I had seen a **High Brown** five days earlier. After waiting and searching for some time one of the group

spotted a Fritillary which turned out to be a **High Brown Fritillary**. Everyone eagerly gathered round it with cameras at the ready. One man even had time to go back to the car park for his camera and the **High Brown** obligingly waited for his return. This was a very satisfactory end to a lovely day on Bircher Common: but does someone in Suffolk have a photograph of a High Brown with a blue ink spot on its left hind wing?

v Beryl Petters

Coach Trip to Porton Down – 5 August

Brenda and I were delighted to be with old friends for the coach trip to Porton. On arrival at Worcester we were reminded by Digby Wood of the previous visit which must have been at least twelve years ago when my then 82 years old Father returned with a happy smile having seen so very many butterflies but complaining that it had been rather a long day! Our visit in 2000 was completely consistent with this approach in that the decision was made to see everything possible by extending our travels to Bentley Wood.

Some 17 members were present. It was regrettable that the event was not better supported but it was impossible to accept last minute bookings because of the security aspects.

On arrival, we were received very kindly indeed by our guides for the day, Kevin, Philippa and Elsa, all of whom were obvious enthusiasts. The visit began with a visit to the Porton Museum which contains a wide ranging display of which the butterflies form just one component. There is much else for the bird watcher, botanist or archaeologist to mention but three.

Our visit was divided into visits to two main areas. These two sessions being separated by lunch. That is with the exception of Terry Smith whose enthusiasm kept him going throughout the lunch break.

It was interesting to discover just how very localised some species were within the site. This despite the incredible number of butterflies present overall. The dominant species was, I suppose, the **Meadow Brown** but

Species known at Porton	Seen 5 Aug
Gatekeeper	X
Speckled Wood	X
Wall Brown	
Grayling	
Meadow Brown	X
Small Heath	X
Ringlet	X
Dark Green Fritillary	X
Silver-washed Fritillary	
High Brown Fritillary	
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	
Small pearl-bordered Fritillary	
Marsh Fritillary	
Red Admiral	X
Painted Lady	
Small Tortoiseshell	X
Peacock	X
Comma	X
White Admiral	
Duke of Burgundy Fritillary	
Holly Blue	
Small Blue	X
Brown Argus	X
Common Blue	X
Chalkhill Blue	X
Adonis Blue	
Small Copper	X
Green Hairstreak	
Purple Hairstreak	
Brown Hairstreak	
White Letter Hairstreak	
Large White	X
Small White	X
Green Veined White	X
Orange Tip	
Brimstone	X
Clouded Yellow	X
Marbled White	X
Dingy Skipper	
Grizzled Skipper	
Small Skipper	X
Essex Skipper	
Large Skipper	
Silver-spotted Skipper	X

there were also considerable numbers of **Six Spot Burnets** as many as six together on flower heads. In the morning we were delighted by good sightings of numbers of **Silver Spotted Skippers** and I personally cannot remember ever having seen so many **Brimstones** both male and female. There were also numbers of **Dark Green Fritillaries** but these were, sadly, coming to an end.

In the afternoon, at the second site, we saw considerable numbers of male **Chalkhill Blues** in search of almost absent female members. One solitary **Clouded Yellow** flew overhead and in one corner were numbers of **Small Blues**, a pleasing sight.

Then on to Bentley Wood. Obviously in the hope of a **Purple Emperors** ! We were not surprised when these failed to materialise. But amongst others we had good sightings of **Silver-washed Fritillary** and an excellent sighting of a solitary **White Admiral** gliding gracefully amongst the trees while from time to time **Purple Hairstreaks** were visible amongst the tree tops.

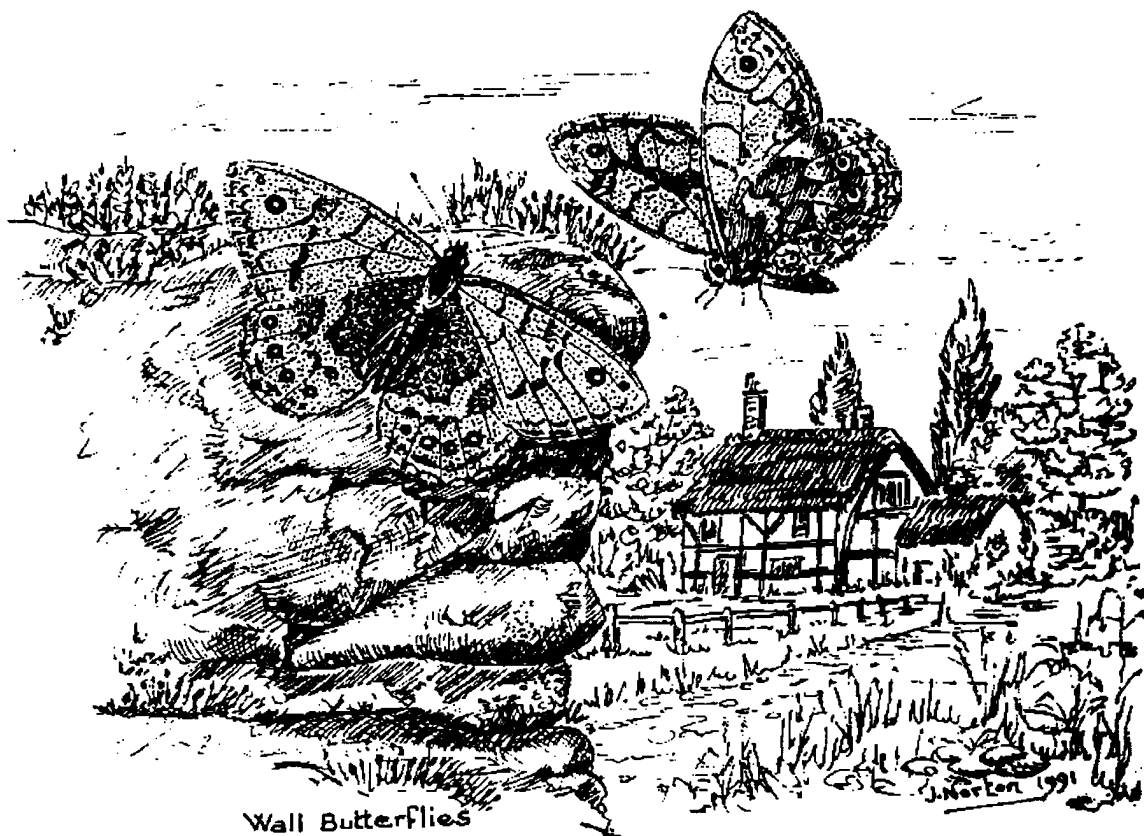
All in all a memorable sunny day and our best thanks to Mark Farmer for organising the trip, our coach driver for guiding us safely throughout the lanes and to our guides at Porton, Kevin, Phillipa and Elsa.

v Roger Bell

The Bog, Shropshire 13 August

In spite of the dull, overcast conditions, a very creditable group of 15 turned up to search for the target species of **Grayling** and **Wall Brown**. Sadly, due to a complete lack of sunshine, no **Wall Brown** was seen, but the **Grayling** really excelled itself. About 30 were seen in the car park and immediate surroundings – more than I have ever recorded on previous visits to the site. In my experience, the **Grayling** has the engaging habit of landing on the observer and those at The Bog ran true to form, to the delight of the group. Many of the party had the butterfly land on their clothing, umbrellas, walking sticks and even cameras! Among other species seen were good quantities of **Small Heaths** (a species very variable in size) and a few **Small Coppers**.

I then took the group a few kilometres north to Smailbeach, the site of an old mining complex, now restored. In the small car park we were



Wall Butterflies

immediately greeted by a **Painted Lady** in immaculate condition nectaring on a Knapweed.

In addition to the mining complex, Smailbeach also possess a considerable amount of Oak woodland, and one eagle eyed member of the party located a **Purple Hairstreak** flitting round the top of one of the smaller trees. Eventually we were rewarded by the sight of at least three of these difficult to observe butterflies. A good example of the blue-spotted aberration of **Small Copper** (*ab. caeruleopunctata*) was

found and gave excellent close up views to all the group. Other species seen included the (not so) **Common Blue**, **Comma**, **Peacock** and **Speckled Wood**. Although **Wall Brown** was missed, an excellent total of 16 species was recorded, and conditions remained dry until the end of the visit, when the heavens opened up.

v Bill Davidson

Barton's Cottage Open day

On Sunday 20th August, Ron and Jean Hunt again opened their large and wildlife-friendly garden to Butterfly Conservation members for the dual purposes of enjoyment and fund-raising. We were determined to go this year for the first time in spite of the uncertain afternoon weather forecast and Christine's dislike of motor cars. So we arrived before the crowd, by no. 292 bus (amazingly going from

Harborne, Birmingham to Far Forest) and by car.

Within a few minutes, we had spotted an obviously superb butterfly site, in effect a small field with a wild meadow at the centre and with Buddleia bushes all around the periphery. The Buddleias were teeming with **Peacocks** and **Large Whites** and we also quickly spotted **Painted Lady**, **Red Admiral**, **Tortoiseshell**, **Meadow Brown**, **Gatekeeper** and **Small Copper**. It was just like the 'good old

days' when one was a child – I am sure that you remember. Christine's usual eagle eye drew my attention to a very impressive large yellow butterfly on the Buddleias. It was a **Clouded Yellow**: one could clearly see the red-circled silver spot on the under-wing. Neither of us had seen one at such close quarters before and we kept quiet about the sighting in case we had made a mistake! In fact, later in the afternoon, the **Clouded Yellow** reappeared for everybody's benefit. About 40 visitors came to Barton's Cottage that day and wandered around the garden together with **Speckled Wood**, **Common Blue** and, rather special, a **Silver-Washed Fritillary**.

The results from the moth trap were very disappointing, no doubt due to the previous night being rather chilly. Those seen were,

Considered Common in Worcestershire: **Flame Shoulder**, **Large Yellow Underwing**, **Common Rustic**, **Small Square Spot**, **Shuttle-shaped Dart**, **Flounced Rustic**, **Silver Y**,



Agriphila tristella, *Agriphila straminella*, **Rush Veneer**, **Square-spot Rustic**.

Considered Local: **6-striped Rustic**.

Ron and Jean provided tremendous hospitality, which went far beyond the buffet lunch. £60.50 appeared in the collecting box for the benefit of Butterfly Conservation.

Postscript: The next day, an excited man (not a BC member) rang me from Wolverhampton, having seen a yellow butterfly in his garden. Being by now an expert in such matters, hrmph, I was happy to confirm that this was indeed a **Clouded Yellow**. Yes – a good time was indeed had by all. Others later rang me to report seeing

Clouded Yellows in urban areas; it seems to have been a spectacular year for them.

v Jim Chance

Stock Green field trip - 27 August

Thirty-three attendees, including an intrepid visitor from Sheffield, met under the gargoyles of the parish church at Grafton, on a cool showery day with only brief sunny periods.

Neil Gregory and Mike Williams had set moth traps at Grafton Wood the previous evening and on arrival at the meeting point, the assembled crowd were able to see some of the night's quarry that had been "bottled up" ready for our edification. Neil passed on his enthusiasm, in particular for the **Red Underwing**, one of Britain's largest moths, **Black Arches** and **Purple Bar**. A list of all trapped species follows this report.

Bob and Ann Steele generously showed us

around the wood that Bob manages, with Bob explaining the management practices involved in the hazel cash crop, that includes the culling of Sika deer – vital to the protection of the hazel. There is a system of rides throughout the wood, and small groups were allocated potential "hotspots", and, a "first" for the Branch, hi tech communication between groups, was to be established by using mobile phones! The system worked well; when one tentative identification was made all other persons descended to the "hotspot" involved. The three guys who initially thought they'd only found a **Speckled Wood**, decided to retire to the pub when it was confirmed that they'd actually found a **Brown Hairstreak**! This was to be a solitary **Brown Hairstreak** sighting, a very fresh specimen that decided to alight atop a hazel tree. David Jackson was dispatched to

fetch his telescope from his car. While we waited for David, Mike Williams and John Tilt gingerly bent (or should that be tilted) over the obliging hazel to enable the army of photographers to record the event. Possibly to Mike's chagrin; Mike had to hold the hazel down, whilst keeping himself out of range for the purists who didn't perhaps want to record a "manipulated" photo. Upon David's return, a close up view was available to all – even when the same specimen moved to a nearby oak tree.

Bob and Ann then showed us other parts of the wood, where clearings have been made and a pool created and it was pleasing to be share Bob's knowledge, commitment and practical involvement in management of the wood that is beneficial to wildlife in general.

Our grateful thanks to Bob and Ann Steele, John Tilt and Mike Williams.

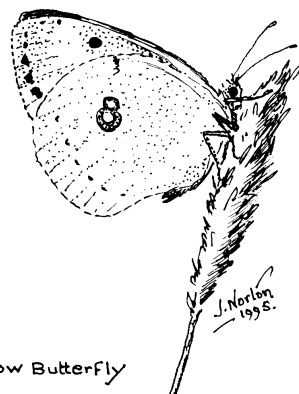
Ten species of butterfly were seen, including singleton **Brimstone** and **Purple Hairstreak** together with two **Clouded Yellows**. Other delights were, one **Brown Hairstreak** egg, two magnificent **Elephant Hawk-moth** caterpillars on Willowherb, a **Rush Veneer** moth and a small stand of Naked Ladies (aka Autumn Crocus!).

Moth Trap Species: **Copper Underwing, Green Carpet, Silver-Y, Angle Shades, Red Underwing, Dusky Thorn, Lesser Broad Bordered Yellow Underwing, Black Arches, Feathered Gothic, Dunbar, Lesser Swallow Prominent, Centre Barred Sallow, Purple Bar, Smoky Wainscot, Pale Eggar.**

v Philip Hopson

National Moth Night – 23 September

On a cold mothless night in the Wyre Forest



Clouded Yellow Butterfly

plans were afoot to publicise the forthcoming National Moth Night. A press release to the local newspapers and BBC Hereford and Worcester resulted in a live radio interview on the day of the event. This plan proved fruitful and 13 people turned up at the allotted time at the Wyre Forest Visitors Centre. They were then guided to Lodge Hill in the middle of Wyre at the English Nature centre where the group was augmented by 7 others including the regular moth-ers.

The scene for 23rd September was set with 5 Mercury Vapour light traps; 2 of which were powered by our generator supplied by English Nature. The evening started off with a look at the moths caught in Rosemary Winnall's trap the previous night; a good selection including: **Black Rustic, Barred Sallow, Dark Sword Grass, Autumnal Rustic, Deep-brown Dart, Brindled Green, Brown-spot Pinion** and **Pearly Underwing** to name a few.

After a brief Health and Safety talk along with an introduction to our group, we went for our first look around the traps. The traps were positively buzzing when we got to them, but mostly with insects other than moths. There were many little flies of unknown variety, two hornets, various shield-bugs and a 14 spot ladybird amongst the visitors.

A break was then had by all of mulled wine, biscuits and home-made cake. The wine was a welcome addition to our usual crisps and warming mugs of tea and enlivened spirits! Throughout the evening we had three visits to the traps. We were careful to note the numbers of each species present at each trap so that accurate information could be passed back to Atropos, the night's national organisers. 25 species of macro and 15 species of micro moth were recorded. However, Mike won the booby-prize of washing up at midnight for the fewest specimens in his trap!

There were various "autumnal" moths now appearing, including: **Beaded Chestnut, Black Rustic, Brown-spot Pinion, Canary-shouldered Thorn, Dark Sword Grass, Satellite, The Turnip** and **Flounced Chestnut**. The latter's name led to a discussion about the Victorian etymology of entomology. **Red-green carpet** was the most numerous of the night with 25 caught in our traps as well as by the numerous low-flying Pipistrelles and Noctules. The micro-moths included **Gold Fringe, Many-plumed,**

Ypsolopha costiastrigalis, *Plutella zylostella*, *Epinotia ramella*, *Epiphyas postvittana* and *Eudonia mercurella*. (A full list is available from us).

Overall the night was very successful and attracted people who had never studied moths before. The same event will be held next year and hopefully with an entry for the most unusual location for a trap (all suggestions welcome in advance!).

v Corinna and Neil Gregory

Trip to Picos Mountains & Pyrenees

As most of you will know, a special trip was organised by Mike Williams to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the West Midlands Branch. The destination was of course Spain and France staying at two sites in Spain and one in France.

On 21 June 2000, ten of us met near Stourport and duly collected our minibus for our drive to Plymouth for the 24 hour crossing to Santander.

On arrival, we safely negotiated the traffic and set out towards the Picos mountains, a drive of some three hours, planning to make frequent stops along the way, the first being the picturesque town of Santillana del Mar. During a short walk, we found a buddleia where we saw our first insects: **Humming-bird Hawk-moths** and **Peacocks**. On return to the minibus, we also saw **Speckled Wood** where the yellow markings are replaced with orange.

At another stop beside a small lake, **Long-tailed Blue** was seen and we drove through a long, spectacular gorge, briefly stopping to watch Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, also a **Lulworth Skipper**. We eventually arrived at a small hamlet and our first guesthouse "Casa Gustavo", a 500 year old farmhouse at the top of a very narrow and winding lane. Our accommodation had been recommended to Mike and, after settling in, several of us went for a walk up the lane to the next village, finding a roosting **Heath Fritillary** on the way.

The next morning, after breakfast, we decided, as the day was quite dull but relatively warm, to take a drive to Tudes and complete a short circular walk, starting along the hillside then broadening out to an area of meadow, not all of which had been mowed.

The list of butterflies seen included: **Scarce Swallowtail**, **Black-veined White**, **Berger's Clouded Yellow**, **Purple** and **Ilex Hairstreaks**, **Weavers** and **Spotted Fritillaries**, **Great Banded Graylings** and **Pearly Heath**.

After returning to "Casa Gustavo" the sun came out and **Blue Spot** and **False Ilex Hairstreaks**, **Cleopatra**, and **Bath White** appeared.

At this point of the holiday, Mike thought it would be a good idea to have a moth trap which he duly set up. Before breakfast the next day, we gathered round the trap and spent about an hour looking at and detailing the different species. After breakfast, we set out for a destination higher up the mountains with spectacular scenery, eventually coming to the summit which was covered in cloud. This road I believe is closed between October and April every year because of adverse weather conditions. After a short halt at the top, where **Lefebvres Ringlet** was seen, we decided to drop down to a site by a small river recommended by Lisa Farino. This was quite superb as the sun was out and several new species were observed, i.e. **Swallowtail**, **Apollo**, **Purple Edged Copper**, **Langs Short-tailed** and **Mazarine Blue**, **Heath**, **Provencal**, **Pearl-bordered**, **Small Pearl-bordered**, and **Queen of Spain Fritillaries**. On returning to the summit, now in sunshine, **Red Underwing** and **Olive Skippers**.

Our last day in the Picos was fine and sunny so we decided to have a cable car trip to the top of Fuente De, a mountain of approx. 6000 feet. The butterflies at the top were not plentiful but the views were wonderful. After having our picnic near the summit and feeding a flock of Alpine Choughs, we walked around the higher slopes finally finding **Gavarnie Blue** which only occurs in a few mountainous areas of Europe. After descending the mountain (in the cable car I hasten to add) and stopping for a welcome drink at a local inn we went for a short walk coming across another new species **Large Wall Brown**.

The next day, we left the Picos and travelled across Spain into France finally arriving in the French Pyrenees, a small village called Miglos about 3000 feet in the mountains. Our accommodation was a gite, a converted 200 year old house. Here we met Graham Hart, a butterfly expert living and working in the area as a vet. He was to be our guide during our

three days stay.

On our first day, we were taken to one of the highest local peaks where we again recorded new species, i.e. **De Brunners, Common Brassy** and **Small Mountain Ringlet, Meadow** and **Shepherds Fritillary** and **Mountain Clouded Yellow**. After a couple of hours, we moved to a totally different habitat, wooded with clearings by a small stream and a bog where we found **Violet, Scarce, Copper, Geranium Argus, Amanda' s Blue, Lesser Marbled, Bog, False Heath,** and **Marsh Fritillaries, also Bright Eyed Ringlet, Chestnut Heath** and **Chequered Skipper** - a truly prolific site.

We found the French Pyrenees very lush and peaceful. Although all 10 of us were within a few yards of each other, each person was lost in their own thoughts and wonder. Occasionally one would see Robert Williams (Mike' s son) dash past with his net - you had to be agile at times; Pat and Frank Lancaster were studying plants and flowers; Mike Taylor was setting up his telescope for bird watching (over the whole holiday Mike recorded almost as many birds as we did butterflies); Terry Higgins was busy keeping records of species seen on every site; John Reeve regularly disappeared into the undergrowth trying to find that elusive rare butterfly, insect etc. (We had a special call to locate his whereabouts before moving to another site); Brian Kesby and myself spent most of the time on our knees trying to get pictures and last but not least my wife Doreen, observing us all and enjoying the wonderful views. On our return journey to Miglos, a further stop saw **Apollo** and **Moroccan Orange-tip**. After an enjoyable meal and wine, Graham treated us to a slide show of many of the local species of butterflies.

That evening Mike Williams set up our second moth trap which again proved very successful. Species included **Privet, Elephant** and **Small Elephant Hawk-moths, Buff Arches, Swallow-tailed, White Ermine, Large Emerald** and **Puss Moth**.

Yet another different location was visited on day two, a rough scrubland and this turned out to be our best site so far with 31 species recorded including **Large Tortoiseshell, Large, Chapmans** and **Short-tailed Blue, Southern White Admiral, Woodland** and **Great Banded Grayling, Niobe** and **High Brown Fritillary**.

After another varied picnic lunch, our second site of the day was a steep hillside with the farmer below us cutting the wild flower meadows. Again a good number of species including **Eshers** and **Adonis Blue, Dark Green** and **Marbled Fritillary, Rock Grayling** and **Large Chequered Skipper**.

Day three dawned rather damp with some drizzle but we made our way to very secluded meadows where new species **Map** and **Lesser Purple Emperor** were seen together with a good number of other species. Our butterfly count now was over one hundred so new species were becoming harder to find. A similar site for the afternoon saw another rarity **Mountain Alcon Blue**.

The next day, we set off for the Spanish Pyrenees. On the way we stopped for our final site in the French Pyrenees where **Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Map** and **Silver-washed Fritillary** were seen. After about a five hour trip including a short stop in Andorra we reached the village of Santa Engracia at the end of a 10km drive from the main road. Our guesthouse was perched precariously on the edge of a rocky outcrop, a 1000 year old farmhouse restored by the present owners of sixteen years. In the locality of "Case Guilla" throughout the year over 170 species have been recorded.

The weather in the Spanish Pyrenees was considerably warmer, with sunshine most of the time. Our first trip was a walk around the village of Santa Engracia which again revealed 31 species including **Moroccan Orange-tip, Sloe Hairstreak, Furry Blue, Knapweed Fritillary, Iberian Marbled White** and **Spanish Gatekeeper**. Most of the above were new to us.

On our second day, we took the minibus up a narrow mountain track close to Santa Engracia. The countryside was very dry and weather very hot but a lot of butterflies were around. New species were **Black Satyr, Dusky Heath, Idas,** and **Provencal Chalkhill Blues, Western Marbled White**.

That evening, we had a third and final moth trap, yet again a success.

Our last trip was to the lake at the bottom of the hill, a lovely site and our final new species **Spanish Purple Hairstreak, Turquoise Blue** and **Nettle Tree**.

The following day, we started our journey home reaching our stop-over town of Guernica in the heart of the Basque Country. After a short journey to Santander we boarded the ferry for our return crossing, finally reaching Stourport at 1.00 pm. the following day.

In conclusion, a really wonderful holiday with

very nice people. A total of 117 species of butterfly were recorded. The most common butterflies seen on 15 of the 22 sites were **Clouded Yellow** and **Small White**, although the most prolific was, I feel, **Marbled White**. Of the final total, 27 species were only seen once, including some rather rare ones.

v John L Griffin

Guide to Moth Identification: Silver Y (*Autographa gamma*)

The **Silver Y** (*Autographa gamma*) is a noctuid moth that, as its name suggests, is of a silvery colour and has a Y shaped mark on either wing. This moth is found in many places including gardens and parks, where they are often seen in reasonable numbers at garden flowers, especially buddleia. They beat their wings rapidly, feeding on the wing and can usually be seen at any time of day or night. A small form called *gammina* is not uncommon and worth looking out for. The larva feeds on various herbaceous and low-growing plants and is a general green colour with a series of red dots along its side and longitudinal green variations.

This moth is a strong migrant to this country and breeds to produce one or two summer broods. The numbers fluctuate much, but the summer broods reinforce these numbers. It is usually seen anytime from late spring until the autumn, depending on the weather conditions. Take a look next year in your own garden or where there are nectar-flowers. It is interesting to record how their numbers change throughout the year and according to the weather conditions.

v Neil Gregory

Conservation in the wider country side

Several years ago, when out walking one spring, in the Abberley/Great Witley area with my family we discovered a place, called Walsgrove Hill. After the initial exhaustion of the steep climb up, we followed the narrow path through scrub, along the ridge. There are several small clearings, along the path, and it was immediately apparent that the ground flora was better than average. Violets, Cowslip, Hawkbits, and Salad Burnet amongst other things were growing in abundance. After about a quarter of a mile, it opens into a clearing about 150 metres long or so. We were taken aback immediately, by the breath-taking views across to the Shelsey Hills, Clee Hills, Abberley etc., (the ridge lies at roughly 800 feet), and then by the flora. There were lovely stands of Early Purple

Orchid, carpets of Rockrose, Trefoils, Salad burnet, Thymes, and Violets in incredible profusion. It was also apparent that the scrub was encroaching rapidly, and this could all too quickly be gone. Anywhere with this amount of floral diversity, obviously has potential for lepidoptera, and with this in mind I started making enquiries.

I discovered from Mike Williams, that there were records from the site for **Wood White**, and **Dark Green Fitillary**. Being in between Penny Hill, and Abberley, and having similar flora, there seemed to be some potential for **Green Hairstreak**, and **Dingy Skipper** also.

On meeting the manager of nearby Elbatch wood I discovered, that Walsgrove was

owned by an elderly gentleman, who no longer farmed the hill. I also found out from Harry Green that until recently a botanist Roger Maskew, had been doing some scrub clearance on the hill. By courtesy of Roger, we have obtained the owner's permission to do further management, at the site and this past winter we cleared scrub from the large clearing and opened it up some more. We also opened up another area about the same size, a few hundred yards further along the ridge, with a view toward opening both of these clearings further, and linking them.

A topic of National Members Day was "conservation in the wider countryside", to a certain extent with funds currently available, our nature reserves almost look after themselves, so I think we should do more of this type of work outside of our reserves.

Hopefully there will be many more work days at Walsgrove Hill (also known as Camp Farm), so please come, and support us, even if you only come and enjoy the views. On our first work day we ate our lunch in glorious sunshine watching Buzzards and Peregrines fly above.

Playing the devil's advocate now, a whisper came my way via Richard Southwell, that the people at the top at National level, for some reason think work days will soon be a thing of the past. So who will look after the Walsgrove Hills in this world if we don't? Somehow I don't think it will be the ageing landowner.

v Trevor Bucknall

P.S since writing this piece **Dingy Skipper** has been recorded on Walsgrove Hill.

Two firsts for Staffordshire

Jane and I took advantage of a very rare weekend to ourselves by going away to North Staffordshire to record some butterflies and also look up some of her childhood haunts.

Derbyshire is well recorded for the Millennium Atlas and **Dark Green Fritillary** is shown as covering a good number of tetrads over their moorlands in low numbers. We are delighted to report this must also be true in Staffs when we were fortunate to identify one on Goldsitch Moss on 16 July. On Monday we followed a circuitous route home including our first visit to Blithfield reservoir where Jane noted **Clouded Yellow**. We eventually reached Hollies Common too late to record **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, their season was over, but delighted to witness literally hundreds of **Small Skipper, Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown** but

not a single **Ringlet**.

Secondly, **Brown Argus** has eventually got a toehold in the county and was identified by Steve Harper and myself on two set-aside fields at High Lodge stables on 10 June. Luckily they also reached Bunkers Hill Wood with good numbers of the second brood recorded there in August, just as well since the fields were by now ploughed over.

Staffordshire is still a relatively under recorded county. I ask new members who would like to rectify this situation to contact Dave Jackson or Jim Chance for advice, from our brief experience opportunities for glory beckon.

v Richard Southwell

Surprises in Slovenia

Chris van Swaay and Martin Warren should consider reclassifying the Red Data Book of European butterflies if our experience of Slovenija on a family holiday is anything to go by. **Scotch Argus** (*Erebia aethiops*) is classified as "near threatened" but we were seeing hordes of the blessed things above 800m, most frustrating as we were attempting to increase our list of sightings of the many species of mountain-loving **Ringlets**. At a distance they all look the same to us beginners. In the end I had to re-read the bible on their precise habitat requirements and then

realised Alpine pasture is different to Alpine meadow or put another way the 1200-2000 metre band has very different habitat to that at 750-1200 metres.

The Slovenes could well be the first people to appreciate the fact that the size of nature reserves does matter. When one considers that 49% of the country is forest and that on our evidence their agricultural practices are conducive to wildlife, I do believe you can consider the whole country a nature reserve! However, this did not stop them establishing

Triglav National Park in 1924 which was further extended to encompass the whole of the Julian Alps in 1981 covering 84,000 hectares. The result – wildlife abounds, the local communities are proud and protective of this heritage and this in turn is helping their economy. Lessons for us in the UK?

In this setting we were bound to have a few surprises and shocks; herewith are some of them:

- Whilst we slept a calf was eaten by a wolf pack in the adjoining field at the start of the holiday. On the final day, and on a solo foray, I was checking out a secluded forest clearing in the Kamnik foothills when I was deafened by the “screech” that could only have been a bear not 20 metres away. I was suffering from dehydration on the plane back home that afternoon.
- The farmer at our final location brought us a box and proudly showed us a moth he had caught, easily 7 inches wide and mainly a creamy pale yellow with silver eyes on its wings. I didn't have the heart to ask him if it had lost a lot of one of its front wings in his efforts to get it in the box.
- Dwarf cyclamen abound on the forest floor. Delightful.
- We looked up at Golden Eagles in the Trenta valley and down on them from Mount Zvoh, but contrast this with 5 Honey Buzzards in a field right by Brnik Airport. Quite surreal.
- The commonest butterflies were **Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Wood White** (including **Real's** variety), **Silver-washed fritillary, Balkan Marbled White, Scotch**

Argus, Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood (all had cream spots not orange as the book states for the continent!)

- My favourite must be **Water Ringlet**, full recompense for a heart-stopping drive up Mount Mangart but quickly followed by **The Map** spotted by Kirsty on the last day.

In all we spent a maximum of 30% of the time butterflying and were delighted to see 71 species including 34 “first-timers”. The Slovenes are a most welcoming and generous people, the cost of living is about 35% cheaper and my teenage daughters considered this their best holiday to date. My big tip is NOT to use hotels that are still too regimented but farms and pensions which brings you into the village communities. I contacted the Slovenija Tourist Board in London who sent me a list of travel companies along with comments on their marketing style. I chose Slovenija Pursuits, a small specialist operator. Further comments are not needed about their choice of 3 locations given the above remarks. Anyone wanting a species list, contacts or opinions on the country please get in touch.

v Richard Southwell

Addendum. The Slovenes have an almost impossible language. For instance they have three words for butterfly depending on whether you are referring to one, two or many. The last two are similar and I am wondering if Drs van Swaay and Warren had translation difficulties with **Scotch Argus**?

New Members

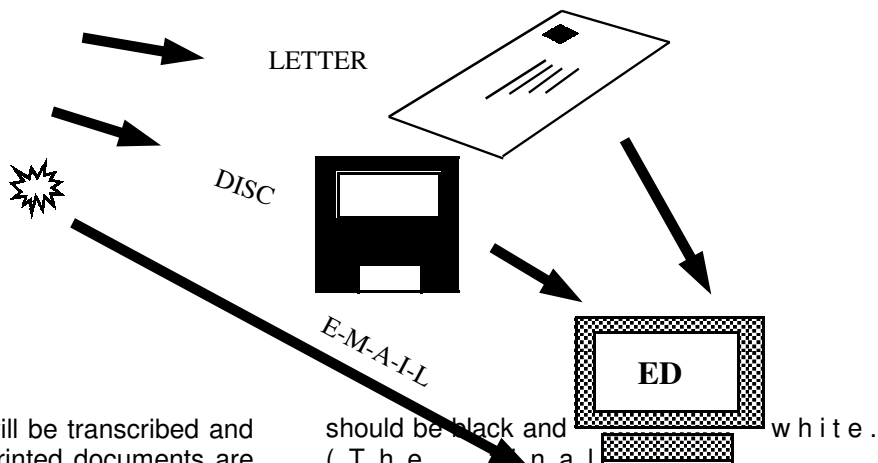
Mr. & Mrs. D. Teall	Birmingham	Dr. & Mrs. M. Uren	Malvern
Mr. D. J. Holmes	Birmingham	Ms. W. Innes	Ross-on-Wye
Mrs. A. Loram	Birmingham	Mr. J. Evans	Rowley Regis
Mrs. B. J. Moore	Birmingham	Mr. & Mrs. D. Richards	Shrewsbury
Mrs. H. J. Billing	Birmingham	Mr. M. J. Mitchell	Shrewsbury
Mrs. J. A. Teall	Birmingham	Mrs. L. McAleavy	Shrewsbury
Ms. M. C. MacKayu	Birmingham	Mr. & Mrs. R Freeman	Solihull
Mr. C. Howat	Bridgnorth	Mr. A. J. Millward	Solihull
Mr. R. B. Eaton	Bridgnorth	Mrs. E. E. Weetman	Solihull
Mr. G. Forrest	Bromsgrove	Mrs. J. G. Thorne	Solihull
Mr. A. Noble	Burton-on-Trent	Mr. & Mrs. P. Instance	Stafford
Mr. M. Kennard	Burton-on-Trent	Mr. P. G. Gaskell	Stafford
Dr. C. Uff	Craven Arms	Mrs. Y. van der Meer	Stafford
Mr. P. A. Thompson	Craven Arms	Mr. C. Morris	Stourbridge
Mr. C. Bostle	Evesham	Mrs. F. Robinson	Stourbridge
Mr. G. Payne	Evesham	Mrs. P. Brookes	Telford
Mrs. C. Goode	Hereford	Miss A.G. Bence	Tipton
Mr. W. Pointon	Leek	Mr & Mrs. S. Coulson	Winchester
Mrs. B. Evans	Lichfield	M. B. M. Marsh	Wolverhampton
Ms. D. M. Ericsson	Ludlow	Mrs. P. J. Austin	Wolverhampton

Instructions for Contributors

Deadline for Winter Newsletter contributions is Thursday 1 February 2001

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 or attach to your email unformatted text** (e.g. "save as" a ".txt" file under MS Word, not as a ".doc" file) as some formatted texts received recently, especially by email, have proved to be totally unreadable and, unlike a .txt file, could contain viruses, which frighten me to death. Newer software often produces files which are incompatible with older software even of the same name.

Pictures will normally be scanned in and



should be black and white. (The original 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.

v Christine Chance
christine_chance@talk21.com

Letters

Letter from Philip Hopson:

I am rather perplexed as to why seemingly organised field trips are so poorly patronised by members.

Our events organiser, Mark Farmer, attempts to strike a Branch coverage balance by organising site visits and leaders to meet counties that comprise the Branch. From what I hear the number of attendees hardly justifies the goodwill and effort put into the organisation of such outings and Mark must feel disappointed at the low turnouts.

Perhaps those members who have not yet sampled Branch field trips might like to reflect on my attitude to field trips.

a) Field trips should be communal. In addition to sharing the discovery of sites and species, organised trips are probably safer than going on your own.

b) Local site conditions and safety issues will be known to the field trip leader.

c) Generally speaking a reasonable turnout of members will include a cross section of members with supplementary wildlife interests to complement the days sightings (see the report on Castern Wood).

d) Bad weather does not, necessarily, mean that the proposed trip should be written off as a non-starter. The weather can change, often dramatically so. In some cases, the Brown butterfly family will fly in light rain and I have often found blue family species roosting – easy to locate and photograph.

e) The field trip leader will be pleased to meet you – he will turn up whatever the weather.

v Phil Hopson

Conservation Corner

A look back...

Conservation Corner is made its first appearance in newsletter no. 8 back in 1982 and has appeared (I think) in every newsletter since. It was started to reflect an increasing involvement on the part of the Branch and its members in active conservation work, something which I am pleased to say has been sustained over the years. In those far off days, Butterfly Conservation had none of its own reserves to manage but the Branch was already heavily involved in winter conservation work on land belonging to other conservation organisations. The previous year, the Branch had started its first recording scheme and plans were afoot to focus recording effort on particular under-recorded areas and species (sounds familiar!). Another activity which strikes a modern note was the news that the Branch had been involved in two successful objections to development proposals which threatened good sites for butterflies. Reference is made to the fact that "the value of industrial land to butterflies should not be underestimated", sentiments which have been echoed on many occasions in recent issues of the newsletter. Moth enthusiasts within the Branch will also be interested in hearing that 1982 saw the Branch's very first moth night. The same year also marked the start of transect walking within the Branch when I took over the butterfly walk in the Wyre Forest, a personal addiction that lasted for seventeen years! As Ian reported in the last newsletter, the number of transect walks within the Branch is now up to 35 with a wealth of accumulated data that has helped to monitor changes in the abundance and distribution of our butterflies.

And what of the butterflies themselves? Over the years, Conservation Corner has tended, not surprisingly, to concentrate on those species and habitats which have been most under threat but in this last column under its present authorship I would like to concentrate on those butterflies that have done well during this period: **White Admiral** – in 1982 this species was still ranked as extremely vulnerable in the West Midlands, geographically restricted to just a few woods. Since this time the butterfly has enjoyed a major expansion northwards, being found now in most medium/large woods in

Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Herefordshire and establishing a firm toehold in Shropshire. A spread no doubt assisted by the general neglect of so much woodland resulting in a plentiful supply of honeysuckle growing in the semi-shaded positions favoured for egg laying. In recent years, the species has been recorded near Kinver and in the Frankley area and colonisation of Staffordshire and Birmingham and the Black Country must be firmly on the cards.

Marbled White – another species to greatly increase its range both northwards and eastwards. In the early eighties, the **Marbled White** was only found south of an east-west line drawn through Worcester. Now it is found well to the north of this line, particularly on the eastern side, where a number of strong populations have been established in the Droitwich area. It is also expanding in the Black Country although its true status here is muddied by a number of unofficial releases.

Brown Argus - up until 1990 this was a considerable rarity within the West Midlands region being confined to limestone areas like Bredon Hill where rockrose occurs. Over the last ten years, the butterfly has shown a surprising ability to utilise a range of different habitats colonising new sites over a wide area of Warwickshire and Worcestershire. rockrose is absent from these sites and instead the butterfly has utilised several geranium species notably dovesfoot cranesbill and, to a lesser extent, common storksbill and possibly cut-leaved cranesbill. Favoured habitats are those at an early stage of succession, including set-aside, which may mean that the butterfly's colonisation of such sites can only be semi-permanent in nature. At first, it appeared that the **Brown Argus** may have been univoltine in these new areas, with virtually all records coinciding with the timing of the butterfly's second brood. More recently, however, there have been many more reports from May/June suggesting that the species has settled into its more usual bivoltine pattern of emergence.

Essex Skipper – even more recent has been the spread of the **Essex Skipper** into our region with the first record from Warwickshire in 1992, Gloucestershire in 1996 and Worcestershire in 1997. Progress has been rapid and the species is now well established in the first two counties with an increasing

frequency of records from the latter. Roadside verges and disused railway lines appear to have been important corridors of dispersal. This westward and northward expansion looks set to continue and it can only be a matter of time before the butterfly is recorded throughout the Branch area.

It is perhaps a sobering thought that most of the real success stories as outlined above have happened in spite of our conservation efforts rather than as a result of them!

A look forward...

Clearly, there have been many conservation successes which have been documented in this column over the years but the general trend of our butterflies is still downward and there will no doubt be many new challenges ahead. As next year's publication of the Millennium Atlas will confirm, a number of our butterflies are still declining at an alarming rate. I fear there is a real risk of losing **High Brown Fritillary** as a West Midlands species and other Fritillary species found in the same bracken habitats are also vulnerable. It is quite clear that there is still much more to be learned about bracken management for butterflies and that cutting by hand and/or machine is a poor substitute for grazing. I also suspect that grazing by sheep, which appears to be the favoured eleventh hour option on the Malverns, will prove second best to grazing by cattle and we need to press the case for this with English Nature and the Malvern Hills Conservators. Even more worrying, is the continuing decline of species which up to now have not been considered target species. In this category, we can place **Wall Brown**, **Green Hairstreak**, **Dingy Skipper**, **Grizzled Skipper**, and even **Common Blue** and **Small Heath** in large parts of our region. Without major changes in the way that the countryside is managed, there is probably little that can be done to halt further decline and the priority here has to be in those parts of the region where we can still hope to have an effect. In many cases this means increased emphasis on those more urban habitats where some of these species still flourish. Biodiversity Action Planning gives us a real opportunity here, as the recent experience at Anchor Meadow has shown, and we should seek ways of further exploiting this process to further the cause of conservation. Reserves and their management will no doubt continue to take up much of the Branch's time and resources

but we need to make sure that, through this work, our reserves can become models of excellence where we can showcase good management techniques to other landowners. What is important to recognise is that we are not going to secure the future of butterflies or moths through reserves alone and we need to achieve a more balanced approach which puts due emphasis on the wider countryside. A dangerous preoccupation which we need to resist, is to become over concerned with the reintroduction of species that have become extinct. While there may be a place for re-establishment as part of a wider conservation strategy, we need to make sure this does not become a panacea. To have to reintroduce species to a site is a sign of our failure not of our success. There are already signs at branch level elsewhere in the country that introduction attempts are taking up scarce resources that would be better employed elsewhere and in some cases even run contrary to agreed priorities within Regional Action Plans. Even at a national level (and to end on a controversial note), the case perhaps needs to be made that efforts to introduce species like **Large Blue**, **Chequered Skipper** and **Large Copper** (not all of which have been as successful as their proponents might claim) should be re-examined in the light of both their limited success rate and the large levels of resources they consume. The West Midlands Branch can be extremely proud of its conservation record so far but we will need to keep our priorities under continual review in the light of changing circumstances and new opportunities while not losing sight of our longer term goals.

New Conservation team

My forthcoming departure as Conservation Officer has necessitated a restructuring of our own conservation efforts. The result is the emergence of a very strong team which retains the benefits of regional perspective and leadership while maximising on local knowledge and enthusiasm. Jenny Joy will take over the role of branch Conservation Officer but will be supported by a team of county-based Conservation Officers: Andy Nicholls in Herefordshire, Trevor Bucknall in Worcestershire, Dave Jackson in Staffordshire, with Jenny herself doubling up for the time being in Shropshire. For any day to day conservation queries, the county conservation officers should be the first port

of call and they will be the main point of liaison with county wildlife trusts and other conservation partners as well as planning local work days and other activities. The Branch Conservation Officer will be the person responsible for Regional Action Plan co-ordination and review and ensuring that local efforts are properly co-ordinated and reflect regional priorities.

Transect walker required

A new transect walker is required for Perry Wood in Worcester for next year. Perry Wood is one of our longest running transects and has, because of its urban nature and low levels of management, always provided a very interesting comparison with our more rural and more intensively managed woodland reserves. Phil Williams has been the highly dedicated transect walker from the start and his thoroughness in the presentation of the annual data and his commitment to the task has been second to none. We owe Phil a great debt of gratitude for his work over the years and it is really important that we find someone, ideally fairly local to Worcester, to replace him. Phil has volunteered to show his successor the ropes and might even be persuaded to step in for the occasional week! If you can help please contact Ian Duncan as soon as possible.

Moth news

The Worcestershire Mothers Group has enjoyed another highly successful year culminating in the group's participation in the second annual national moth night on 23 September. Mulled wine and biscuits were on offer in the Wyre Forest, while Dr. Moth (alias Tony Simpson) was on hand to deal with any help required with identification. A number of non-members came along including a couple of families and a good time was had by all. Some 24 species of macro moth were recorded including **Dark Swordgrass** which is a migrant species. Nationally, events took place as far afield as Cornwall, Dumfries & Galloway, Northern

Ireland and East Anglia and first indications suggest that the night was generally successful with a wide range of moths being recorded. These included a number of rarities such as **Four-spotted Footman**, **L-album Wainscot**, **Anomalous** and **Black-banded**, with a **Dewick's Plusia** caught in Kent. Next year's event is planned for 15 August with **White-spotted pinion** being a particular target.

Bulgaria trip

After the success of this year's trip to the Picos Mountains and the Pyrenees, plans are afoot to organise a trip to Bulgaria in 2001. This will be a rare opportunity to sample the butterflies of eastern Europe and visit areas only recently made available to western visitors. Bulgaria can boast around 1100 species of butterfly and moth and 400+ species of birds including a number of species extremely rare elsewhere in Europe. Its sunny climate, together with the fact that it is now perhaps the least intensively farmed country in Europe, makes it an ideal location. A three centre holiday is planned staying in good quality hotels and visiting some of the best butterfly spots Bulgaria has to offer. This includes the spectacular Pirin and Rhodope mountain ranges near the border with Greece plus the Black Sea coast. Proposed dates are 13-24 June 2001 and target species include **Eastern Festoon**, **Cardinal**, **Apollo**, **Large Copper** and **Camberwell Beauty** together with masses of Fritillaries, Blues and other goodies. We would hope to see approaching 100 species over the course of 11 days. The areas visited are also rich in flowers, birds and other wildlife. Costs are likely to be around £800-850 including all flights, hotel accommodation and transport. The trip will be accompanied throughout by a local guide/interpreter. Party size will be limited to around a dozen and priority given to members of West Midlands Butterfly Conservation. For further details and to reserve a place contact me as soon as possible.

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.
- 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.”

Dates for your Diary

Herefordshire winter work days

NOVEMBER

- 19 **November (Sunday) Conservation task Haugh Wood** meet 10 am in car park on the north side of the minor road running through the wood. OS map 149 GR SO592365.

DECEMBER

- 3 **December (Sunday) Conservation task Dulas Court** meet 10.30 am at the entrance OS map 149 GR SO372295.
- 31 **December (Sunday) Conservation task Haugh Wood** Details as 19 November.

JANUARY 2001

- 21 **January (Sunday) Conservation task Dulas Court** Details as 3 December.

FEBRUARY

- 18 **February (Sunday) Conservation task Haugh Wood** Details as 19 November

MARCH

- 18 **March (Sunday) Conservation Task – Bircher Common.** Meet 10 am at Highwood end gate at bottom, of lane passing Croft Castle (look for NT signs) OS Map 149 GR SO459660.

Worcestershire winter work days

OCTOBER

- 29 **October (Sunday) Fungal Foray, Grafton Wood.** Meet 11.00 am at Three Parishes Hall, Grafton Flyford. Specimens will be identified. OS map 150 GR SO978553. Leaders John Tilt and Nick Williams.

NOVEMBER

- 4 **November (Saturday) West Midlands**

Branch AGM 2.00 pm at Woodland College, Greenwood Trust Ironbridge, Shropshire. See page 3 for location map.

- 5 **November (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood** Meet 10.00 am in the reserve car park just off the Sinton Green-Monkwood Green road. OS Map 150 GR. SO803603.

- 12 November (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood** Meet 10.00 am at Three Parishes Village Hall, Grafton Flyford (next to church) just off A422 Worcester-Alcester road. OS Map 150 GR. SO963557. Brash clearing.
- 19 November (Sunday) Conservation Task - Great Whitley (Walsgrove Hill)** Meet at 10 am at Great Whitley OS map 150 GR SO752662, leader Trevor Bucknall tel 01905 755757.
- 26 November (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood NR** - meet 10.00 am at reserve entrance on Sale Green-Dunhampstead road. OS Map 150 GR SO929588.

DECEMBER

- 3 December (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood NR** - details as 5 November
- 10 December (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood** Details as 12 November.
- 26 November (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood Details as 24 October but without the balloons!

JANUARY 2001

- .6 January (Saturday) The Great Egg Race** Join us at Three Parishes Village Hall at 10.30 am (see 29 October for directions) for our annual Brown Hairstreak egg count.
- 7 January (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood** Details as 5 November. A Whitbread Action Earth event - work off the excesses of the new year at this special festive celebration. Soup & mincepies on offer. Glade & ride management for the Wood White.

- 14 January (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood** Details as 12 November.

- 21 January (Sunday) Conservation Task - Great Whitley** Details as 19 November.

- 28 January (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood** Details as 26 November. A Whitbread Action Earth event - Hot potatoes & squash on offer.

FEBRUARY

- 4 February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood** Details as 5 November. Ride and glade management.

- 11 February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood** Details as 12 November. Brash clearing.

- 18 February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Great Whitley** Details as 19 November.

- 18 February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Prees Heath Meet 11.00 am (note later start time) at parking area east of A49. OS Map 126 GR. SJ558367. Heather management for the Silver-studded Blue. Travel expenses on offer courtesy of English Nature.

- 25 February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood** Details as 26 November.

MARCH

- 4 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood** Details as 5 November. Glade management.

- 11 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood** Details as 12 November. Brash clearing.

- 18 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Great Whitley** Details as 19 November.

- 25 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood** Details as 26 November.

West Midlands Butterfly Conservation Reserve Wardens

Grafton Wood
John Tilt
9 Meadow Close
Flyford Flavell
Worcs WR7 4DE
tel. 01386-792458

Monkwood
Paddy Harrison
Moorcroft Barn
Sinton Green
Hallow
Worcs WR2 6NW
tel. 01905-641523

Trench Wood
Neil McLean
10 Hammond Close
Droitwich
Worcs WR9 7SZ
tel. 01905-795381

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION



WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS

Chairman &

Branch Organiser:
Dr. Ian Duncan
Midway Cottage
Upper Welland Rd
Malvern WR14 4LD
tel. 01684-568415

Treasurer:

Jancis Smith
42 Wiseacre Croft
Shirley
Solihull
West Midlands B90 1BB
tel. 0121-430-3945

Newsletter Editor:

Dr. Christine Chance
65 Wentworth Rd
Harborne
Birmingham B17 9SS
tel. 0121-427-1706

Conservation Officers:

Dr. Jenny Joy (Shrops)

(Coordinator)

The Croft,
off Haygate Rd
Telford BF1 2BV

Trevor Bucknall (Worcs)
26 Vine Street
Northwick
Worcester WR3 7DY
tel. 01905-755757

Andy Nicholls (Hfds)
2 Auckland Close
Hereford HR1 1YE
tel. 01432-275834

David Jackson (Staffs)
11 Hyperion Drive
Penn
Wolverhampton
WV4 5QW
tel. 01902-344716

Branch Recorder:

Jim Chance
65 Wentworth Rd
Harborne
Birmingham B17 9SS
tel. 0121-427-1706

Communications

Officer

Richard Southwell
Sandylands
48 Whitehall Rd
Stourbridge DY8 2JT
tel. 01384-397066
(after 4pm only)

Branch Secretary

Corinna Gregory
6 Thames Drive
Droitwich Spa
Worcs WR9 8TP
tel. 01905-771623

Moth Officers:

Jeff Andrews (Hereford)
Meadow View
Dinedor
Hereford HR2 6LQ
tel. 01432-870301

Neil Gregory (Worcs)

6 Thames Drive
Droitwich Spa
Worcs WR9 8TP
Tel. 01905-771623

Education Officer:

Richard Lamb
Stratford-on-Avon
Butterfly Farm
Tramway Walk
Swan' s Nest Lane
Stratford-on-Avon
Warks CV37 7LS
tel. 01789-299288

Events Organiser:

Committee Members:

Mike Williams
47 Stagborough Way
Lickhill, Stourport
Worcs DY13 8SY
tel. 01299-824860

Ron Hatton
45 Delabere Road
Bishops Cleeve
Cheltenham
Glos GL52 4AN
tel. 01242-673923

Terry Smith
42 Wiseacre Croft
Shirley
Solihull B90 1BB
tel. 0121-430-3945

Digby Wood

Jasmine Cottage
2 Upper Ferry lane
Callow End
Worcester WR2 4TL
tel. 01905-830391

John P Brayford
57 Hotspur Street
Greenfields
Shrewsbury
SY1 2QA
tel. 01743-270481

Phil Hopson
7 Woodhall Rd
Penn
Wolverhampton
WV4 4DL

Mark Farmer
The Forge
Didbrook
Near Winchcombe
GL54 5PF
tel. 01242-621008



**BUTTERFLY
CONSERVATION**

HEAD OFFICE:

PO BOX 222, DEDHAM, COLCHESTER, ESSEX CO7 6E7, (01206-322342).

THE BRITISH BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SOCIETY LTD.

REGISTERED OFFICE: Shakespeare House, High Street Dedham, Colchester, Essex CO7 6DE

REGISTERED IN ENGLAND No. 2206468 REGISTERED CHARITY No. 254037