



No. 48

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2001

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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Chairman's notes

New Hawne Colliery

As described in Newsletter 46 (Summer 2000) this is a very important urban site for butterflies and other wildlife. Notable butterflies recorded by Dave White on his transect walk include **Small Heath**, **Small Copper**, and **Green** and **Purple Hair-streaks**. There is also a strong colony of **Common Blue**. In terms of the total number of butterflies recorded in a season, Hawne Colliery is one of the highest in the West Midlands.

The site is threatened by a plan put forward by Dudley Council which includes building on much of the site. Dave and Richard Southwell have been drawing attention to the importance of this site for butterflies in the local and national press and television and are leading a vigorous campaign to save the site. We wish them every success.

Winter Excitement

You might think the winter is a time when there is not much excitement in the world of lepidoptera. However, a recent record from Malvern has shown that this need not always be the case. I had a call from Peter Garner in West Malvern in early December to say that he saw an unusual moth in his house which he thought was a **Tunbridge Wells Gem**. I had never heard of the **Tunbridge Wells Gem** so a consultation of Skinner's "The Moths of the British Isles" was required. My edition of Skinner (1984) noted that this moth was first recorded in England in 1870 in Tunbridge Wells. Since then (up to 1984) there had been only 7 other records, all in southern England in the autumn.

I collected the moth from Peter, and after photographing it, showed it to Michael Harper, the moth recorder for Herefordshire. He thought it was either the **Tunbridge Wells Gem** or the **Golden Twin-spot**, another rare immigrant moth to the British Isles.

I now contacted David Green, the moth officer at Butterfly Conservation, for more information. He told me that, since 1984, the moth had been recorded 6 more times, all in October 1995 in Southern England, following a period of strong southerly winds. Interestingly, this autumn has also been a period of gales from the south. David also pointed out that the illustration in the 1984 edition of Skinner was wrong and was in fact of a **Golden Twin-spot**! This has been corrected in later editions. David also believed that many of the recent records of **Golden Twin-spot** in England originated from imported cut flowers with flowers from Tesco a particular favourite!

Further information on the mystery was provided by an article in Atropos in 1996 by David Brown on the status of the **Tunbridge Wells Gem** in the British Isles. This species is a sub-Saharan species and has never been recorded in continental Europe. In contrast, the **Golden Twin-spot** breeds in North Africa and in some years in Southern Europe. This species is often recorded in Holland where it thrives in tomato glass houses.

So, is the specimen a **Tunbridge Wells Gem** or a **Golden Twin-spot**? Did it arrive as a genuine wind-blown migrant or did it originate from imported cut flowers? As I write this in early January we are still trying to solve the puzzle. More will be revealed (hopefully) in the next newsletter.

Committee Changes

I am pleased to welcome Peter Boardman to the committee. Pete brings his wide conservation experience to the committee and also strengthens our representation in Shropshire. Dave Haslam will also be joining the committee; his experience in the complexities of local authority planning will be invaluable.

Field Trips

We are pleased that Mark Farmer has agreed to continue to organise our 2 annual coach trips to prime butterfly sites. Due to the poor attendance at some of our local butterfly trips last year we have decided to reduce the programme this year. I am grateful to the following for arranging the local trips: Richard Southwell - Black Country; Dave Jackson - Staffordshire; Jeff Andrews -

Herefordshire; John Brayford - Shropshire. The moth programme organised by Neil Gregory goes from strength to strength and this year we have a very exciting programme including day trips to look for caterpillars and leaf miners.

Branch AGM

Thanks to all of you who braved the floods, petrol shortages and the chaos on the railways to attend the Branch AGM in Shropshire in November. There were over 30 attendees who enjoyed Jenny Joy's talk on the butterflies of Shropshire. This year we would like to hold the AGM in Herefordshire. Would anyone care to suggest a suitable venue?

Branch Van

We decided at the last committee meeting that, as a result of the reorganisation of our conservation function we no longer required the Branch van. We therefore donated the van to Butterfly Conservation head office, who were very grateful for the gift.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Lepidoptera Atlases

The Branch, together with the Moth Recorders for Herefordshire (Michael Harper) and Worcestershire (Tony Simpson) are planning to produce the first ever atlases showing the distribution of lepidoptera in the two counties. Jim Chance (Branch Recorder) has designed the format based on 10 km squares. All records before 31 December 2000 will be shown. The atlas will also give information on (a) national status (b) local status and (c) flight period.

We hope to publish the atlas of the butterflies and the macro moths (around 700 species) later this year and the atlas of the micro moths (over 950 species) the following year. We are fortunate in having two of the national authorities on micro moths (Michael and Tony) in our area. We believe that this will be the first regional atlas covering all the micro moths to be published in the UK.

The principal aim of the atlases is to provide a baseline data set showing the state of the counties' lepidoptera at the end of the 20 century. It will also help in conservation and we hope stimulate more recording.

We are currently trying to raise the funds to cover the publication costs. We hope to keep the purchase price of each atlas at around £10. A pre-publication offer will be available to members.

Coming Events

CHANGE OF DATE FOR SPRING MEETING NOW 7 APRIL

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 7 April 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 early April: Pochard, Tufted Duck, Widgeon, Shoveler, Grey Heron, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Snipe, Green and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Moorhen and Coot.

Extending the topic highlighted in several places in this Newsletter, the two guest speakers for this

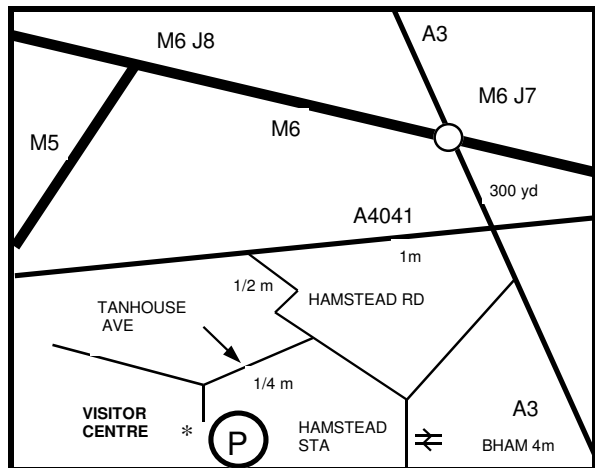
meeting, Dr. Byron Wood and Alison Loram will talk about their work on urban butterflies. The theme for the afternoon will be "What dictates the presence or absence of butterflies in urban areas". There will be time for a discussion at the end of the talks.

As last year's winners, the Southwell family will be arranging a quiz. Light refreshments will be provided.

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

Summer Coach Trips

Two coach trips have been arranged for the summer – do take this opportunity to see rare butterflies, birds and beautiful countryside. A comfortable coach has been booked – if it can be filled there may be a price reduction.

Gower Peninsula and Kenfig Sunday 3 June £18.00

A trip to the Gower Peninsula – target species **Marsh Fritillary** and **Green Hairstreak**; and to Kenfig for the **Small Blue** and **Skippers** also Fen Orchids and marsh birds. Leave Bromsgrove 8.00 am and Worcester 8.30 am. **Closing date for booking 20 May.**

Trip to Cumbria Sunday 8 July £18.00

Whitbarrow Crag – possibly the best place to see

High Brown Fritillary. Other target species include **Mountain Ringlet**, **Silver –washed Fritillary**, **Grayling**, and **Northern Brown Argus**. There is a possibility of including **Meathop Moss**. If the weather is unsuitable for butterflies **Leighton Moss** will be visited where birds such as a Marsh Harrier, Bittern, Bearded Tits and others may be seen. The coach leaves Worcester 7.30 am and Bromsgrove 8.00 am **Closing date for booking 24 June.**

Form enclosed for booking seats. **Please note the closing dates.** Further details from Terry and Jan Smith tel: 0121-430-3945

High Brown Hills Project update

Did you happen to see the Midlands Today item on BBC1 this week (15 January.) giving some details on the progress of the High Brown Hills Project? The project is aimed at restoring grazing to the Malvern Hills to recreate the habitat that once made the Malverns one of the country's premier **High Brown Fritillary** sites, and it's all beginning to happen. A shepherd has been engaged (complete with sheep dogs) and was filmed up on the hills acquainting himself with the hillsides where he will be working. Things were clearly on the move, and a couple of phone calls to English Nature and the Malvern Hills Conservators soon confirmed that this was indeed the case.

The grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund is progressing well and is expected to be available later in the summer, but in the meantime English Nature has received some additional Government money and has been able to finance the employment of the shepherd and to purchase a flock of 150 Cheviot sheep. This tough Scottish breed is already being acclimatised to the area and will be introduced to the Hills on 22 January to attack the grass that is becoming dominant in many places: they will also stir up the bracken litter and trample the emerging bracken fronds to produce the mosaic pattern of grass, herbs (particularly violets) and bracken that make up good **Fritillary** habitat. English Nature has also bought 50 Hebridean sheep which have the reputation of eating almost anything, especially young tree seedlings; these will be used to tackle the more difficult areas of scrub encroachment. This is all good news and we must hope for better spring weather this year to

give us a good emergence of **High Browns** to take advantage of the improving habitat.

The arrival of the sheep is very timely in view of the findings of the second meeting of the Midlands Threatened Fritillary Action Group in July. This is a meeting of all the interested parties, conservation groups, land owners, government funded and local government organisations to agree and coordinate actions. Data presented by Dr Martin Warren (Butterfly Conservation's Head of Conservation) showed (fig 1) that on a number of test plots in various locations among the bracken on the Hills, the area covered by violets had drastically reduced,

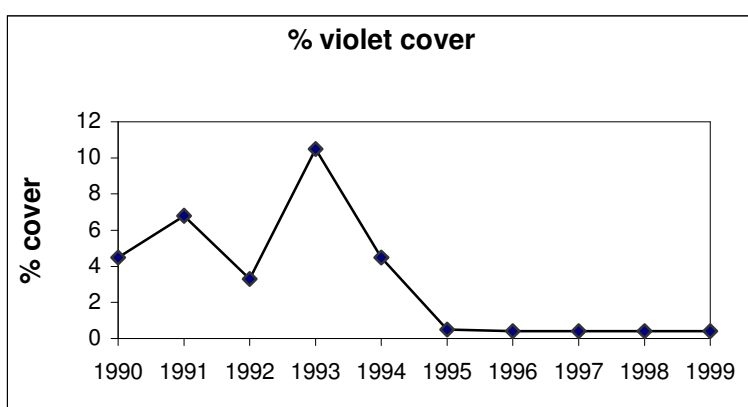


FIG 1

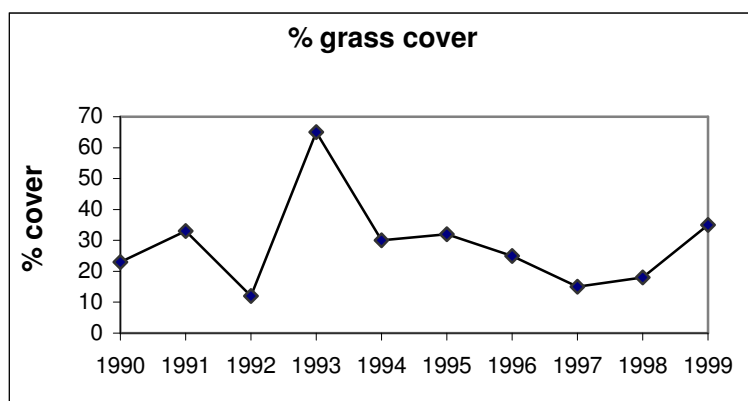


FIG 2

especially since 1995, whilst the area covered by grass remained relatively unchanged (fig 2). The effect of this was demonstrated by West Midlands Branch Transect data, collected over the last 13 years, which showed that butterfly species with grass-feeding larvae had tended to increase in numbers whilst those with herb-feeding larvae (including the **Fritillaries**) had significantly declined, especially since 1995 (fig 3). Transect data will be vitally important to monitor the effects of all the new

management.

Other actions being taken on the Hills include the use of a bracken bruiser, a machine that rolls over the growing bracken fronds flattening them down and imprinting a series of notches in the stems, which has the effect of inhibiting further growth for the season and thereby weakening the underground rhizomes of the plant. Judicious use of this machine can encourage violet growth and also reduce dense bracken stands to make them accessible to the sheep. It

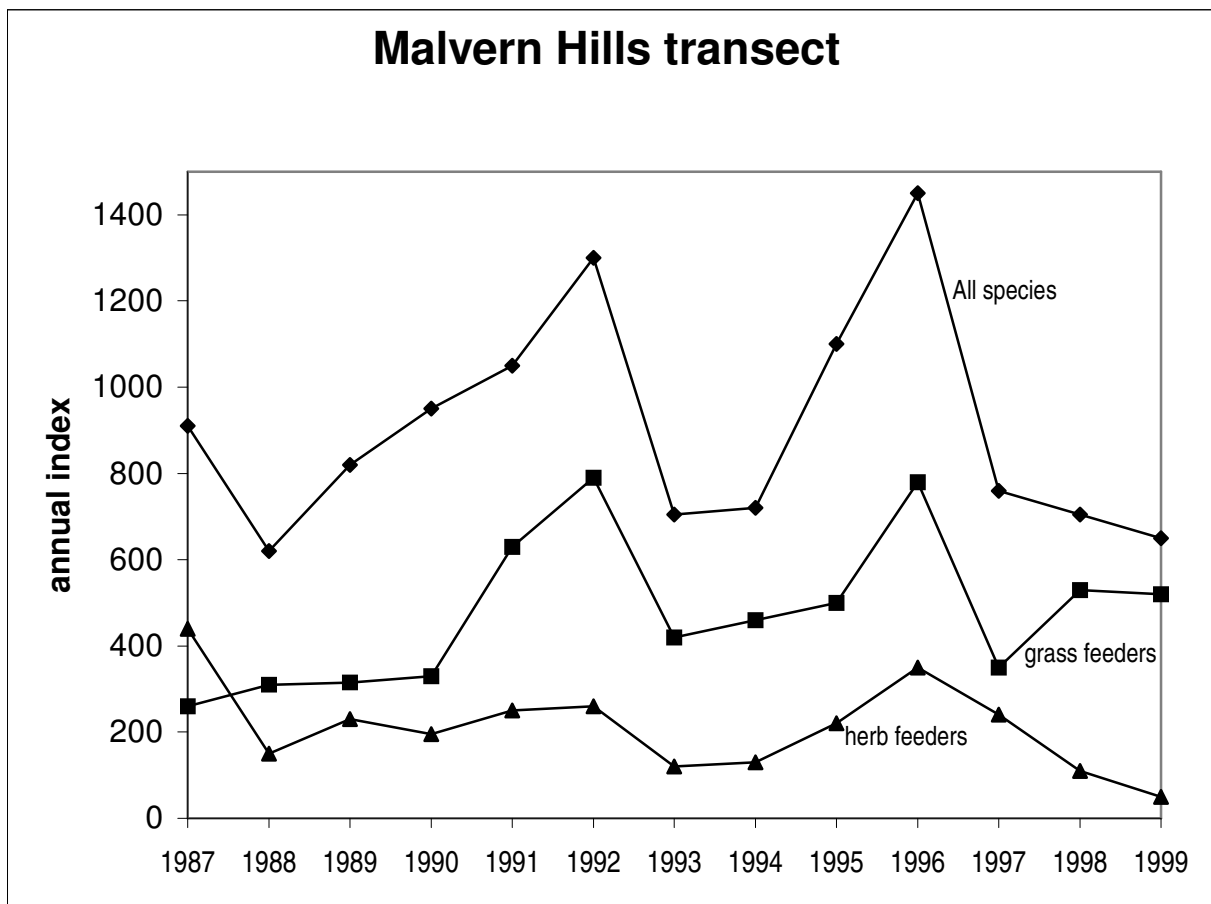


FIG 3

is hoped to use this technique on the Eastnor site instead of the hand cutting of swathes in the bracken by Branch volunteers. We will not, therefore, be making our usual call for volunteers this year, unless nothing has

happened on site by Sunday 10 June, when there will be some frantic phone calls for help!

v Digby Wood

Knapp and Papermill Butterflies 2000

After many years of recording here, Cherry Greenway decided she needed a rest, so Pam and I have now taken over. We were unable to do every week from April to September so we are grateful for the cover given by Cherry, and Claire Turner, who does the Monkwood recording.

It wasn't the best of summers for weather, with nearly six inches of rain in April, severely depressing the numbers of over-wintering species. Only June had low rainfall, at just over an inch.

Commas and **Small Tortoiseshell** during April were in very low numbers, but **Peacocks** were more abundant. **Holly Blues** were non-existent, with only one seen from their second brood, but the **Small Coppers** seemed to be increasing,

with a total of twelve being seen from June to September.

There were reasonable numbers of **Common Blues** around for the first brood, and these found conditions favourable for breeding, with one weekly total reaching forty-four during August, from the second brood. They were extensively found in Big Meadow, after the hay was cut, on the unmown portions of the field.

Meadow Browns had one of the longest seasons I can remember, being seen from 7 June until 23 September.

Most of the common species fared well, but it was the excellent display of devils bit scabious, seen in the Papermill Meadow during August and September that attracted most of the

species that were still around. This plant is an invaluable nectar source for them late in the year, and on sunny days this is where most of them are to be found. Lots of **Red Admirals**, **Commas**, and even the low numbers of **Small Tortoiseshell** seen earlier in the year, had increased to eleven sightings on one day in September. **Painted Ladies** also appeared, with three on one day and with a single sighting of a **Clouded Yellow** on another. One oddity was a single **Marbled White**, seen on 15 July. One can only assume it just wandered into the reserve from another site. The nearest one being in Suckley, where a few may be seen on a roadside spot, not far from Tundridge.

In total twenty-one species were recorded on the reserve. Some sightings were reported of **Brown Argus**, but even with a closer look at the blues during the transect walks, none could be positively identified. This butterfly has no blue at all on the upper wings and may be mistakenly identified when a worn **Common Blue** is seen. This does not mean they do not occur here, as occasional ones have appeared in the past.

v Garth Lowe

New Member to advise us on Local Authorities

Last year the Branch, or should we say you, got involved in a number of initiatives concerning the conservation of butterflies by questioning Local Authority planning consents, one of us even joined his local council's 'biodiversity' committee. This was quite a change from our normal activities such as organising walks to spread the message, recording butterfly sightings for the Atlas or studying trends by conducting transects. The Walsall 'Anchor Meadow' case quickly flagged up the importance of the need to understand and work with Local Authorities, it also proved that the local electorate does have a great impact on decision-making. Experts or paid employees from 'green' organisations e.g. county wildlife trusts, have a part in the decision-making but your influence, as the elector, is one that focuses the minds of both Councillor and council official.

Local Authorities do respond to your letters, maybe not quickly, but if enough of the electorate get involved in an issue there are now enough case histories to prove that there will be successful outcomes. Therefore, if you send a positive, well-focused letter that appreciates both the 'planning regime' and the biodiversity arguments, it will be time well spent. This request is easier said than done as most of us appear loath to ask for advice from people we do not already know or where we are unsure what to say about an issue. Maybe we are just shy?

Help is now at hand as new committee member, David Haslam, has joined us with the express purpose of assisting our Branch membership making contact with local authorities. Therefore, should you become aware of any local issues where there might be a land use or planning issue of concern, or where a plot of land is becoming 'derelict' from a biodiversity viewpoint, do phone David for advice. David, apart from

being an experienced lepidopterist, is the Senior Countryside Officer for Walsall MBC. Just as importantly, he knows all the 'movers and shakers' within local authorities throughout our Branch area in both planning and countryside departments. He can also advise you on the 'right' questions to ask or the 'right' points to make.

As far as we are aware, West Midlands is the first Branch in Butterfly Conservation to have a committee member with such expertise. This should not be a surprise since we were about three years ahead of other mainland branches with our Regional Action Plan document being passed to local authorities for them to incorporate into their own Biodiversity Action Plans back in 1997.

Ideally, none of the 'planning strategies' or their respective committees should work in isolation, so important lepidoptera/habitat information should eventually be fed through to the local Unitary Development Plan or Local Plan. However, as we all know, no system is perfect and errors/omissions will continue to occur and we urge you to play a positive part in alerting your local authorities to issues which arise on your patch. The most important terms regularly used by local authorities with regard to planning issues and biodiversity are defined below.

Unitary development Plan (UDP), also called a Local Plan or Development Plan - a formal local authority document setting out the planning framework for what types of development are suitable and where. There is also a detailed analysis of the various factors that are taken into account in decision-making one of which is biodiversity.

LA21 Plan - only just coming into existence. It is

a comprehensive planning approach to achieving a sustainable society. Hot topic sections include pollution, energy, waste, water, transport and biodiversity. It should greatly affect decision-makers in councils, plus industry and commerce at large. It will probably give extra teeth to European quality standards ISO 9000 and ISO 14001, well known to those readers employed in the private sector.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) - again the first attempts at a formal approach to planning biodiversity conservation. It is essential that the policy and indeed habitat and species mentioned in the plan are formally acknowledged in the BAP, LA21 and County Structure Plan.

Structure Plan - the county council overall plan setting targets for the county's development over the next planning period, usually 10 years. All

local plans of the district councils must take account of its requirement.

Regional Action Plan (RAP) - a Butterfly Conservation document setting out the main priorities for lepidoptera in the region for the next 10 years.

All these council activities are just being rolled out for the first time and therefore the opportunity to make an impact will never be so great. Do speak to David, he can be contacted on 0121 360 9464 or e-mail haslamd@walsall.gov.uk

v Richard Southwell and Jenny Joy

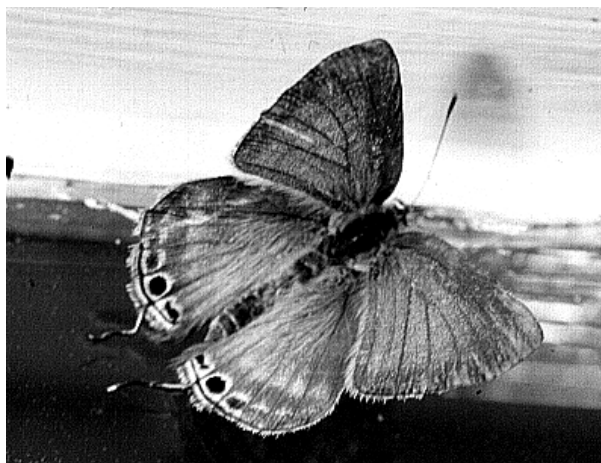
Clouded Yellows and a Long-tailed Blue

Why has everyone else but me seen Clouded Yellows this summer? Well not quite true because I saw lots of **Berger's Clouded Yellows** in Italy during June and July so I do know what they look like! Anyway, as a boy I experienced **the** greatest **Clouded Yellow** year of all time in 1947, when they fell out of the sky like snow! So why couldn't I see them here in Worcestershire in 2000? My usual experience was for someone to shout "**Clouded Yellow**" and by the time I looked up it had gone. The worst incident of this type happened on 3 September near Evesham. I was out on a tetrad recording day with members of the Worcestershire Flora Project and, true to form, Roger Maskew yelled "**Clouded Yellow**" when I was watching a particularly interesting hoverfly on hogweed. In fact I had put my gear on the ground and was trying to coax said hoverfly into a tube when the yell came. I looked up - and the **Clouded Yellow** had vanished; I looked down - and the hoverfly had gone as well. More than a little exasperated I got off my knees and joined the rest (botanists!) to tramp back to the cars and on to the usual pub for lunch (certain Flora Project leaders run on miles per pint of beer!).

I was just about to go into the pub - hand in pockets to check modern gizmos some of us carry into the field: binoculars, yes; phone, yes; electronic grasshopper detector, yes; expensive GPS gadget.....**No!** Back to the car, back to the tortuous route we had followed all morning, trying to think where I could have dropped the ***** GPS. By the pool, climbing a gate, struggling through that big hedge? Tried all those sites - blank. Then I thought **Clouded Yellow!** Next, how do I find one hogweed plant amongst many

in a scrubby weedy field. By great good fortune I did and was re-united with my GPS: there it was sitting expensively in the warm sunshine and recording the inexact grid reference of the **Clouded Yellow** I didn't see.

My second lepidopteral event of note this summer was much more fun. When Chris Thompson phoned from Pershore on 7 August to say he had



Long-tailed Blue – photo Chris Thompson
by kind permission of the Worcestershire Record

a **Long-tailed Blue** in his kitchen I was a little sceptical. "It has tails" he said, "and blue, its a female". A **Hairstreak**, I queried. He disagreed, politely! Book in hand, I went to see it, and it was! The **Long-tailed Blue** is of course a well-known European migrant which breeds through the year round the Mediterranean (the caterpillar feeds on legumes, usually brooms and other large-podded species) and often migrates north,



Long-tailed Blue – photo Chris Thompson
by kind permission of the Worcestershire Record

but it rarely reaches Britain. But was this individual a true immigrant or had it been bred in captivity and released by someone, or had it hitched a lift on a lorry-load of plants? We shall never know for sure. To date (November 2000) I have not heard of any other British records but I think it's quite in order for Worcestershire to have the one and only record!. Unlike **Clouded Yellows**, which everyone can see but me, **Long-tailed Blues** are inconspicuous fast-flying little butterflies and may well be missed, except in a kitchen!

v Harry Green

Branch Website

The Branch website is now up and running. The address is as follows:

www.sharper14.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/default.html

As it's a bit of a mouthful, make sure you type it in correctly!

The current design is a bit basic, but I hope to improve it soon. Any comments on it will be gratefully received, especially any items that you think should be included and are not.

v Steve Harper

sharper14@currantbun.com

Transect Walker Software Training

This will now be held on Saturday 10 March at the Bishop's Wood Environmental Centre starting at 11.30. Tom Brereton, the national coordinator of the butterfly transect programme, will take the training session.

Tom will give a demonstration on how to use the new software, followed by an opportunity for participants to try it themselves. The session should last 2 - 2.5 hours.

Please let me know before 2 March, on 01684 568415 or email duncanchase@cs.com if you

wish to attend so that we can make the necessary arrangements regarding numbers of computers etc.

Please bring your own lunch.

Directions – North of Worcester on A 449 to Kidderminster. After 6 miles at Crossway Green take A 4025 to Stourport. After 400 yds entrance to Bishop's Wood on the left hand side.

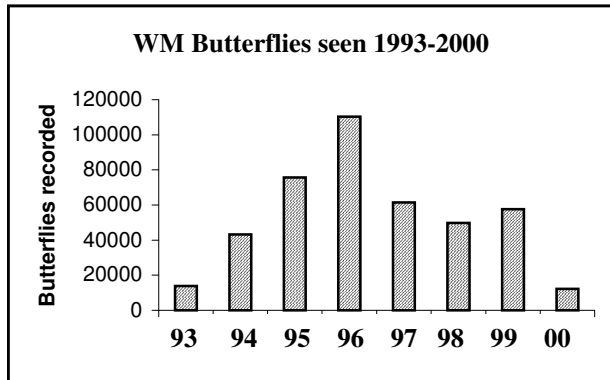
v Ian Duncan

West Midlands butterfly records for the year 2000

Butterfly records from members for the year 2000 were, as expected, far fewer in number than last year. The total number of butterfly date/site records (i.e. columns on the recording form) made in 2000 was 4,017, compared with 17,022 in 1999 and a massive 25,315 in 1996, the highest ever recorded by the West Midlands Branch. This really just shows what a huge effort was made by everybody especially for the Millennium Atlas, which will be published in April. How on earth Andy Nichols managed as Branch Recorder during the Millennium Atlas years, I

shall never know. The date/site records for 1993, before Atlas records started, total 3,402 – much the same as last year. The records have now been sent to Butterfly Conservation's head office for inclusion in the national data base. Of course, the number of butterflies seen is much larger. The following bar chart shows the minimum number of butterflies recorded by West Midlands members between 1993 and 2000. These data illustrate very clearly one of our major problems: We are measuring the numbers of observers quite accurately, but changes in butterfly numbers are

completely lost unless more sophisticated analysis is done.



I would like to thank everybody who sent in records, listed below and offer my apologies to anybody that I have inadvertently omitted. Especial thanks are due to Guenter Petters and my wife Christine who entered data and without whom the project could not have been completed in time.

recorders use non-standard forms or use the forms in an unusual way (for example entering multiple dates per column). This current batch of data contains 9 different formats – hint hint! This newsletter contains a preferred type recording form.

I have converted all our Levana records (1980-2000) to a spreadsheet format, which makes it possible to select many particularly interesting sets of data. For example, where people have taken frequent records in one place, especially over several years, something pretty well equivalent to a transect can be extracted. I have entered a few such to “Transect Walker”, the new software designed to record and display transect data and hope to investigate the results when time allows. Most such sites are urban, where traditional transects are often impossible to set up. Urban records are of particular interest at the moment, as you will no doubt read elsewhere in this Newsletter.

In contrast to some, I particularly welcome

Levana Contributors for the year 2000		
Mrs. J. Allen	Steve Harper	John Norton
Jeff Andrews	Michael Hayward	Beryl & Guenter Petters
Jean Armstrong	Keith Heaven	D.G. Simmonds
F. Banyard	Terry Higgins	Michael Southall
Simon Barber	Brian Hogbin	Richard Southwell
Brian Bull	Alan & Margaret Holder	M.R. Thomas
Christine & Jim Chance	Jenny Joy	Paul Townsend
Andrew Curran	Joan King	D.R. Twist
Pat Davies	Phyl King	Douglas Welch
John Dodgson	Richard Lamb	Geoff Williams
Anita Ferguson	Ronald McLaren	John Wills
Steve Groome	Andy Nichols	

As this is my first year as Branch Recorder, perhaps you will let me tell you some of the facts of life about entering records to the Levana software package and forgive me a small ‘moan’ in the process. Everybody copying data to a computer seems to make about 5% of errors, i.e. 1 column in 20 has a mistake. This means that all the data must be gone through a second time for checking and correction. This is all very time-consuming. The situation is made worse when

records of the supposedly common species. While rarities are, of course interesting, especially for the recorder, it is only with the common butterflies that the numbers recorded get large enough to do any meaningful analysis.

Once again, many thanks to all our faithful butterfly recorders; please keep the recording going during 2001.

v Jim Chance

The Shropshire Moth Group

The Shropshire Moth Group was formed at the back end of last year by myself and other colleagues both within and outside of the West Midlands Butterfly Conservation group with a view to collating existing moth work done within the county of Shropshire. Also, and perhaps

more importantly for the future, encouraging others to get involved as “mothing” becomes more popular and more organised, thanks to the Biodiversity Action Plan process both regionally and nationally.

There - does that sound as though we are a group who knows what we are doing? Well I would like to think so but also I would like to believe that we get much fun and enjoyment out of moth trapping too. Anyone who has stood rubbing their hands together and making the appropriate " brrrrrrr " noises at midnight plus on a frosty March evening so they can get species of **Quaker** moths to add to their site list might not concur but mostly moth trapping is fun.

The feeling that generally dominates is one of anticipation - What will come to the trap next? - Are the bats swirling and dipping overhead going to eat all of my potential catch? - Will tonight end up with an obscure micro that leads to my name going down in history? - Or will I just end up being assaulted by **Large Yellow Underwing** moths as usual?

So the group will, hopefully, attract both serious trappers and novices alike - we all have to learn somehow and I can assure you I' ve still lots to learn. Nevertheless I would hope that the group can achieve some of its founding targets within

the near future. We' ve already established a moth programme for the summer as part of the West Midlands Butterfly Conservation events programme (see programme elsewhere in this Newsletter) plus all records received will go to the official county recorder, and be used towards moth conservation in the county. Therefore I would appeal to anyone who traps in Shropshire, constantly, regularly, occasionally, intermittently or once in a blue moon, as well as recorders of day flying moths and larvae to send their records with date and grid reference to:

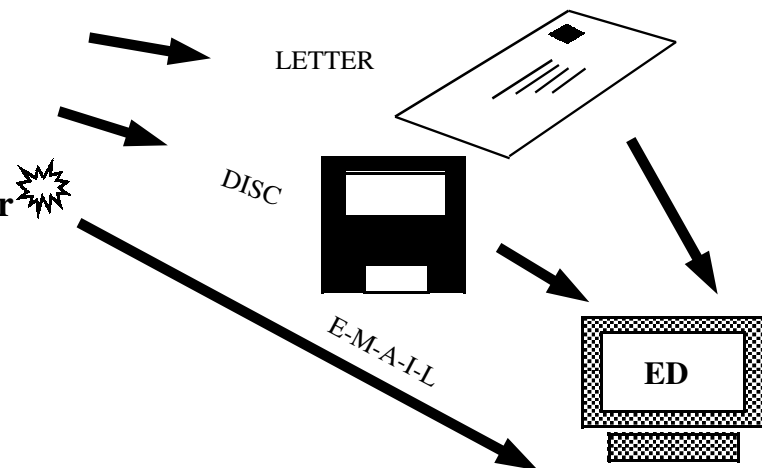
The Shropshire Moth Group
 Peter Boardman
 7 High Street
 Weston Rhyn
 Shropshire
 SY10 7RP

email : peperouda@btinternet.com

v Peter Boardman

Instructions for Contributors

Deadline for Summer Newsletter contributions is Friday 29 June 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 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.

v Christine Chance
 harborchristine@aol.com

Butterfly Conservation West Midlands Branch

Minutes of the AGM

Greenwood Trust, Ironbridge, Shropshire 4 November 2000.

The chairman, Ian Duncan, opened the proceeding by welcoming everybody to the first AGM to be held in Shropshire. Apologies were received from Frank Lancaster, Jim and Christine Chance, Mark Farmer, Andy Nicholls and Jeff Andrews. The minutes of the previous AGM were approved and there were no matters arising. The following committee members were re-elected after 3 years office, Richard Southwell, Terry Smith, Christine Chance and Ian Duncan. The co-opted members were Jenny Joy and Peter Boardman. The chairman thanked Mike Williams for his tremendous contribution as Conservation Officer for over 20 years and explained the replacement structure. Jenny Joy will co-ordinate conservation in the West Midlands with the following committee members: Jenny Joy (Shropshire), David Jackson (Staffordshire), Trevor Bucknall (Worcestershire) and Andy Nicholls (Herefordshire). In his chairman's report Ian Duncan highlighted the successes for the Branch over the past year:

Chairman's Report

- (a) Over 300 people attending the National AGM that we hosted in Malvern.
- (b) There has been a record number of new members with our membership rising to about 450 throughout the region.
- (c) Our Branch received a high profile exposure on BBC Countryfile, thanks to the efforts of Frank Lancaster and Richard Southwell.
- (d) The moth group has gone from strength to strength and a moth atlas for Herefordshire and Worcestershire is currently being produced in conjunction with the County Moth Recorders: Mike Harper and Tony Simpson. This will serve as a bench mark for all future publications as it is the first such publication. It will be published in two parts: macro moths (650) and then micro moths (850).
- (e) Trevor Bucknall is now organising work parties. He is always looking for volunteers to play a vital role in BC.
- (f) The West Midlands Branch has now gone High Tech with the creation of two separate web-sites covering the Branch and the moth group.
- (g) Thanks to various Branch members' efforts, a sizeable amount of land has been set

aside for the **Dingy Skipper** at a proposed housing development in Walsall (Anchor Meadow).

- (h) The seminar on **Fritillaries** was held in Malvern earlier this year and was well attended.
- (i) Transect recording is on the up with 10 more being walked compared to last year, bringing the total to 40. These are vitally important for recording. Volunteers are needed for transects in Shropshire and Staffordshire!
- (j) A butterfly trail has been established in Haugh Wood, Herefordshire.

The chairman ended his report by stating that all of this work has been carried out by volunteers and he expressed his thanks to the committee and other members.

Butterfly Web-site: Steve Harper discussed the Branch web-site which has had its first public airing. It can be found at:

www.sharper14.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/default.html

He made a plea for help in making the site more interesting by contributing photos as prints through the post or emailed to sharper14@currantbun.com.

Treasurer's Report Terry Smith said there has been a slight loss this year due to donations and income from the lottery grant being used for conservation work. Lottery monies were received in 1999, but not spent until 2000, therefore some expenditure was carried over. There is still money in the Prees Heath fund, making some interest. A balance of £10,204 has been brought forward. The accounts were approved by the members present.

Conservation Officer's Report: Mike Williams gave his final report, saying that conservation had changed direction in this 21st anniversary year. The work of the Millennium Atlas has made us realise that numbers of butterflies are still decreasing despite all out efforts. We have therefore recognised the importance not just of continuing work on reserves, but also within the wider countryside. This is being achieved through increased co-ordination with Forest Enterprise, Malvern Hills Conservators, private site owners and Commoners. Biodiversity Action Plans have been drawn up in conjunction with local authorities. Also priorities stated in Regional Action Plans have led to the

establishment of good working relationships, for example in the case of Anchor Meadow. We have indeed realised the significance of urban areas such as quarries, railway lines and urban waste grounds. Mike ended his report by thanking committee and Branch members for their support in achieving what we have done.

Moth Report: Neil Gregory opened his report by explaining the purpose of this developing side to BC: discovering where the moths are and how to conserve them. He showed the Skinner mercury vapour moth trap that was bought earlier this year with branch funds. This is available to any BC member who wishes to use it. Neil talked about the 12 trapping sessions held this year which produced some interesting results despite poor weather. The highlight of the year was the discovery of **Pauper Pug** (a red data book species) in Shrawley Wood, Worcestershire. The culmination of this year's moth events was the National Moth Night. This is organised by Atropos and aims to raise the profile of moth recording. We had good publicity beforehand including reports in local newspapers and a live interview with BBC Hereford and Worcester. Next year the moth group aims to continue night time recording sessions, but also to diversify our interests with day time trips and looking for caterpillars and leaf miners.

Day Events for butterflies: Butterfly events were surprisingly badly attended this year in

contrast to the well attended moth events, suggesting a changing emphasis. Next year there will still be two national trips as well as regional visits and practical sessions, for example how to do a transect walk. Our thanks go to Mark Farmer for arranging this year's visits. There being no other business, the morning session closed with a showing of the BBC Countryfile programme in the Wyre Forest.

Butterflies in Shropshire: Jenny Joy gave an enlightening and interesting slide presentation on the butterflies of Shropshire. She discussed a selection of the many sites in Shropshire that she has been involved with in terms of monitoring and management, including Prees Heath Common with its associated **Silver-Studded Blues**, the National Trust Estate at Dudmaston, Whixall Moss, Stiperstones and Granville Country Park. She highlighted the point raised earlier that butterflies can be just as abundant in urban areas if these are managed well. She gave the example of Telford which was planned with "green corridors" throughout.

Thanks go to J.P.Brayford and the staff at Greenwood for organising the event.

Speckled Yellow Moth (*Pseudopanthera macularia*)

This attractive little Geometrid moth is often seen flying in woodlands and scrubby places on warm sunny days. A day flying moth, it is frequently disturbed by walkers. Its markings are yellow with a variable amount of blackish spots, blotches or bands. The caterpillar is a well camouflaged green with white lines and stripes and a shining green head. You will find the one inch larva in July and August on wood sage, woundwort, dead nettle and yellow archangel. It hibernates as a pupa and then will emerge to fly from late May through June to even the beginning of July.

This moth is found over the whole of Europe. It is widely distributed and generally common in the Southern half of England. In Worcestershire it is described as being local and less common due to some restriction in habitat.

This is an excellent moth to add to a transect walk as it is readily identifiable and adds an extra bit of interest to days when there are fewer butterflies about.

v Neil Gregory

New Members

Owing to the reorganisation of Head Office, the new members list is delayed and should appear in the Summer Newsletter – Ed.

Conservation Corner

Having agreed to take over the role of overall conservation officer for the West Midlands Branch as well as for the county of Shropshire, I am now beginning to wonder what I have let myself in for - especially after I met Mike for a hand-over meeting and I was left with the contents of several filing cabinets and bookcases! Having spent the last couple of evenings looking through some of these papers and reports I am left with an overwhelming impression that Mike must have devoted a good proportion of his life to the conservation of butterflies in this area. It was Mike who first introduced me to Butterfly Conservation when I was undertaking my first ever piece of work on butterflies up on Fenn's and Whixall Mosses and it is Mike who I have regularly contacted over the last ten years to ask for information and advice. I think he will be a very hard act to follow. Nevertheless, as things have been gradually changing on the conservation side of the West Midlands Branch over the past few years, particularly with the appointment of county conservation officers who will hopefully handle some of the work which was previously co-ordinated by Mike, I hope the role of overall conservation officer for the Branch is one that I can achieve alongside the demands of a young family. I plan to continue with Conservation Corner in the same sort of format as before - as Mike said in his last article it has appeared in every newsletter since 1982 and it would be a great shame to lose it now.

Priority butterflies:

The year 2000 was a year of mixed fortunes for the priority butterflies of our region. It was a reasonably good year for species such as the **Wood White**, **Small Blue**, **Silver-studded Blue** and **Duke of Burgundy** but generally a poor year for the **High Brown Fritillary**, **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**.

The dismal fortunes of the High Brown Fritillary in the Midlands:

It is very sad to acknowledge that despite all the bracken management work that has been carried out in the West Midlands, the numbers of **High Brown Fritillary** remain critically low. The annual index for the **High Brown** in 2000 was nine in the Malverns, two at both Bromyard and Bircher Common, and zero at Chase End Hill. However, a new phase in the management history of the Malverns has just been reached with the appointment of a full time shepherd and the purchase of a flock of sheep (see Digby Wood's article in this issue). We shall have to wait and

see whether sheep grazing can bring about a reversal in the fortunes of the **High Brown** in the Malverns. Unfortunately, the long term outlook for **High Brown Fritillary** at Bromyard in Herefordshire does not look very bright. Despite trying very hard with various management options (bracken braking and cutting), these seem to have had little impact and the overall impression of this site is still solid bracken. The only viable long term management option to sustain the High Brown Fritillary at the site is again perhaps grazing. Grazing would however be very difficult to bring about here as the site is common land with a major trunk road through it. The catastrophic decline at Bircher Common, in recent years the strongest West Midlands' colony, is particularly worrying as this is the site that has seen the most intensive management over the years including regular grazing as well as cutting by the National Trust.

Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries:

During 2000, the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** was only recorded on three out of six transects which used to record this species. While the **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** was recorded on four out of five transects, on two of these transects only singletons were seen. In the Wyre Forest, numbers of both **Pearl-bordered** and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** are steadily decreasing from high numbers recorded in the mid-1990's. For example, at Shelfheld Coppice (Wyre Forest, Worcestershire) the annual index for **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** declined from 55 in 1996 to 1 in 2000. In the Malverns, no **Pearl-bordered** or **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** have been recorded on the transect for the past three years and on Coppett Hill (Herefordshire) the annual index for **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** has fallen from a high of 43 in 1997 to 0 in 2000. Unless we can take some more positive steps to bring about a reversal in the fortunes of these fritillaries, we are in danger of losing them from a number of sites.

Prees Heath in North Shropshire:

This is the last remaining site for the **Silver-studded Blue** butterfly in the midlands. The sad saga of this site continues with the latest subject of controversy being the large scale dumping of chicken manure and egg shells adjacent to the SSSI. The scale of this dumping is vast, the smell is over-powering and the anger of local people immense. I find it hard to accept that we can do so little to protect a site that is cared about by so

many. As the dumping is not on the SSSI there is little EN can do and the Environment Agency and the Department of Environmental Health in North Shropshire say there is little they can do either. On a more positive note, English Nature plan to have a meeting with the main agricultural tenant involved with the chicken waste, to try to encourage him to into a management agreement over land adjacent to the SSSI so that this problem does not happen again. Another possible way forward is to try to impose the legislation in the new CROW act (The Countryside and Rights of Way Act) on the landowners (Prees Heath Limited) to make sure that they manage this land for its nature conservation interest more positively. This is action for the future; all we can do for now is to make a noise about this latest problem and how little we can actually do right now!

Grafton Wood in Worcestershire:

This is another site where there have been some recent management problems. In early autumn 2000 problems included sheep coming into the wood from an adjacent orchard and rides not being mown/flailed at the most appropriate time. This was then followed in late autumn by the breaking down of a fence and the totally inappropriate cutting of blackthorn by contractors which undoubtedly led to the loss of some **Brown Hairstreak** eggs from the site. The loss of the blackthorn was largely down to a communication problem and clearly illustrates how important it is to ensure that contractors are fully aware of the importance of a site. Unfortunately, it is not always possible for BC members to be present on sites during working days so that we will have to continue to rely on other organisations to get our messages through. On a more positive note, the second **Brown Hairstreak** count of the season has just been undertaken here and it confirmed the impression that numbers were well up on the previous year. Several hedgerows produced counts over 100% higher than in 1999/2000 with a hedgerow on the eastern side of the wood recording the highest egg number in ten years of monitoring. Last year this hedgerow was flailed in advance of the winter egg search and not a single egg was recorded. Trevor Bucknall has contacted the local farmer who cuts this particular hedge and the farmer has agreed not to cut the hedge this winter but to leave it to next July when **Brown Hairstreaks** should have already left the hedge prior to pupation.

Hawne Colliery in Dudley:

This wildlife haven surrounded by housing and industry continues to attract attention.

Unfortunately, as David White pointed out in his original article on this site (summer newsletter 2000), it is in an area zoned for housing development. A special council forum open to the public was held on 24 January 2001 to determine what should happen to the site. Read the piece by Richard Southwell for the latest update on this site (incidentally I'm sure that anybody who saw the television piece on this site will agree with me that it was very positively presented - well done to all concerned).

Regional Action Plan:

Most of you will probably know that I have been very involved with the production of the Regional Action Plans (RAPs) and have compiled three others since I did the first one for the West Midlands region back in 1997. In the West Midlands, as we have been ahead of the game as far as the RAP is concerned, we have had three years to start implementing some of the priority actions identified in the plan: also ensuring RAP information is used in county Biodiversity Action plans (BAPs) as well as in other council documents (see the separate article in this issue). In November 2000, a RAP workshop was organised through the national conservation office and held in Grange-over-Sands in Cumbria. Several members from the West Midlands region attended this enjoyable and constructive meeting with discussions focussing on the implementation of RAPs and how to take them forward. Feedback methods were also discussed as it is important to review these plans but we all agreed that resources should not be wasted on too many rewrites. I hope that our future annual RAP reviews will be slightly more detailed than the feedback required by the national office but not so detailed that they never get done.

Research and Survey Reports:

Over the years, a tremendous amount of knowledge has been built up in the West Midlands region by surveys and research projects. Several of the boxes I acquired from Mike contained a large number of reports which make really interesting reading - particularly important if you are about to carry out a similar sort of study. When I have time, one of the first things I would like to do is to write a list of all the reports we hold copies of so that anybody looking to do a piece of survey work or research in the West Midlands can learn from the previous work. This list will be available in due course so please do contact me if you wish to have a copy.

v Jenny Joy

Hawne Colliery – present position

The whole of Dudley MBC area has been fully recorded for the Millennium Atlas. The council's UDP is also at drafting stage but the existing document allows development. However, if this happens, then existing policies such as 'Linear Open Space', the recently completed LA21 Plan and the Biodiversity Action Plan will be compromised!

There are enough local groups lobbying against development but only West Midlands Branch is presenting a case based on data recorded over at least three years (see Newsletter Summer 2000). All council decisions must be viewed against the principles of 'Best Value', and this in turn means that the spotlight is now on the owner/developer and council. Since a baseline has been established, whatever happens in the future can be measured. Our data are vital.

There has been much good publicity, with a high profile piece appearing on BBC Midlands Today, along with many mentions on local radio, the quality regional press and all the local freebies. What impressed the media so much was that our case was based on fact.

It is too early to give the final outcome but members from the Branch and the Urban Wildlife Trust are acting as 'advisors' and we will assist the developers, Barratt Homes, with a mandatory 'Environmental Impact Assessment'. To give you a flavour of how important this brownfield site is, out of the 40 transects conducted by the Branch, Hawne had the highest numbers of butterflies last year; the highest sightings of **Common Blue**, was second for **Small Copper** and has a resident **Green Hairstreak** colony. This latter species appears in the council's own Biodiversity Action Plan. Chris Parry of the Urban Wildlife Trust considers it is quite likely there will be a UK Red Data Book species discovered on site.

The BBC is so impressed by the professionalism of our Branch and the society as a whole, that we have been promised two further pieces this year. I recommend you are watching Midlands Today at the time the Atlas is launched on 24 April. Maybe all this will encourage a positive outcome at Hawne Colliery!

v Richard Southwell

STOP PRESS EMAIL FROM MIKE WILLIAMS! - PLEASE NOTE

(1) Change of address – please see back cover of this Newsletter.

(2) Aluminium cans – with my impending move and the fact that we no longer have the National Grid van, I can no longer accept aluminium cans. Please thank those who have taken part in what has proved a good fund raiser for the Branch.

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 – butterflies

Herefordshire conservation days

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.

- 25 March (Sunday) Dulas Court conservation task.** Meet 10.30 am at the entrance. OS Map 149 GR SO372295 details Ian Hart tel: 01981-510259.

Worcestershire conservation days

MARCH

- 4 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood** Meet 10.00 am at reserve entrance on Sinton Green, Monkwood Green Rd. OS map 150 GR SO803603 Glade management.
- 11 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood** Meet 10.00 am at 3-Parishes village hall, Grafton Flyford (next to church, just off A422 Worcester-Stratford Rd.) OS map 150 GR SO963557 Brash

clearing.

- 18 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Great Whitley** (Wallsgrove Hill) Meet at 10.00 am at Gt. Whitley OS map 150 GR SO752662, leader Trevor Bucknall. 01905 755757.
- 25 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood.** Meet 10.00 am at reserve entrance on Sale Green – Dunhampstead Rd. OS map 150 GR SO929588.

Butterfly field trips West Midlands

APRIL

- 7 April (Saturday) Branch Spring Meeting RSPB Reserve Sandwell Valley 2.00 pm**
See page 3 for map and full details

MAY

- 19 May (Saturday) Saltwells Nature Reserve (Merry Hill) 11.00 am target species Green Hairstreak** Meet on outside concourse by Harry Ramsden, situated in the North-East of the Merry Hill Complex, adjacent to Debenhams (easily spotted from the road running between Merry Hill and Saltwells NR). Park in car park 6. Map 139 GR SO926873 Details Richard Southwell 01384-397066 after 4.00 pm.
- 20 May (Sunday) Ewas Harold Common & Whitney Wood 11.00 am target species Pearl-Bordered Fritillary.** GR SO382302. Details Jeff Andrews 01432-870301
- 27 May (Sunday) Bury Ditches, Clunton.** Meet 11.00 am in car park, target species

Wood White, Wall Brown, Green Hairstreak. GR SO334839 details Bill Davidson 01588-640727

- 27 May (Sunday) Great Whitley 11.00 am. Meet at Hundred House PH, target species Wood white and Dingy Skipper.** OS map 150 GR SO752662, details Trevor Bucknall 01905-755757

JUNE

- 3 June (Sunday) Coach trip to Gower Peninsular and Kenfig,** details page 3, booking form enclosed.
- 20 June (Wednesday) Joint meeting with walk organised by Walsall MBC 2.00 – 4.00 pm.** Meet Anchor Health Centre, Aldridge (opposite Sainsbury). Car park at rear of Health Centre (toilets available). Visits to Anchor Meadow and Leighswood. Target species Purple Hairstreak. Map 139 GR OS SK054013. Details Dave Jackson 01902-344716

JULY

- 7 **July (Saturday) Bircher Common, meet 11.00 am at Highwood End Gate at bottom of lane, passing Croft Castle. Look for NT signs. Target Species High Brown Fritillary.** Map 138 GR SO458658 details Andy Nicholls 01432-275834.
- 8 **July (Sunday) Coach trip to Whitbarrow Crag, Cumbria. Target species and details page 3.** Booking form enclosed.
- 14 **July (Saturday) Baggeridge Country Park. Meet 11.00 am at Baggeridge Visitor Centre.** Birds and butterflies. Joint trip with Wolverhampton RSPB. A walk from visitor centre to Himley and return. A gentle walk, about 1.5 miles each way. From A449 Kidderminster to Wolverhampton Rd. leave at junction with A463 Wodehouse Lane. Follow towards Sedgley, entrance to Baggeridge Country Park on right. Visitor Centre about 400 yards. Toilets and cafeteria available. Map 139 GR OS SO896937. Details Dave Jackson 01902-344716
- 14 **July (Saturday) Saltwells Nature Reserve (Merry Hill) 11.00 am target species Marbled White** Meet on outside concourse by Harry Ramsden, situated in the North-East of the Merry Hill Complex, adjacent to Debenhams (easily spotted from the road, running between Merry Hill and Saltwells NR). Park in car park 6. Map 139 GR SO926873. Details Richard Southwell 01384-397066 after 4.00 pm.
- 15 **July (Sunday) Grafton Wood. Meet 11.00 am at 3-Parishes Hall, by the Church, Flyford Flavel off A422 Worcester to Stratford Rd. Target species White Admiral.** Details Trevor Bucknall 01905-755757
- 21 **July (Saturday) Haugh Wood 11.00 am in**

car park. Butterfly walks throughout the day
Map 149 GR SO593363. Details Andy Nicholls 01432-275834

- 22 **July (Sunday) Linton Wood near Dymock at minor road. past Ross Golf Club. Target species White Admiral & Silver-washed Fritillary.** Map 149 GR SO668265 details Jeff Andrews 01432-870301

AUGUST

- 11 **August (Saturday) Monkwood – A day with the Hoppers (looking for grasshoppers & crickets) 10.30 am-2.00 pm.** Meet in car park off Sinton Green/ Monkwood Green Rd. OS map 150 GR SO803603. Charge **£1 adults 50p children.** Please give your name & phone no. to Paddy Harrison 01905-641523 if you plan to attend. Leader Garry Farmer

SEPTEMBER

Events still to be arranged

OCTOBER

- 13 **October (Saturday) Monkwood Fungus Foray and Feast, 10.30 am-2.00 pm** Meet in car park off Sinton Green/Monkwood Green Rd. OS map 150 GR SO803603. **Charge £2.00.** Please give your name & phone no. to Paddy Harrison 01905-641523 if you plan to attend. Leaders Diana & Tim Bateman.

Millennium Moths: The Moth Group 2000 into 2001

The group continues to go from strength to strength. We managed to trap 184 species of macro- and 63 species of micro-moth at the 15 events in Worcestershire and Herefordshire. This compares to the 140 macro- and 20 micro-moths we have identified in our garden! Unfortunately the cold and wet weather was against us for many events this year. Some nights were cancelled while others were only for the brave and weather-hardened "mothers" – and moths. A few nights were memorable for the wrong reasons; we were literally washed out of Shrawley Wood and Haugh Wood, the latter during a fierce overhead thunderstorm.

However, despite the elements, some notable species were discovered. In Shrawley Wood, the excitement was almost tangible from Tony Simpson as he became more and more convinced that a small, dull looking pug was in fact a **Pauper Pug**, a first for the county. What's more, the only other records for Great Britain are a few in Kent. This species being a small-leaved lime feeder and is a RDB3 species. Shrawley Wood also had the second UK site record for **Dichomeris australella**. A **Blomer's Rivulet** was found on Crew's Hill. In Herefordshire, there was a new county record of **Capperia britannodactyla** in Queen's Wood. Haugh Wood had its first records of **Lesser Treble-bar** and **Marbled Brown** and second record for the **Tissue**. At High Vinnalls the rare **Pandemis cinnemanni** and **Blastobasis lignea** which is new to the site.

A combined event at Roundhill Wood caught 29 species including the startling **Red Underwing**. These were mostly new records for the site due to under recording. St. Wulstans Local Nature Reserve in Welland also produced 34 species. Our first daytime event (on Castlemorton Common) proved successful, with several fast flying female **Emperor Moths** of note within the region.

The year was not without its customary visit from the Police. Deep in the woods of High Vinnalls, we were surprised to be approached by a rather burly, no-nonsense-tolerating Police Woman. Appearances were deceptive and it was difficult to

discern who was the more amazed at the sight they beheld. Apparently it is a hot spot for suicides, especially by owners of GTI cars (no names mentioned). Just what we wanted to know while out on a dark night.

This coming year, over 40 separate events have been organised. We have various aims in mind, namely sustaining recording on Butterfly Conservation's own reserves (this year also including Monkwood) as well as regular monitoring in the Wyre Forest and the coppiced areas within Haugh Wood. However, perhaps our main aim this year is to capitalise on the growing interest in moths and broaden the area covered by events. We have joined forces with Dave Grundy's Walsall "mothing" group as well as Pete Boardman's newly-formed moth group in Shropshire. Following successful partnerships with the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, we will also join forces with other organisations such as the National Trust and the British Entomological Society. National Moth Night will be taking place in August, with separate events in each county open to the public.

It is all very well and good to enjoy the moth recording nights. However, we are beginning to feel that our knowledge needs to be furthered and our horizons broadened. This year we aim to incorporate a wider range of recording methods, such as beating for larvae and 'treacling'. We have also enlisted the help of our expert County Recorders, Tony Simpson and Michael Harper, for some 'educative' practical sessions. These, along with some other events will be held during the daytime to encourage those Butterfly Conservation members who shrink at the thought of meeting after dark deep in a wood far from civilisation (that's part of the fun – honest!).

Finally, one point of note: it is essential that people wishing to attend moth evenings contact the leader beforehand. This will avoid people travelling, possibly long distances, to find that we have all already left the meeting place. It is not so easy to catch up with the group in the dark!

v Corinna and Neil Gregory

The moth programme for 2001 follows overleaf:

Please note that the list is rather long, partly because several **events are often run on the same day**. You may have to choose your own preference.

Dates for your Diary – moths

MARCH

- 2 **March (Friday), Wyre Forest, 19:00** Meet at Lodgehill Farm. OS Map 138, SO759766. Contact Rosemary Winnall.
- 23 **March (Friday), High Vinnalls, 19:00.** Target species **Silvery Arches** larvae. Meet in car park OS Map 138, SO474732. This will be weather dependent - must contact if attending.

APRIL

- 6 **April (Friday), Wyre Forest, 19:00,** Meet at Lodgehill Farm. OS Map 138, SO759766. Contact Rosemary Winnall.

MAY

- 4 **May (Friday), Wyre Forest, 19:00,** Meet at Lodgehill Farm. OS Map 138, SO759766. Contact Rosemary Winnall.
- 19 **May (Saturday), Briar Hill, Droitwich, 14:00.** Target species **Burnet Companion.** Meet in lay-by OS Map 150, SO883627. A walk around reserve led by Geoff Trevis (WLT) followed by evening' s trapping at 20:00.
- 26 **May (Saturday), Piper' s Hill, Droitwich, 20:00.** Target species **Barred Hooktip.** Meet in car park OS Map 150, SO957653.

JUNE

- 1 **June (Friday), Wyre Forest, 19:00,** Meet at Lodgehill Farm. OS Map 138, SO759766. Contact Rosemary Winnall.
- 2 **June (Saturday), Shrawley Wood, 20:30.** Target species **Pauper Pug.** Meet in car park at end of lane leading up to gated entrance of wood directly opposite New Inn, OS Map 150, SO801664.
- 8 **June (Friday), Chaddesley Wood, 20:30.** Meet by gate off the road, OS Map 139, SO915736.
- 8 **June (Friday), The Cliffe, 21:00,** Meet at Clifton House, OS Map 126, SJ395217. Event in association with the Friends of the Cliffe. Essential to bring a torch. Contact Pete Boardman.
- 1 **June (Saturday), Haugh Wood, 21:00.** Meet in car park, OS Map 149, SO593365.
- 16 **June (Saturday), Briar Hill, Droitwich, 21:00.** Meet in lay-by OS Map 150, SO883627.
- 23 **June (Saturday), Windmill Hill, 21:30.** Target species **Reddish Light Arches, Pale Shining Brown.** Park on the roadside opposite the entrance to the reserve, on the B4510 just before the brow of the hill, OS Map 150, SP072477.

- 23 **June (Saturday), Martineau Centre, Edgbaston, 21:00.** Meet Martineau Centre, Priory Rd., at gate off road, OS Map 139, SP061846. Public event contact Dave Grundy.

- 30 **June (Saturday), Wyre Forest EN centre, 14:00.** Talk given by Tony Simpson (Worcs County Moth Recorder) about **pyralid moths**, followed by practical session 'in the field'. Meet at visitor centre car park, OS Map 138, SO752741.

- 30 **June (Saturday), Old Walsall Airport, 21:00.** Look for airport sign (disused!), off Bosty Lane, OS Map 139, SP050994. Public event contact Dave Grundy.

JULY

- 6 **July (Friday), Wyre Forest, 19:00,** Meet at Lodgehill Farm. OS Map 138, SO759766. Contact Rosemary Winnall.
- 7 **July (Saturday), Chaddesley Wood, 14:30** then 20:30. Meet by gate off the road, OS Map 139, SO915736. In association with the British Entomological Society.
- 7 **July (Saturday), High Vinnalls, 20:30.** Meet in car park OS Map 138, SO474732.
- 14 **July (Saturday), Shrawley Wood, 14:30.** Target species **Pauper Pug larvae. 21:30** Target species **Scarce Hooktip.** Meet in car park at end of lane leading up to gated entrance of wood directly opposite New Inn, OS Map 150, SO801664.
- 14 **July (Saturday), Sandwell Valley RSPB Centre, 21:00.** Meet in RSPB visitor centre, OS Map 139, SP035928. Public event: bats and moths. Contact Dave Grundy.
- 20 **July (Friday), Grafton Wood, 20:30.** Meet in 3 Parishes car park, OS Map 150, SO963557. 1 mile to trapping site. Contact Mike Williams.
- 21 **July (Saturday), Fenn' s, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses NNR, 21:00.** Target species **Northern Footman.** Meet at north side of Morris' s bridge crossing at track to Furber' s scapyard. OS Map 126, SJ04355. In association with English Nature / Countryside Council for Wales. Essential to bring a torch. Contact Pete Boardman.
- 21 **July (Saturday), Park Lime Pits, Walsall, 20:30.** Meet in car park at end of Park Road, beyond Manor Arms Pub, OS Map 139, SK032002. Public event: bats and moths. Contact Dave Grundy.
- 28 **July (Saturday), The Cliffe, 21:00.** Meet at Clifton House, OS Map 126, SJ395217. In association with the Friends of the Cliffe. Contact Pete Boardman.

- 28 **July (Saturday), Monkwood, 21:00.** Meet in car park, OS Map 150, SO803603.
- 28 **July (Saturday), Haugh Wood, 21:00.** Meet in car park, OS Map 149, SO593365.

AUGUST

- 3 **August (Friday), Wyre Forest, 19:00,** Meet at Lodgehill Farm. OS Map 138, SO759766. Contact Rosemary Winnall.
- 4 **August (Saturday), Feckenham Wylde Moor, 21:00** Target species: **reedbed specialities.** Meet off main road, OS Map 150, SP012603.
- 11 **August (Saturday), National Moth Night, Trench Wood, 20:00.** Target species: **White Spotted Pinion.** Meet in car park, OS Map 150, SO928589.
- 11 **August (Saturday), National Moth Night, Wigmore Rolls, 20:30.** Meet next to church in Wigmore, OS Map 137, SO415690.
- 11 **August (Saturday), National Moth Night, Long Mynd, 21:30.** Meet at Carding Mill Valley, OS Map 137, SO441949. In association with National Trust. Contact Pete Boardman.
- 18 **August (Saturday), Chaddesley Wood, 20:30.** Meet by gate off the road, OS Map 139, SO915736.
- 18 **August (Saturday), Sutton Park, Sutton Coldfield, 20:30.** Target species **Angle-striped Sallow.** Meet by Boldmere Gate into Sutton Park, OS Map 139, SK107953. Please meet promptly, we will then drive beyond locked gates! Contact Dave Grundy.
- 25 **August (Saturday), Fenn' s, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses NNR, 21:00.** Meet at north side of Morris' s bridg crossing at track to Furber' s scrapyard. OS Map 126, SJ494355. In association with English Nature / Countryside Council for Wales. Essential to bring a torch. Contact Pete Boardman.
- 25 **August (Saturday), Haugh Wood, 20:30.** Meet in car park, OS Map 149, SO593365

SEPTEMBER

- 1 **September (Saturday), Uffmoor Wood, 20:00.** Meet in main Woodland Trust car park on minor road heading south off A456 westbound carriageway near Halesowen, OS Map 139, SO949912. Contact Dave Grundy.
- 7 **September (Friday), Wyre Forest, 19:00,** Meet at Lodgehill Farm. OS Map 138, SO759766. Contact Rosemary Winnall.
- 8 **September (Saturday), Kinsham Lake, Kemerton Estate, 19:30.** Meet by church in Overbury, OS Map 150, SO947374. Contact Ian Duncan.
- 15 **September (Saturday), Hartlebury Common, 19:30.** Target species **heath specialities,** Meet in Wilden Top Car Park, on B4193 road, Stourport to Hartlebury, OS Map 138, SO827715. Contact Dave Grundy.

OCTOBER

- 5 **October (Friday), Wyre Forest, 19:00,** Meet at Lodgehill Farm. OS Map 138, SO759766. Contact Rosemary Winnall.
- 6 **October (Saturday), Wyre Forest EN centre, 14:00.** Talk given by Michael Harper (Herefs County Moth Recorder) about **leaf miners,** followed by practical session 'in the field'. Meet at visitor centre car park, OS Map 138, SO752741

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