



No. 49

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2001

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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Chairman's notes Summer 2001

Foot and Mouth

We have decided to bring forward the publication of this newsletter to update members on the impact of the foot and mouth outbreak on our activities. We include in this newsletter a copy of the official Butterfly Conservation position as well as a thought-provoking view on the situation by one of our members. We would welcome any other members' views on the subject. As I write this in late May, most of the countryside is still closed with no prospect of a significant change in the near future. This is very frustrating for all of us, however it does mean we will never take unrestricted access for granted again.

Fortunately, not all recording has ceased; some

site owners, particularly the Wildlife Trusts and Forest Enterprise are allowing butterfly transects to continue, subject to MAFF guidelines. In addition, urban recording is unaffected. We are trying to ensure, in consultation with the relevant authorities, that the monitoring of our high priority species can go ahead despite the restrictions.

We have had to cancel many of our field trips, work parties and moth nights until further notice. Some of these may go ahead in urban settings and elsewhere later in the summer. **Before attending any of the planned events please check with the leader before hand on the status.**

On a more optimistic note, this does provide an opportunity for us to get to know our gardens better and also to record more in urban settings

Who knows what we may discover?

P.S. The moth turned out to be a Golden Twin-spot.

v Ian Duncan

Coming Events

Opening of new butterfly trails Haugh Wood – 21 July

On Saturday 21 July, new butterfly trails will be opened at Haugh Wood. This is a joint venture between Forest Enterprise and Butterfly Conservation. Chairman Steven Jeffcoate will be present to represent Butterfly Conservation. Walks will take place from 11 am onwards including the afternoon. For further details contact Andy Nicholls (01432-275834) or Jeff Andrews (01432-870301)

Butterfly Walks

The butterfly walks at Anchor Meadow – 20 June, Baggeridge Country Park and Saltwells - 14 July and Haugh Wood butterfly trails 21 July are confirmed. **Members planning to attend any**

other butterfly walk or moth night must contact the leader first to check that the event is still taking place.

Additional Moth Night

Please note that a moth night has been arranged for Saturday 21 July at Knapp and Paper Mill. Meet in the reserve car park OS Map 150 SO 748522. Contact warden Fergus Henderson on 01886 832065

Moth night cancelled

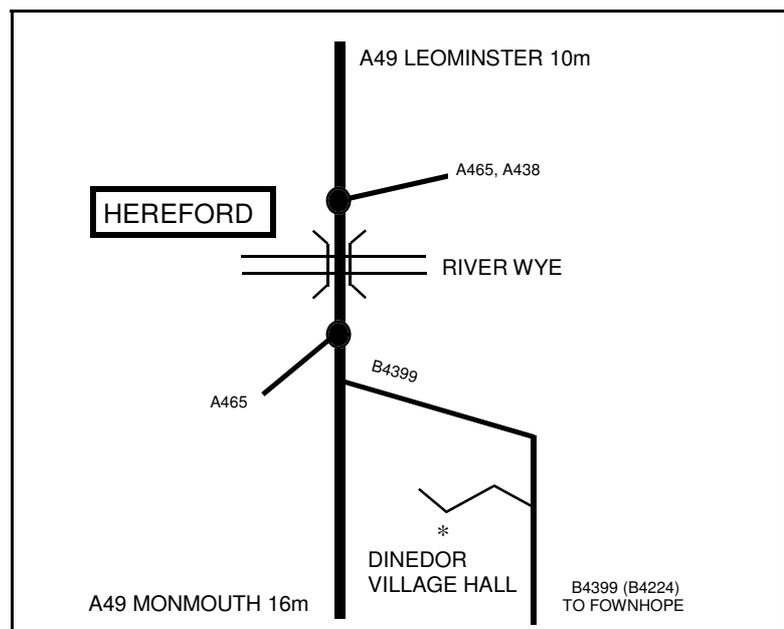
The moth night planned for the 28 July, The Cliffe in association with friends of The Cliffe has been cancelled.

West Midlands Branch AGM Saturday 20 October

Continuing the policy of holding meetings in different parts of the Branch area, this year's AGM will be held in Herefordshire a few miles from Hereford itself in the Village Hall at Dinedor. The meeting will begin at 2 pm. The speaker will be Nick Greatorex-Davies who will be speaking about the history of transects and also about fritillaries.

How to get there?

In Hereford City, take the A49 southbound. Half a mile south of the river, turn left on to the B4399 to Fownhope. After 2.8 miles turn right to the village of Dinedor and you will find the village hall on the left hand side after about 700 yards. OS map 149, grid ref. SO 535366.



Tropical Paradise

I am investigating the possibilities of a butterfly/birding trip to Trinidad next April. Trinidad is in the southern Caribbean and boasts many of the species associated with the rainforests of South America. The holiday would be based at the well known Asa Wright Nature Centre in the north of the island situated in an area of lush, tropical rainforest overlooking the Arima Valley. The location is stunning with a fantastic array of butterflies and birds to be seen without leaving the verandah of the Centre. No fewer than 630 species of butterfly are found in Trinidad, and April, when the weather is normally warm and dry, should be a good time to visit. Butterflies include the spectacular **Blue Morphos** and **Owl** butterflies together with a wide range of colourful Nymphalids and strikingly beautiful **Skippers**. Many of the species only familiar to us in butterfly houses can be seen in their natural habitat plus lots, lots more. In the evenings, we should be able to sample a huge variety of moths and other creatures of the night like Praying Mantids and tree frogs. The Asa Wright Centre is set in its own 200 acre former cocoa estate with habitats ranging from dry grassland, through mangrove swamp to montane rainforest. Birds are no less spectacular with up to seven different species of

Hummingbird visiting special feeders on the verandah. Over 170 species have been recorded in the Arima Valley alone including Toucans, Manakins, Tanagers and Honeycreepers. We will also have an opportunity of seeing other exotic species like Oilbirds, Red-bellied Macaws and Scarlet Ibis during our 10 day stay. If conditions are suitable we may even see leatherback turtles at their nesting beaches. Accommodation is very comfortable with each room being fully ensuite and with its own balcony. Food has a good reputation with a mixture of European and Caribbean dishes on offer rounded off with home grown coffee and a free glass of rum punch at sunset. Costs will depend on numbers but should work out at under £2,000 per person (all inclusive). If you are interested please get in touch asap - tel. 01299 824860. I am only looking at taking around 12 people and I have six bookings already!

v Mike Williams

Reports on Trips

West Midlands Branch Spring Meeting 7 April 2001 Sandwell Valley Reserve

In spite of the many closures occasioned by the Foot and Mouth epidemic, a successful Spring Meeting was held at the RSPB reserve in Sandwell Valley. Rather more than 30 members heard Dr. Byron Wood speaking on urban butterflies and Alison Loram talking about her work on the determinants of the presence or absence of butterflies in urban areas. Both talks were well illustrated with slides.

Following tradition, the quiz winners from last year (the Southwell family) had devised a challenging set of questions for 2001. The winner of the quiz was long time member David Porter.

Thanks are due to Colin Horne, Reserve Manager, for arranging the afternoon.

v Christine Chance

Butterfly walk – Saltwells Nature Reserve 19 May 2001

Despite an unpromising cool, grey morning, eighteen people (including 10 from the general public) met at the Merry Hill Shopping Centre to be greeted by Richard Southwell who spoke of the aims of Butterfly Conservation and the background of this particular event. Butterfly Conservation had organised it with support from Dudley Council and Chelsfield plc (owners of Merry Hill) as part of the Council's LA21 Plan. They gave permission to place a Branch Display in the Information Centre, made announcements over the Tannoy and provided a warden from Saltwells to lead the walk, namely Anthony Ravenscroft. He handled the role superbly, adding greatly to the success of the event. Anthony first told us of successful consultations with Saltwells concerning landscaping initiatives of the Merry Hill Centre to include aspects of wildlife conservation and of the importance of "linear open space" – an official council policy to promote a sense of space and well-being for rate

payers as well as benefiting wild life. He then guided us through the reserve explaining past present and future management practices whilst we strained our eyes for anything flying or even just resting! The extensive bluebell display was at its best and although not complemented by any blue sky a few butterflies were seen: **Speckled Wood**, **Green Veined White**, **Peacock**, perhaps an **Orange Tip** (too far away to be certain) and a single **Green Hairstreak**, the target for the day. It was disturbed by Nick Williams and well observed by all, especially Steve Groome's son while it perched on his hand. A cry of "**Large Blue**" raised a few pulse rates and then laughter at a discarded blue burger container, suitably open in butterfly mode! However a good lead in for Richard to explain the successful reintroduction of **Large Blue** in southern England.

Three day flying moths were also recorded: **Latticed Heath**, **Nettle Tap** and *Nemophora*

deegerella (the male has the longest antennae of all British moths). A fourth moth, later identified as a **White-pinion Spotted**, is not commonly found in Staffordshire although it has previously been recorded at Saltwells. A resting Large Red Damsel Fly was also noted.

En route back to Merry Hill Richard showed us a potentially good site for **Green Hairstreak** on a vacant spot adjacent to the newspaper offices of the Express and Star. He threw out a challenge to spot one and then negotiate a banner headline!

Thank you Richard for organising the event. The support of Dudley Council and Chelsfield plc proved a great success and was much appreciated.

v Anita Ferguson

Editor's Notes

Newsletter arrives early!

Apologies to those relying on the 29 June deadline. See Chairman's Notes. No Conservation Corner this time – but wait for it.

Does anybody keep old Newsletters?

We are trying to keep a complete run of all the Newsletters for the Branch – we are short of no.

12. If anyone could supply this, we would be most grateful. We would copy and return the original.

Next (Autumn) Newsletter

The deadline for contributions to the Autumn Newsletter is Monday 17 September 2001.

v Christine Chance

Brimstones and Alder Buckthorns

As in many other gardens, the spell of fine, dry May weather gave us the chance to tackle the weeds that had continued to grow and spread all through the mild, wet, wet winter. It's not exactly a favourite job, but there is something rather satisfying (and tiring) about being down on hands and knees and, having first loosened the rain panned soil with the big border fork, slipping the small hand fork under each Creeping Buttercup in turn and levering upwards and hearing the crunch as the roots snap. Then the whole plant, some the size of a cabbage, can be lifted out and tossed into the wheel-barrow to be carried to the compost heap. It was half-way through the second barrow-load, work having progressed as far as the Buttercup mat that was firmly established beneath the Alder Buckthorn bush when, as so often is the case, it was the shadow of a butterfly on the ground that gave the first indication as to what was happening above. A female **Brimstone** was busily engaged in laying an egg on one of the

newly-opened leaf buds at the tip of a branch of the Alder Buckthorn, the first egg for 5 years!

This Alder Buckthorn was one of three 50 cm whips planted in the winter of '91 and which were smothered in **Brimstone** eggs the following spring. As the bushes grew, two were given away leaving the present bush in a sunny spot about 1m away from the boundary Hawthorn hedge. There were no further eggs in '93 and '94, but in '95 and '96, when the bush was about one and a half metres high, a number of eggs were found, eventually yielding some fully grown larvae. No pupae were discovered. There were no more eggs for the next 4 years, '97 to 200, and as most of the reference books state that **Brimstones** usually select young bushes less than 1m high, which it is believed contain lower levels of toxins in their leaves, it was assumed that this bush was now over-age. For this reason seed was collected and some seedlings raised

and 3 plants, now about 50cm high, had been planted in a sunny place on the edge of the veg. plot. For some reason the **Brimstone** now laying on the big bush had ignored the 3 succulent little ones only 10m away.

The **Brimstone** was about to lay some more eggs when a second female **Brimstone** appeared and made straight for the same bush. Two females in the garden at the same time was unprecedented! Records of casual observations in this garden show that on average there are 9 spring sightings of males, but only 2 females each year, so 2 females together..... The two butterflies immediately engaged in the customary twirl, but after only a couple of seconds the interloper broke away and flew off, passing over the 3 young bushes and ignoring them. It has been observed many times that when a male butterfly goes into the territory of another male, the resident invariably wins and the interloper flies away, and it seems that this "etiquette" also applies to females on food plants. The first female then continued egg laying all over the bush, high and low, sunny side and shady side, outer branches and inner branches, but always on the tip bud or one very near to it. Some 20 eggs were laid over about 10 minutes and after a 10 minute rest on a nearby leaf, a further 20 eggs were laid. She then flew off taking a brief look at one of the 3 small bushes but not stopping to lay. It had been noted that she appeared to lay 2 eggs on some of the leaf buds and possibly 3, and subsequent inspection found that there were many buds with multiple egg clusters, the maximum being 5. Thus it is clear that the same bud had been selected for egg laying more than once, whilst apparently identical buds nearby had been ignored. What is it that the butterfly looks for? All the leaves were less than 2cm long. Perhaps some "smelt" better than others, who knows.

Two days later another **Brimstone** appeared (was it the same one?) and laid about 20 eggs on the large bush and then a further 10 on two of the small bushes, ignoring the third small bush. It was noticed that this third bush was more advanced than the others having leaves some 3cm long. Two days later still a further **Brimstone** was seen laying on the small bushes and a subsequent inspection showed a number of multiples. A group of 5 eggs had 3 pale green ones showing that they were freshly laid and 2 yellow ones which must have been laid some days earlier. No eggs could be found on the third, more advanced, bush.

Mention has already been made of the fact that more males are recorded than females during the spring, and this is even more marked in the summer when records show an average of only 2

males annually and no females. There was an exception in ' 91 when 3 females were seen in the summer. It is however very probable that some females are recorded as **Large Whites**, and this is more likely to occur in the summer than the spring, but this does not alter the fact that more **Brimstones** are recorded in spring than in summer, the averages for this garden being 10.5 and 2.1 respectively. The garden is situated on the edge of a village within 50m of meadowland with a small area of woodland about 300m away and extensive woods (about 50 ha) within 1 km. The **Brimstones** are reputed to hibernate in the woods and to disperse in spring to mate and lay eggs, but it is not at all obvious why they should be more visible in gardens in spring than they are on the return journey in the summer.

Returning to the question of the selection of egg sites, the published observation that small bushes of 60 to 90 cm in sunny, sheltered positions are preferred was no doubt true at the time of the observation, but is it true every time? If the suggestion that the level of toxins in the leaves (ie. the "smell") is the important factor, then there may be more things affecting the toxin level other than the age/size of the bush. For example, the state of development of the leaf which in turn may depend on the local micro-climate and soil conditions and also on the heredity of the bush. The three small bushes in this garden are all seedlings from the large bush and, having been raised in pots for a couple of years, were planted out last year. This spring all three burst into leaf several weeks before the parent bush and perhaps their leaves contain more toxin for this reason. Further to this, although all three have the same heredity, they all look different from each other. At the time of writing, one has small leaves (about 1cm. long) thickly distributed along the branches whilst another has much larger leaves (about 3cm. long) more thinly spread. The third seedling is intermediate between the other two. It is the larger leaved seedling that has not been used for egg laying, perhaps indicating an excess level of toxins in the more fully developed leaves. One further thought, this exceptionally wet winter may also have had an effect, the large bush deeply rooted into the wet sub-soil may have produced leaves with a lower toxin level than the recently transplanted seedling bushes.

There is still so much to learn about the behaviour of butterflies, but we can go on looking and thinking and enjoying them at the same time.

Foot & Mouth Disease and the countryside - a member' s personal view

Amongst the general hand-wringing and crocodile tears of the farmers and the politicians there has been another voice, quieter and more questioning than that of the, alleged, guardians of the countryside. This voice belongs to those people who have developed a deep distrust of current agricultural practice, people who have watched as the countryside has been degraded due to the industrialisation, intensification and chemicalisation of food production. The people who have been told for too long that farmland (i.e. the countryside) is being managed well on our behalf, whilst butterflies have declined or disappeared, and of course the very same people who currently find themselves barred from vast tracts of open space.

Foot and Mouth Disease (hereafter referred to as FMD) is seen as a national disaster by the farming industry due to the effect it has had on the practice of live animal export for breeding and food purposes. Despite the general view that the French general public wouldn't touch English lamb, it is however exported to France and the rest of Europe in large volume, though to stay within E.U. food directives English meat becomes French meat once it has been slaughtered in France. The fear is that vaccination of the national herd would prevent such an export of animals as they could then not be guaranteed as FMD-free. Many will know that FMD is not fatal and is equivalent to human influenza. *There is no cure. It usually runs its course in 2 or 3 weeks after which the great majority of animals recover naturally. The justification of the slaughter policy is that widespread disease throughout the country would be economically disastrous. FMD is endemic in parts of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America, with sporadic outbreaks in disease-free areas. Countries affected by FMD in the past twelve months include Butan, Brazil, Columbia, Egypt, Georgia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kuwait, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Namibia, Russia, South Africa, Taipei, Tajikstan, Uruguay and Zambia. The last major outbreak of the disease in the EU was in Greece last year.* (source: MAFF website)

So this world-wide problem has now reached beleaguered Britain and various ministers have striven to give the "Britain is open for business" line that would be funny were the situation not so economically crippling for our tourist and other countryside industries. As far as I am aware, only farmers have been promised compensation for their losses, unlike the hundreds of thousands of other businesses active in the countryside which are directly related to agriculture.

At the beginning of March, all National Nature

Reserves/County Wildlife Trust Reserves/Public Spaces and Footpaths were closed off with that red and white tape and hastily photo-copied notices quoting fines of £3000 or so for anyone ignoring such restrictions. Of course many of these sites were kilometres from any livestock or hundreds of kilometres from the nearest outbreak of FMD, or even urban. This appeared not to matter as we saw the plumes of smoke emanating from infected farms. As more cases were confirmed, the complete shut down of the countryside began, except for horse racing (no countryside link there then ??) and the home nations' rugby union matches (good percentage of the rugby union fan base agricultural ??), as well as golf courses, where members continued to play even though the public footpaths that crossed courses were closed! Butterfly Conservation rushed to do its bit cancelling all BC - related work parties, meetings, survey work etc. until further notice - another blanket ban. This seems to have been mirrored by local authorities and national organisations throughout the land.

Did this mass closure prevent the spread of the disease? It seems not, with the continuation of cases across the country, and I would question whether any subsequent outbreak was caused by a member of the general public. The abattoir at the centre of the original outbreak in Essex did re-open though, and the legal movement and slaughter of "certified FMD-free" animals resumed. All this whilst still a blanket ban on the use of the countryside continues in many parts.

So what effect upon butterflies? A telling point was made by a farmers' spokesman during March when he made his point that land unable to be grazed would suffer and that within a very short time the entire countryside would be "a wilderness, without any wildlife." Similarly a representative of upland farmers within the Lake District National Park said that within a few years scrub would appear and that it would take a generation ("if ever") for the uplands to recover. Those of you who may remember Bryan Roberts' article in BC News (ref. BC - Newsletter January 2000, Issue no. 44) may smile wryly when recalling how he searched in vain for butterflies amongst the countless sheep on the Cader Idris NNR in upland Wales during 1999, whilst a few days later he recorded a multitude within the industrial core of petro-chemical Halton. When will the myth that the majority of farmland is quality countryside going to be nailed once and for all? OK, there are farmers who take part in Countryside Stewardship schemes and there are those who have created wildlife habitats specifically for butterflies, birds etc, but I put it to you that these are at a premium with

the majority farming in a non-wildlife friendly method.

Perhaps a crisis like this will shake up the country. The grip of supermarkets over food production may be lessened? Will people start to buy more organic produce? Will government lead the way? The answers to these questions are for the future, and for fellow members of this society to participate in, but as populations of our most threatened butterflies become marooned within small islands of suitable habitat choices need to be made. Recently I listened to a well known academic butterfly specialist talk about the very serious threat to our fritillary species. What was left unsaid was more worrying with the implication that these species (**High Brown Fritillary** and **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**) are perhaps doomed. Within Wales the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** has declined to only eleven sites nationally, a fall of 80% in the last fifteen years. (Ref: Action for the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** - *Boloria euphrosyne* in Wales: Progress in 2000, K.E.J. Stewart & T.M. Brereton). This suggests something is going badly wrong. If a species of such high conservation importance is declining by such a large amount when so much is known about its biology and ecological needs that perhaps suggests that the countryside is failing - or are we failing the countryside? This collapse of numbers is of course not limited to specialist habitat butterflies like the Fritillaries. Common species like **Meadow Brown** aren't subject to the

same attention and therefore when a piece of rough ground is built upon or the council mow a road verge needlessly the butterflies just disappear. Current thinking in many aspects of general life seems to put wildlife down to the bottom of the list, although opportunities such as local, regional and national Biodiversity Action Plans and LA21 should be moving us into the position of a better general environment. Are these schemes going to work? It can only be hoped that the memories of 2001 convince our government, local authorities, conservation bodies and general public that the countryside is ours and needs to be taken back and managed in a way that balances the need for food production with the needs of wildlife and tourism. Is farming in the U.K. doomed? It is if it takes no account of the needs and wants of its market and continues the methods of the factory floor in our threatened countryside.

v Peter Boardman

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Branch or Butterfly Conservation.

What are the factors governing the presence or absence of butterflies in urban areas?

If recent articles in this newsletter and the Birmingham Post are anything to go by, interest in butterflies in urban areas is growing – and not before time. Urban landscapes are among the most modified of all, with areas of natural and semi-natural habitat becoming increasingly fragmented and isolated as development continues. Until recently, there has been a tendency to disregard towns and cities in terms of their conservation value despite the fact that they can support a surprising diversity of wildlife, not least, butterflies. For example, sites throughout Greater Manchester have a butterfly diversity as rich as that of nearby rural areas, whilst over the last 10 years, an average of 20 species per year (27 in total) have been recorded at sites in Walsall. As habitat in rural surroundings continues to be lost, urban areas are growing in importance both as wildlife habitats and, for the educational and recreational opportunities they offer to local communities. Consequently, enhancing wildlife diversity is increasingly seen as an integral part of urban regeneration by both public and planners. However, conservation or

creation of suitable habitat requires an understanding of the ecological factors operating in urban areas and yet studies have been few and far between.

British butterflies are among the most extensively researched in world and their relationship with their habitat is already well-understood. Thus they would seem an ideal species through which to learn about the factors influencing the survival of wildlife in urban areas. As distribution maps in both the Millennium and West Midlands atlases show however, some butterflies "deal" better with the urban environment than others, though the reasons are poorly understood. Furthermore, many of the butterflies which occur in urban areas are relatively common species which have been the subject of comparatively little research.

Research currently underway at the University of Birmingham under the Natural Environment Council's URGENT (Urban Regeneration and the Environment) programme, aims to redress this balance. For example, as a member of the

School of Biosciences' Conservation and Biodiversity Research Group, I am investigating the ecological factors which govern the persistence of butterflies in urban areas. Supervised by Butterfly Conservation committee member Dr Andrew Pullin, I will be following up analysis of genetic structuring of four grassland butterfly species carried out by Dr Byron Wood. As those of you who attended the Spring meeting at Sandwell Valley in April will know, Byron's work has suggested that the **Small Heath** in the West Midlands conurbation, is more likely to be limited by lack of suitable habitat than by these species' differing abilities to move through the landscape.

Over the next two or three years, I am hoping to assess the importance of the *quality* of the available habitat in determining the distribution and abundance of species in the West Midlands, particularly in relation to the size and isolation of patches. Although it has long been appreciated that a deterioration in the quality of habitat may adversely affect butterfly populations, research into population dynamics has tended to focus on the number, size and isolation of patches. Studies have demonstrated that habitat patches are more likely to be occupied if they are relatively large and close to other occupied patches, whereas populations in small, isolated patches are more likely to become extinct. However, the condition and organisation of resources within each patch has not generally been taken into account.

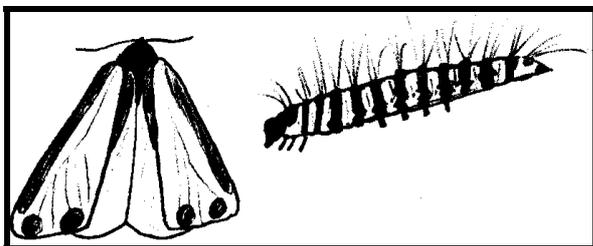
Initially, I will focus upon the habitat occupied by the **Common Blue**, **Small Copper** and **Small Heath** and also the **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak**. These are all thought to be in decline within their ranges but are comparatively under-researched compared to rarer species, whose past declines have been more obvious. I'm in the process of devising a quality index based on the requirements of each of these species, which I am hoping that I and others can use to assess potentially suitable habitat patches. I am particularly interested to hear from anyone who comes across "thriving" populations of any of the above species in the West Midlands conurbation (I leave you to decide upon the definition of "thriving"!) or who knows of new populations, or any that have been recently lost. I may also be calling upon you for information on the history of sites and their management. You can contact me by email (alison@loram8.freereserve.co.uk or axl788@bham.ac.uk) or by telephone (0121 454 6656)

You can read more about the work of the Conservation and Biodiversity Research group at <http://www.biosciences.bham.ac.uk/labs/pullin> and about the URGENT programme at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/thematics/urgent/index.htm>

v Alison Loram

Moth Identification: A Quick Guide to the Cinnabar Moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*)

This slender-bodied footman moth is a relative of the **Tiger** and **Ermine** moths, but perhaps surprisingly, not of the **Burnet Moth**.



It is a common and widespread species, and you are likely to see it in grassy places. Mainly nocturnal, it does sometimes fly short distances by day from late May until July. It is an attractive moth with dark forewings showing two distinct bright red dots and a red line. The hind wing is a vibrant red. You will find the caterpillar most commonly on ragwort, often in large numbers. However, it will also feed on field and meadow groundsel. The

larva is easily recognisable by its hairy black and yellow stripes.

References:

Moths of the British Isles, Bernard Skinner (Viking).

Insects of Britain and Western Europe, Michael Chinery (HarperCollins).

Guide to the Status of the Larger Moths of Worcestershire, ANB Simpson (unpublished).

v Corinna and Neil Gregory
droitwich@btinternet.com

URGENT NOTICE

FOOT and MOUTH DISEASE: BAN ON ACCESS AND MANAGEMENT WORK on BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION NATURE RESERVES

To all Branch Contacts, Reserve Officers and Work Party or Event Co-ordinators.

Butterfly Conservation shares the widespread concern over the outbreak and spread of foot and mouth disease, and given its serious consequences supports the measures trying to control this potential disaster. Accordingly the Society wishes to notify its members of the following:

1. It is considered an appropriate and necessary precaution to **close all BC reserves (including woodlands) to access by all persons until further notice.**
2. This closure means **management tasks** and **work days** cannot take place and must be postponed until precautionary control measures are lifted.
3. We would also ask that those volunteers intending to participate in work days on other reserves and sites refrain from doing so if these have not already been cancelled.
4. BC is asking its staff and members to **postpone all survey and field-work.** Also it asks for all outdoor events or those involving travel through the countryside to be postponed until the outbreak is over.

Many other conservation bodies are taking similar responsible steps and it is in line with advice issued by English Nature MAFF, NFU, Ramblers and the National Trust. Local Planning Authorities have been given the power to close public rights of way, and areas of open access countryside such as Dartmoor are being closed to try and control the outbreak.

If the disease spreads out of control, it could cause considerable damage to wildlife habitats. Sheep and cattle are essential to maintaining many of our rare grasslands and heathlands. It could also affect our native deer populations. The disease is highly contagious and can be spread by wind, water, people, vehicles and dogs, as well as some wildlife.

Management Work Parties.

Many Branches undertake winter management work on BC reserves or help with work on reserves and sites belonging to other organisations. Though many such sites will not be used by agricultural stock or are not considered agricultural land, they are of course set in the farmed countryside and access to them means the volunteers and their vehicles are potential vectors for transport of the virus. If a reserve needs to be visited or accessed for urgent unavoidable reasons, then risks must be reduced by disinfecting boots, vehicle wheels and undersides and tools. If entry into a 'declared infected area' (can be up to several kilometres around an identified outbreak) has been made then disinfection measures may need to be more comprehensive, and advice from MAFF should be sought. Only approved disinfectants should be used, a list is enclosed.

Unauthorised entry onto land closed as a result of approved control and precaution measures could result in prosecution and a heavy fine.

Reserve closure notices

Notifying closure of our reserves to members of the public, such as by posting notices, presents the need to visit the site. First of all please consider carefully the need to put up the notice by judging the level of public usage at this time of the year. Might a notice in the local paper be just as effective? If you go to the site please strictly observe the disinfection precautions.

In the case of some of our reserves regular year-round usage, particularly by dog-walkers, takes place. Affixing notices is appropriate in such instances even if the footpaths and other public rights of way they use might have been already closed by the Local Planning Authority. Our notice will reinforce the message. Sadly we are hearing of many instances of irresponsible behaviour by members of the public ignoring closure signs to exercise dogs or horses, and enforcement of closures is something we must accept will be difficult in many instances. If you have any concerns or queries about being able to post a notice and /or enforce closure of access on your Reserve please do contact me to discuss.

If there is a BC reserve in your Branch area, reserve closure notices are enclosed. They can be used once laminated or in a cellophane envelope, and further copies made as required. Please discuss if you need to modify it.

Future restrictions

There is no way of knowing at this stage what further restrictions will need to be applied by national authorities to control the outbreak. The outbreak in 1967 entailed restriction on access to the countryside for many months and we must anticipate possible effects on the field survey and transect season.

Communication

Several copies of this notice are enclosed for immediate circulation to other relevant members of the Branch especially those likely to visit the BC reserves or attend work parties on other sites.

We have already been hearing from many Branches that they have already taken or are taking such steps, so apologies if this notice just re-iterates your own decisions but we do need to be sure the message reaches all concerned. We will be attempting to contact directly Branch Reserve Officers and work party organisers based on the details we hold here (may not be successful or complete) **but please do also contact them yourself with this notice as we are counting on you as the main line of communication.**

John Davis
Conservation Officer (UK South)

Letters

Where are we going?

Over the 15 years I have been a member I have noticed a subtle change in the overall direction of the branch. It started out as a group of individuals with a general interest in butterflies, but it has since become much more academic/research orientated.

I have no problem with an interest in research, but I am concerned that by concentrating on this angle too much, we are putting off those with just a general interest in butterflies. I came to this conclusion after attending the spring meeting when I realised that most of the others there were males between the ages of 40 and 65. I am sure

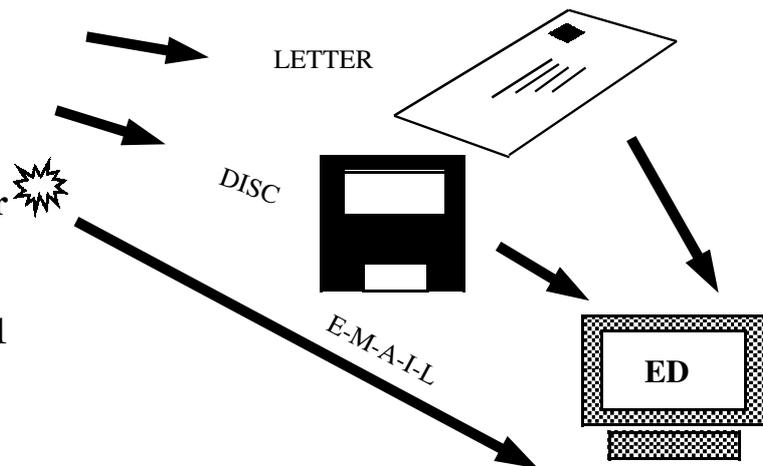
that the active membership used to be more representative than this.

What do you think? Do you disagree with me? I am especially interested in the views of those who do not attend branch meetings as implicitly those who do attend are probably happy with things as they are.

v Steve Harper

Instructions for Contributors

Deadline for Autumn Newsletter contributions is Monday 17 September 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 as plain text (e.g. "save as" a ".txt" or ".rtf" 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 or .rtf 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
harbornchristine@aol.com

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.”

You should be aware that you participate in the following events at your own risk

Dates for your Diary – butterflies

Butterfly field trips West Midlands

- 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.
- 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

None 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.

Dates for your Diary – moths

- 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 scrapyard. OS Map 126, SJ494355. 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.
- 21 **July (Saturday), Knapp and Paper Mill.** Meet in the reserve car park OS Map 150 SO 748 522. Contact warden Fergus Henderson on 01886 832065

28 July (Saturday), The Cliffe, 21:00. Meet at Clifton House, OS Map 124, SJ305217. 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.

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 bridge crossing at track to Furber' s scrapyard. OS Map 10, 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

CONTACTS:

Pete Boardman: 07968 331346 (after 6pm)

Ian Duncan: 01684 568415

Corinna and Neil Gregory (where no contact is specified): 01905 771623

Dave Grundy: 0121 3609464 (day), 0121 4435277 (evenings)

Mike Williams: 01299 824860

Rosemary Winnall: 01299 266929 (day), 01299 266489 (evenings)

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