



No. 50

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2001

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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Chairman's notes Autumn 2001

Butterflies

As I write this in early September parts of the area are still closed due to the foot and mouth outbreak. Recording has been severely disrupted however a few trends are still apparent. The **Whites** seem to have had a good year with particularly good numbers of **Orange Tip**. **Holly Blue** is on the increase again and **High Brown Fritillary** and **Grayling** have done better on the Malverns than for several years. **Marbled White** also had a good year.

On the negative side, **Small Heath**, **Common**

Blue and most of the **Vanessids** seem to be in low numbers.

If you were able to carry out a transect this year please can you send me your records once the season finishes. Please try to send before the end of November if possible so that I can compile the season's report for the Spring newsletter. I don't mind copies on paper or sent to me by floppy disc or email on Transect Walker. Please can you also let me know if you were unable to walk your transect this year. Could you also send me your first and last sightings dates for inclusion in the annual report. Nominations for West Midlands Butterfly of the

Year are also welcome.

Moths

After a slow start to the season, numbers and diversity really picked up from June onwards. In my garden, from March to May the first appearance of most species was several weeks later than normal. However, from June onwards more typical first dates have been the norm. In fact I have had my earliest recorded dates for several species; **Large Yellow Underwing** and **Common Wainscot** in early June, **Common Rustic** in early July, **Flounced Rustic** in late July and **Beaded Chestnut** in late August.

The branch now has another generator thanks to a grant from English Nature. The intention is to use this generator mainly for recording in Herefordshire.

I am pleased to say that Dave Grundy has agreed to become our Moth Officer for Staffordshire and the Birmingham area. Dave is one of our most enthusiastic recorders and is a regular organiser of events in the Birmingham area. We now have Moth Officers for all the counties in the West Midlands area.

Treasurer

Jan Smith has announced that she wishes to step down as branch Treasurer. We will be sorry to lose Jan's very valuable contribution and we will now need to find a replacement. Is there anyone out there who would like to take on the post? Please give me a call if you are interested. I would like to express the branch's thanks to Jan for all her hard work over the years.

Haugh Wood

I am very pleased to report further cooperation

between the Branch and Forest Enterprise. In July a new butterfly trail was opened at Haugh Wood. This trail was designed jointly by the two organisations and the Branch made a £500 contribution towards the cost. I would thoroughly recommend the trail which explores most of the important habitats in Haugh Wood. In the season **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and **Wood White** can be seen in good numbers.

Newsletter number 12 Winter 1984: We are still looking for a copy of this newsletter to complete our set. Does nobody have a copy? Please can you check again.

AGM

I would like to encourage you all to attend the AGM (see separate note for full details) on Saturday October 20.

The guest speaker Nick Greatorex-Davies runs the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme which has now been running for 25 years. Nick will discuss the changes in butterfly populations over this period and look at the possible causes of the variations. This promises to be a very interesting talk – try not to miss it. I promise to get the AGM business over very quickly!

Finally but most importantly I would like to thank all the branch committee members for all their hard work in the last year. It is sometimes forgotten that all the members are volunteers who are trying to do their best to help the conservation of habitats, particularly for lepidoptera, in the West Midlands area.

- Ian Duncan

Transect Recorder needed for Trench Wood

Ken Thomas, who has been the transect recorder at Trench Wood for many years has decided to stand down. Many thanks Ken for all the years of dedication. However, we now need a new transect walker for this very important site. Are there any volunteers out there. If so please contact me (see back cover for contact details

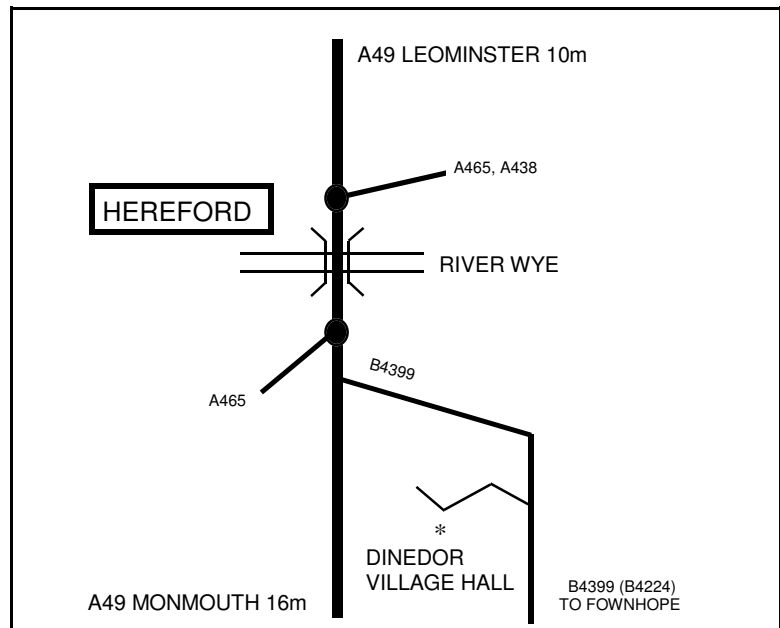
- Ian Duncan

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 changes in butterfly populations over 25 years 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.



Worcestershire moth list in “Worcestershire Record”

I noticed that Neil & Corinna refer to Tony Simpson's Guide to the Status of the Larger Moths of Worcestershire in their note on **Cinnabar** moth as “unpublished”. Readers may like to know that it was published in Worcestershire Record No 6 April 1999 pages 21-24. I can supply a photocopy of the article to interested parties in exchange for £1 to cover costs, and my efforts! Cheques made payable to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust WBRC - any excess pennies go towards producing Worcestershire Record!

Better still we should love to have more subscribers to Worcestershire Record. The cost is £5 per annum and there are two issues - April and November, each 30-40 pages of dense information on many aspects of biological recording and natural history. Our aim is to inform naturalists and other interested parties on all that is going on in the county from flies to

mosses, birds to butterflies; to encourage more recording; and to help and encourage everyone to make their observations known to other like-minded people. Articles range from short notes to weighty articles. I like to think of it as a stimulating two-way information conduit! If you subscribe I will send you the moth list free.

Worcestershire Record is the newsletter of the emerging Worcestershire Biological Records Centre. I am the editor.

• Harry Green

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Brimstones and Buckthorns - Tailpiece

It was a very good spring for **Brimstones** in the garden, a total of 15 males and 7 females being seen during the season. This compares with averages of 8.6 and 1.9 respectively. The females did particularly well, the previous best being 4 seen in ' 92 and 2000, whilst the males were runners-up to the 16 seen in ' 99.

Details of the egg laying on the large and small Alder Buckthorn bushes were given in the Summer Newsletter, about 40 eggs being laid on the large bush now nearly 2.5m high and about 20 distributed between the three small 60cm bushes, mostly on the two with the smaller leaves. Some eggs hatched out very quickly, probably within a week, but some appeared to take much longer, resulting in larvae of very different sizes being seen at the same time. In the latter part of May it was possible to find around 20 larvae in about 10 minutes on the large bush, ranging from fully grown (3cm) down to less than 1cm. Then in the first week of June a similar check found absolutely nothing and subsequent careful checks confirmed that that the bush had been completely cleared! Now I do like birds really, but there are times.....

Attention was now turned to the three small bushes which had each had some larvae on them. The one with the largest leaves was also found to have been cleared, but the other two had about a dozen larvae between them, so a rough frame of canes was erected over them and covered with netting, bird-proof netting. After a week or two it was noticed that one of the bushes was nearly defoliated and the second

not much better, so all the now nearly fully grown larvae were transferred to the third small bush and securely netted. They munched steadily away for a few days and then they also disappeared, but this time we could eliminate bird predation as the culprit and assume that, like many other butterfly larvae, they went "walk-about" prior to pupation (see note below). The pupae are reported to be formed on the stems of adjacent plants, so never having seen a **Brimstone** pupa and being anxious to photograph one to complete the sequence from egg to imago, all the (many) adjacent weeds were dug up and carefully examined for pupae. None were found. Pity, but we could look forward to seeing our own home grown **Brimstones** fluttering about the garden, but at the time of writing (4 September) not a single late summer **Brimstone** has appeared in the garden. Perhaps next year.

Note. Talking of larvae moving long distances before pupation, whilst having my chimney stack re-pointed, the builder found 2 or 3 **Large White** pupa at the very top of the stack, presumably having walked from the cabbage patch situated some 5m from the base. He told me he knew they were **Large White** pupae because he had raised a batch of them at school.

• Digby Wood

Book Review: Enjoying Moths, Roy Leverton

Poyser Natural History, 2001

ISBN 0-85661-124-7 Price £25-55

(From Harcourt Publishers special offer via B.C .) Your first glimpse of this wonderful book shows the **Latticed Heath** on the front. The book is full of delightful photographs to illustrate the many aspects of moths. In a very approachable style Roy describes what a moth is: life cycle,

colouration and distribution. Chapters give valuable and interesting information about observing in the day and at night for all the moth's stages of development. The final chapter is a concise view on moth conservation. This is a must have book for those with all levels of interest in moths.

• Neil Gregory

More volunteers needed for Conservation Days

I'll open up with the usual appeal for volunteers for our conservation days. I'm not sure why but we don't seem to have very many lately. On at least two occasions there was just Ron Hatton and myself. Please come and help on any of the days, you're all very welcome, and your help will be gratefully received. We've even been known to feed helpers

On a more positive note volunteers at Grafton Wood achieved a super human success in creating a new ride, linking the existing north south ride to the south end of the wood. The new section is in the region of 200 yards long, and 40 yards wide, and involved volunteers felling a large number of fully mature trees. Bringing them down is one thing but moving them afterwards is something else when the diameter of the trunks is 2 feet or more, but it's done. This was only achieved with the number of extra days put in, 3 days a month in some months. Well done everyone! A big thank you to Nick Williams for felling some of the larger trees.

John Brayford has taken over as contractor at Grafton, and has already made a big impact. He has cleared a large section of high canopy in the north west of the wood; the understory here is

largely blackthorn/hawthorn and will be managed to suit the **Brown Hairstreak**. So we should have a large area within the reserve where visitors can go and see them without going outside the reserve.

I'd like to remind people, that the areas where we do the egg surveys are not on public rights of way, so visitors should go to the reserve to see the butterfly. With the amount of opening up inside the wood Blackthorn is starting to flourish, and so in turn should the butterfly.

Another success has been to encourage the owner of a private woodland in Worcestershire, to do some management work for **Wood White** and **Dingy Skipper**. There will probably be a volunteer day to this site, this coming winter. As this is the only colony of note in Worcs. apart from Monkwood, I'd like to make an extra special appeal for people to support this one.

Finally I hope Foot and Mouth didn't completely spoil everyone's season, unfortunately it did prematurely finish off our Winter work.

• Trevor Bucknall

Commas and Hops

The Golden Hop is a beautiful climbing plant that has attractive lime green leaves and will happily climb 2 or 3 metres up a pole or pillar or on a trellis. It is also one of the food plants of the **Comma** and a couple of years ago my plant carried several tiny **Comma** larvae which had pupated by the time we returned from holiday. However this summer provided another opportunity to observe the whole process from start to finish.

Commas were seen in the middle of July and later in the month some empty egg cases were found and also some complete eggs all located on the extreme edges of the upper side of the Hop leaves. The eggs were a shiny green colour. better matched to the common Hop than to its Golden form. Some small holes in the leaves led to the discovery of several small larvae some 4mm to 10mm long and to prevent bird predation (see **Brimstones** and Buckthorns) individual leaves with larvae were removed and their stems

pushed into some pre-soaked "Oasis" .the material used by flower arrangers to support flowers and keep them moist. The "Oasis" was stood on a saucer and the whole thing covered by a polythene bag supported on a single short cane to prevent the wet interior of the bag from touching the leaves. The saucer was stood in a sunless north-facing window; very important as even a glimmer of sun raises the temperature too high and also causes too much condensation inside the bag. The bag was turned inside out whenever it appeared to be too moist inside and fresh leaves were introduced as required; the leaves remained fresh and suitable for the larvae to eat for several weeks.

On 28 July a female **Comma** was seen on the Hop. it made several visits over the course of 20mins. each time pausing for only a second on each leaf as it skimmed over the plant, mostly on the east, south and north sides and from about 1m high to the top at about 2.5m. About half a dozen eggs were found and they were

transferred to a second rearing set-up.

All but one of the larvae were successfully reared up to full size, eventually hanging themselves up shaped like a letter ' J' beneath a leaf ready for pupation. One by one they successfully emerged in the moist atmosphere of the bag and were released into the garden. The last two had to be returned to the Hop plant, the leaf stems being tied to the plant stems, as we were to be away for some days. On our return we found that only one remained. the other had been bitten off leaving a tell-tale piece of pupal case behind on the stem showing once again how perilous are the life stages of the butterfly.

Several more larvae appeared on the plant and

were allowed to develop naturally. They normally eat from the edges of the leaves starting near the tip and avoiding the region adjacent to the leaf stem, but in a couple of cases as the larva got to the pupation stage it ate through the main veins of the leaf near to the stem and then pupated on the underside of the leaf. The leaf, deprived of its source of moisture, collapsed and withered around the brown leaf-like pupa, providing it with both cover and camouflage. Was this just chance or some very clever behaviour. Has anyone else seen anything like it?

- Digby Wood

A Health Walk

from Anchor Meadow to Leigh' s Wood, Aldridge not to be sneezed at!

On 20 June I had the pleasure of leading a party of ten on one of Walsall Council' s health walks. Organised by Jeff McBride their Senior Countryside Officer, throughout the year a programme of walks gives people the opportunity not only to keep fit, but to focus on a varying topic as they ramble. I must admit that I was probably the most unfit forty-something as, on this day of all days, my hay-fever was getting the better of me. One octogenarian gentleman who attended looked sprightlier at the end of the walk and seemed to last the pace better than I did - quite unfair really!

Our aim was to look at butterflies in a semi-urban setting. Having grouped outside the plush new Anchor Meadow health centre we went around the back to the wasteland, due for development, next to the railway and immediately adjoining Bryant Homes new housing estate, with building works in full swing. We found a **Meadow Brown**, freshly emerged in a grassy patch and on the Bird' s foot Trefoil, the main nectar source at this site; three male **Common Blues**, several **Burnet Companion** moths, showing off their pale yellow hind wings and, to dispel confusion between the two species, the star of the show, an immaculate **Dingy Skipper**, sporting fuscous brown hindwings as it basked for us to inspect at close quarters. Couldn' t someone have thought of a better name for this lovely little insect? The similar **Burnet Companion** moth could be mistakenly identified as a **Dingy** in flight, I know, because I' ve been momentarily duped in the past.

We then went around the housing estate to the

remnant of the **Dingy Skipper's** main breeding area, sadly the majority of this proposed mini-reserve has been destroyed by the housing development, despite meetings held between Walsall Councils' Planners and BC Committee members. However, Bryant' s have indicated that they are willing to discuss a restoration scheme - we live in hope, but will the **Dingys**? On the positive side the **Dingy Skippers** have still managed to hang on at this site, in the remaining postage stamp area of suitable habitat adjoining, owned by Walsall Council where up to four individuals were seen this year. Here we saw one **Large Skipper**.

In glorious sunshine we ambled towards Leigh' s Wood over half a mile away, passing some beautifully planted gardens and a few wilder but equally attractive ones, though all were devoid of butterflies. We entered the shade of Leigh' s Wood the site of an ancient wood now predominated by relatively younger Silver Birch. We soon came across a pair of **Speckled Woods** basking on bracken in a sunny spot as a **Large White** flitted about overhead. On the rather stagnant and overgrown pond we saw a pair of Common Darter dragonflies and a pair of Mallard - it would be nice to see the pond cleared and cleaned.

At the edge of the pond grew an old Alder and I was reminded that this species of tree gave its name to the nearby town.

I sneezed my way back to the health centre and as we bade our farewells I considered purchasing another nasal spray.

My thanks to Jeff McBride at Walsall M.B.C. for the invitation to partner the walk (tel. 0121 360 9464 for a future programme) and to my obviously healthier walking companions.

- David Jackson

Industrial Cornucopia – Merry Hill walk 14 July

The second Dudley Council LA21 walk started again outside Harry Ramsden's fish and chip emporium along with the expected average weather conditions which really does not seem fair given the previous fortnight's heat wave. I was asked at the start by a couple of new members who had taken the trouble to come all the way from Shrewsbury 'Will we see anything?' It was probably bravado that prompted me to say yes, but then the target species was **Marbled White** which is well known to fly in drizzle. I was riding my luck along with the other 15 people who attended, including a foursome from Hampshire.

Taking an overview, what walkers were to experience was industrial and human activity past and present and how nature can flourish in this environment. Merry Hill is one of the largest shopping complexes in the country and from there we went to a modern industrial estate which also has empty plots of land. People who know the area from the past will realise Merry Hill is previously Round Oak steelworks, a major UK foundry. The next area visited was a wetland used as run off for the canal followed by a dump area for the bargees who unloaded slurry from their longboats before loading up with clay from a nearby quarry. It is worth noting this area is so nutrient poor that trees planted 20 years ago are still only 10 feet high, wonderful for flora that butterflies use as food and nectar sources. A grass and heathland area known as Netherton Hill was viewed before the canal was reached. We then entered a wood and glade area and eventually arrived at a steep sided clay pit before we returned to Merry Hill via the Saltwells Rangers Lodge to check up on a moth spotted by the Hampshire novice.

Before telling you what we recorded it is worth stating the wonderful sense of serenity we all experienced from the vantage point of Netherton Hill where we looked to the horizon of the National Trust's Clent Hills and glimpsed between the trees and hillocks all this frenzied human activity. This was in an area of Linear Open Space, an official council policy who's

primary objective is to instil a sense of wellbeing in urban mankind. The 15 of us can tell you and Dudley Council it works. It has also proved more beneficial for biodiversity than in rural areas since with all these 'wildlife corridors', in an area in regeneration, with constant change in land use, good habitats are invariably connected. This is not the case in most arable fields which, all too often, seem to mimic concrete plains in terms of their permanency. If anyone wants to debate this fact I recommend they study the data from the recently completed Millennium Atlas project before entering serious debate.

Even in average weather wildlife abounded. Birds included Long-tailed Tits, Coots, Moorhens, Kestrel, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and a Heron, a common species in this area that thrives on stealing fish from garden ponds. The **Six-spot Burnet** was in profusion with lesser numbers of **Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet**, **Shaded Broad-bar**, **Common Emerald**, good numbers of second brood **Latticed Heath** and caterpillars of the **Cinnabar**. The nine species of butterfly included **Small** and **Large Skipper**, **Ringlet**, **Meadow Brown**, **Gatekeeper**, **Speckled Wood**, **Red Admiral**, two early **Purple Hairstreak** and huge numbers of our target species, **Marbled White**. They were everywhere whether they be on vacant brownfield sites, around the sides of factories or on the official nature reserve. They are now so close to Merry Hill I predict they will be below the canal and office complex, maybe even in the car parks, next year as long as the area is not 'landscaped'. Probably our most surreal experience was looking at a mating pair of **Marbled White** in the wetlands below the factories when an intercom blurted out from seemingly nowhere 'Video Surveillance – you are under observation please leave immediately'. We eventually did but the mating pair didn't.

Thanks go to Chelsfield PLC and Dudley Council who also provided the Ranger, Antony Ravenscroft. My disappointment is that so few local members have attended these two events

and also that no Dudley Council officials or councillors have come along. If they had they would have started to appreciate two things. First Butterfly Conservation is not against economic regeneration but secondly we fully appreciate the significance of wildlife corridors, hence our concerns about the planning proposal at Hawne Colliery.

- Richard Southwell

Addendum: A **Green Hairstreak** was recorded on the vacant industrial plot by the Express & Star offices which was mentioned by Anita Ferguson in the previous newsletter. **Marbled White** has now been seen in fair numbers, along with many other species, on the steep grass bank between the Waterfront offices and Merry Hill so let's hope this corridor will not be 'environmentally landscaped' which will inevitably eliminate its butterfly populations.

Baggeridge Country Park Industrial heritage and country parkland - 14 July

This walk was led by David Jackson and was targeted at Wolverhampton area members of the R.S.P.B.

Perhaps in the aftermath of the Foot & Mouth crisis, which heavily restricted field trips earlier in the season; Richard Southwell's campaign on behalf of brownfield sites, (as butterfly areas we should not ignore) and Alison Loram's examination of urban butterfly sites "- this field trip gave much cause for optimism."

The site is on the West Midlands/South Staffordshire boundary and comprises what was, until 1968, a coal mine and presently incorporates the thriving Baggeridge Brick Company on its perimeter. Until the beginning of the last (20th!!) century the site was that of ancient woodland, parkland and small farm holdings. Industrial development began, in earnest, in 1902, when pit shafts were sunk. At the height of coal production, the mine was claimed to be the most modern and productive pit in the world. Following closure in 1971, reclamation work was instigated after designation as a country park.

Around 20 of us spent five hours walking over grassland, meadow and woodland. The day was quite warm and fairly sunny with some breeze as we initially explored a woodland fringe area.

It has to be said that after only ten minutes David Jackson surprised even himself by locating a freshly emerged female **White-Letter Hairstreak**, atop a wilted thistle flowerhead, and possibly still "drying out" after emergence. Rarely can a localised target species have been found so soon! The group were all able to admire this pristine specimen with her particularly prominent "tails" and her distinctive "W". **Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Skippers** large and small

predominated the rest of the walk and were easily spotted amongst the tall grasses, looking for nectar sources, protecting "territories" or looking for potential mates. Male **Gatekeepers** were just starting to make their annual appearance and, I suspect, what will turn out to be a good year again for them we saw six splendid **Commas**. David explained how the **Comma** came by its common name, that is, when the **Comma** obliged by closing its wings.

Other highlights included seeing two further **White-Letter Hairstreaks** (males), two **Red Admirals**, (one of which hitched a ride on one of the birders group). A roosting Heron, perched in a tree, near one of the fishing pools was a delight to see; only to be topped by a beautiful Kingfisher that put on a diving show and also "hovered" like a Hummingbird. A Buzzard and three Spotted Flycatchers were also seen. Thirteen species of butterfly were seen and a most convivial group of R.S.P.B. people to share the day with.

One small piece of trivia to accompany this report. The grounds of Himley Hall were part used on the day by a rather posh wedding and the couple had a big marquee with a jazz band playing for their guests. As our group strayed over from Baggeridge to Himley Park, Phil Hopson identified the strains of a jazz tune, appropriately entitled: "Poor butterfly".

A special thank you to: South Staffs Ranger service for free use of the car park and to David Jackson for his enthusiasm.

- Philip Hopson.

Pyralid Moth Presentation

Tony Simpson (Worcestershire Moth Recorder) has a wealth of knowledge and experience in mothing. It was therefore a real treat that he was able to share a small, but significant part of it with us. The talk took place in the inspirational surroundings of a Wyre Forest study room. Tony showed an enthusiastic group of around fifteen people some fantastic slides illustrating various examples of pyralid moths. He explained how to identify the different families and where to look for them. Pyralids are any moth of the family Pyralidae such as grass moths, **Brown China Mark**, **Mother of Pearl** and **Small Magpie** (some of the few with English names)!

Following an interesting talk and discussion full of useful information and identification tips, we all grabbed our nets ready to put our new knowledge into practice. It was very enjoyable being outside, using our eyes and ears to find all sorts of wildlife after a prolonged spell of inaction. Tony demonstrated to us how to beat trees and bushes for caterpillars, informing us which species of pyralid would be found in which trees.

Bibliography: British Pyralid Moths - a Guide to their Identification, B. Goater. 1986. (Harley Books)

- Corinna Gregory

The Quest for the Southern Small White - or a report on the Field Trip to Bulgaria...

The morning of 13 June dawned quite bright but decidedly early as a party of 10 of us set off from Worcestershire at around 4am for the drive down to Heathrow. In general, arrangements went smoothly: we met Mike Taylor at Heathrow; we boarded our flight to Vienna on time and it duly arrived there; we got on our connecting flight to Sofia. Unfortunately the pilot then reported that there was a problem with the aircraft and we would have to return to the stand. Some three hours later, after a number of false starts, we finally did take off for Sofia, arriving there late by a similar margin.

Julia, who had been Mike William's contact in arranging the trip, and our "team" who were to accompany us for the duration, met us at Sofia airport. There was Mitoshka, our main guide who spoke excellent English; Assen was our wildlife guide who specialised in birds and also spoke very good English; Iliya the bus driver; and not forgetting the bus itself.

We fortunately had a short drive that evening, out of Sofia and to our hotel on Vitosha Mountain. Mike Taylor began clocking up the birds at a rapid rate, including Nightingale in urban Sofia where we stopped to change money.

The only problem with the road up Vitosha Mountain is that it is steep and in poor condition, and when your bus's engine feels like it has the power of a lawnmower, it seems to take an

eternity to get anywhere. However this did give us the opportunity to observe the flora and fauna by the roadside at less than a blur, and we identified some potentially good stops for when we returned down the mountain the following day.

Our first full day in Bulgaria began with broken cloud and a pre-breakfast walk. Excellent views of Nutcracker were to be had; a **Clouded Yellow** we decided was the **Balkan** variety (a deeper orange-yellow ground colour to the male); and a **Speckled Wood**, which was to turn out to be the only one I saw during the whole trip. After breakfast we descended back down Vitosha, stopping at a meadow part way down for our first serious butterflying. Here, amongst others, were **Scarce Swallowtail** and plenty of **Grizzled Skippers**. A brief stop was also made in a village with a number of pairs of nesting white storks. We then pressed on towards our lunch stop near Rila, the restaurant being conveniently situated in a narrow valley with good opportunities to add a few more species to our list, including a single **Balkan Marbled White**.

We then carried on up the valley towards Rila Monastery, the most famous in Bulgaria. Unfortunately at this point the heavens opened, although it didn't really spoil our visit to the monastery. If anything, the water cascading off the roofs added to the atmosphere, the buildings as they are nestling at the feet of the surrounding

mountains. As we headed back down to the plains, the sun came out again and we saw brief glimpses of Golden Oriole and Rose-coloured Starling. As the day drew to a close we neared our destination of Bansko, a gateway into the Pirin Mountains. Just before we reached Bansko it became apparent that Iliya was not happy with the mechanical condition of the bus and as we negotiated the back streets of Bansko looking for our hotel, the bus finally expired. While Assen went in search of taxis, Iliya carried out open-heart surgery on the bus, and very successfully too. However Assen was now nowhere to be seen. Simple, just call him on his mobile. Except he'd left it on the bus! Twenty minutes later we were reunited though, and it was just a short drive to our hotel, situated at the foot of the lowest ski slopes.

Next morning, before breakfast, some of us ventured out into the meadow only 100 yards from the front door of the hotel. In winter this was probably a ski slope, but now it was a herb rich meadow and in the warmth of the early morning sun we found the dazzlingly orange **Balkan Copper** and a **Clouded Apollo**. After breakfast we climbed aboard the bus and headed towards the alpine slopes of Viheren Mountain. Unfortunately the higher we got, the cloudier it became, although as we started to walk there were still butterflies to be seen including a first **Camberwell Beauty**. On the mountain the song of Black Redstarts was everywhere, but the cloud closed in even further and we eventually decided to abandon our high altitude walk and to go back down.

Part way down we stopped for lunch in a sheltered spot by the road and by now some sunshine had returned. We eventually stayed at this impromptu spot for maybe two hours or more and were rewarded with views of pristine **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, **Wood White** and **Duke of Burgundy**, amongst others. Back at the hotel, the plan for the evening was to set up the moth trap, although the cool, windy weather meant that this wasn't a great success.

Most of us did however go down into Bansko before dinner to have a look around the town and sample one of the local hostelries. That day was also Rob Williams' 21st birthday and so the culmination of dinner back at the hotel was Rob's birthday cake. However what was to follow was even more of a surprise; spurred on by Mitoshka, the waitresses first played, and then danced to, what seemed an endless selection of local folk music tapes. Brian could not resist this and soon his favourite waitress, "Bubbles", was schooling

him in the finer points of Bulgarian folk dancing.

Next day we had planned a lowland excursion to the Struma Valley, near to the Greek border. The day was hot and sunny and our first stop, "anywhere" at the side of the road, revealed **Amanda's**, **Green-underside** and **Mazarine Blues** and **Black-veined White**. Further on we stopped at a small nature reserve and saw many **Balkan Marbled Whites** and **Queen of Spain Fritillaries**, plus our first sightings of Ant Lions. A stop for Rock Sparrow actually resulted in Spanish and Tree Sparrows, along with **Balkan Green-veined White** and beautiful bird-song that reminded me of Australia. Finally Mitoshka took us to Melnik, famous for its spectacularly eroded mountain scenery and its wine. **Southern White Admiral** and **Marbled** and **Spotted Fritillaries** were added to the list, before our final trek took us to a wine cellar in one of the local caves, where we sampled one or two(!) glasses of wine along with plates of cheese and sausage. There was then the small matter of the three-hour drive back to the hotel....

The next day was perfect again as we headed eastwards to our next accommodation. As we reached the picturesque, rolling green hills of the Western Rhodopes we could look behind us for superb views back to the Pirin Mountains, and to the north for the Rila Mountains. However, our destination was the Eastern Rhodopes, with a stop en-route in Plovdiv for lunch and for Iliya to buy and fit a new fuel filter for the bus. One of several stops during the day saw excellent views of **Cardinal**, **Nettle Tree Butterfly** and **Large Tortoiseshell**, along with further Ant Lions. The big topic of conversation among the birders however was the probable sighting of a Steppe Eagle, normally just a bird of passage in Bulgaria.

We finally reached the Eastern Rhodopes, an area that seemed drier and less wooded than the Western. There was significant farming activity, although this seemed to be largely of a subsistence nature and many people were out working in the fields. We were to be based at the Visitor Centre just outside Madjaravo, famous for the breeding vultures of the Arda Gorge. However on arrival at the Visitor Centre we were greeted not by vultures but by the almost deafening sound of frogs in the river below! As accommodation at the Visitor Centre was limited, some of us had the pleasure of travelling the mile or two into Madjaravo itself, where we stayed in a traditional Eastern European apartment block. Here, after dark, we traded the calling frogs for calling Scops Owls, and I don't know about the frogs, but the Owls called most of the night.

Next day was Monday and those of us staying in the apartments decided to brave the Madjaravo rush hour for a short walk before breakfast... In the communist era Madjaravo was a mining town, but the mines are now closed as they were uneconomic. The pavements around the apartments were waist deep in wild flowers and the odd **Marbled White** ambled across the road. The rusting street lamps looked down on crumbling buildings and overgrown gardens; there was hardly anyone about. The wildlife highlight was probably a Middle-Spotted Woodpecker (that's part way between Lesser and Great!).

The day was to be a more leisurely one, with two walks from the Visitor Centre. In the morning we walked along the roadside, before striking uphill to get a good view of a Griffon Vulture nest. Butterfly highlights were a dark form of the **Spotted Fritillary** and an **Eastern Festoon**. The day was very hot, so most of us took a siesta before exploring the river valley in the afternoon. Mike Williams target species had been **Lesser Purple Emperor**, due to the many willow trees growing in the rocky river bed. In the event we actually saw probably the two rarest species of the trip - **Small Bath White** and **Little Tiger Blue**, both caught in basically the same spot and maybe only 5 or 10 minutes apart.

The next day started rather cool and cloudy as we set off in the bus for one of the local vulture feeding stations. We stopped briefly in one of the small villages to look at Little Owls perched on the chimney tops, only to realise that a half-naked man was standing in the window of the of the house we'd stopped in front of.... At the vulture feeding station however we were rewarded with fine views of Egyptian, Griffon and Black Vultures, while Brian caught our first **Dusky Meadow Brown**. We then headed down to the valley near Dolna Koola, where we first saw Spanish Sparrows nesting in a White Stork's nest on a telegraph pole. Second stop was to see a Black Stork's nest, but the rain started to fall and we decided to retire for lunch. However, before we could reach the restaurant the bus was bombarded with hailstones the size of marbles and Iliya was forced to shelter the bus in the lee of a building in case the windows were broken. After ten minutes or so we were able to continue to the restaurant in the nearby village, where Mitoshka promptly disappeared into the kitchen to ensure that all was to her satisfaction! The ensuing food was however up to the usual high Bulgarian standard and we were able to while away an hour or two as the weather was so wet and cool.

After lunch Mitoshka wanted to take us for ice cream in the local town, and although we went there, the lure of butterflies took us back to the valley as the sun had started to come out again. First stop was to take a proper look at the Black Stork's nest, but an exploration of the gullies on the hillside also revealed **Lulworth Skipper**, many **Spotted Fritillaries** and **Chapman's Blue** (like the **Common**, but without "the" underside spot). The birders also had an excellent afternoon, with fine views of Roller and Bee-eater among others. Compared to the day before, the air was much fresher now, even though the sun was still hot. In the late afternoon the lone trees cast long shadows across the fields in the valley below, while the song of the (slightly tipsy?) shepherd drifted in the wind. A perfect end to what, for many, was probably the best day of the trip.

The following day we set off for the Black Sea coast and another stop "anywhere" at the roadside revealed **Large Grizzled** and **Orbed Red-underwing Skippers**. Lunch was at a roadside restaurant, memorable for the large and very tasty mixed grill, and also the **Silver-washed Fritillaries** nectaring on Lime tree blossom. It was another hot day and the large lunch certainly caused some early afternoon drowsiness to set in. Mike had been told of another stop in the afternoon that was good for **Coppers**, and indeed we saw our only **Lesser Fiery**, plus the first of many **Grecian Coppers**. We eventually arrived at our hotel in Vlas, with fine views out over the Black Sea.

Our destination the next morning was Cape Emona, a large headland jutting out into the Black Sea. It was a hot day and on the exposed parts of the headland perhaps too windy for many butterflies. We stopped at several places, with probably the most notable butterfly being **Delattin's Grayling**. After a packed lunch we set off to visit the medieval town of Nesebar, although our visit was somewhat spoilt by the ensuing heavy downpour.

Iliya had suggested that we go to a Bulgarian Folk Dancing display that evening and despite the continuing rain a number of us did so. The folk dancing in fact seemed to be just a warm up act for the disco that followed, with the guitarist ably accompanied by Bulgaria's answer to Cher on lead vocals. Mitoshka told us that other than us, most of the people there that evening were Russian tourists and it was great to see how much fun they were all having, especially the children. Even John "Travolta" Griffin was enticed onto the dance floor!

The rain had cleared by the following morning, although it was still overcast. Our first stop was essentially a birding one, with huge reed beds vibrating to the sound of Great Reed Warbler. Many of us had excellent views of Bearded Tit, Bee-eater and Spoonbill amongst others, while way in the distance a huge flock of Pelicans wheeled in the sky. We carried on to Sozopol, a small seaside village, for lunch before finally arriving at the Ropotamo Nature Reserve. Unfortunately we found the gate for the walk we wanted to do locked and Assen advised us that it wasn't worth trying to negotiate to get it opened. As we were starting to struggle for new species, the Quest for the **Southern Small White** started in earnest, with as many **Small Whites** as possible being netted for identification. The **Southern Small White** is extremely similar to the more familiar **Small White**, the main diagnostic feature being the shape of the main spot on the forewing. Although we weren't successful with **Southern Small White**, we did catch a subspecies of the **Green-veined White** (*Meridionalis*), which has very little visible veining on the underwings. We also had excellent views of two **Valezina Silver-washed Fritillaries**, with one of them being very accommodating for the photographers.

The next day was our last full one in Bulgaria and we started off by visiting the garden of the local nightclub! The gardens were however well watered and full of flowers, giving excellent views in particular of **Grecian** and **Small Coppers** and **Sloe Hairstreak**. We then moved on to some nearby and equally flowery meadows where we saw **Large Tortoiseshell**, **Twin-spot Fritillary** and **Woodland Grayling**. A sub-quest began for **Pale Clouded Yellow** (is that **Clouded Yellow** orange or lemon yellow?), but again without bearing fruit. Yet another excellent lunch followed in the nearby restaurant, this time to an accompaniment of Rhodopean Bagpipes.

For the afternoon, we'd voted to visit a quarry that Assen knew of. The "short" drive took over two hours under the blazing sun, but the sight of hundreds of Rose-coloured Starlings that were nesting there amply rewarded us. Using Mike Taylor's telescope, Assen then located the Eagle Owl that often roosted in the quarry. Perched part way up the sheer cliff face, the huge Owl was almost impossible to locate with mere binoculars, even when you knew where it was. However, the telescope gave an excellent view of a truly spectacular bird. To top the visit off, we were then treated to flying displays from both a Montague's Harrier and a Honey Buzzard, a

perfect end to another memorable day.

Mitoshka and Assen set off at the crack of dawn next day to catch the bus back to Sofia. They told us not to worry that they weren't coming with us on the flight, it was just to save money. The Quest for the **Southern Small White** continued at the airport; not difficult in the open-air departure lounge complete with flowers growing in the lawn, and we did see **Brown Argus** and **Small White**. The old Russian Antonov 'plane arrived and we all boarded – it was like stepping back in time, the fittings inside the aircraft seemed to be from an old Bond movie. We began to doubt Mitoshka and Assen, especially as the ascent of the aircraft was very bumpy and not for the faint-hearted. However, once we'd reached cruising altitude normality was restored and other than a bumpy descent everything went smoothly.

We met Julia, Mitoshka and Assen at Sofia airport and they took us for our last Bulgarian meal (how did we find time to see wildlife?). Following that we had a whistle-stop tour of the sights of Sofia in the warm afternoon sunshine, the long avenues of Lime trees again pungent with the smell of blossom. Then it was time for goodbyes and the uneventful journey home by 'plane and minibus all the way back to the West Midlands.

Statistically, Mike Taylor's birds delivered a resounding 162 to 93 species defeat to the butterflies, reversing the result of last year's Pyrenean contest. The result was however never in doubt, as Mike was in double figures before the butterflies had even opened their account. The commonest butterfly was probably the **Common Blue**, which is seriously common in Bulgaria. It was officially recorded at 17 out of 26 sites we visited, although it may have been overlooked at others due to **Common Blue** overload syndrome.

It may be a cliché, but this trip was more than just a holiday, more than just a butterfly field trip - it was an experience. I will have many memories of the trip: from countless **Common Blues** to the imperious **Cardinals**; the amazing Ant Lions; the song of the Nightingale and the hoot of the Scops Owl; endless Little Owls perched on Rhodope chimney pots and Golden Orioles almost as common as muck. Above all though, the warm and genuine hospitality of the Bulgarians themselves shines through; they always wanted you to feel at home, to show you what their country had to offer. They had a pride in themselves and their country; they treated you

as their guest but also as their equal. Mitoshka, Assen and Iliya were our perfect hosts in this and every other respect.

- Neil Thompson

P.S. And many thanks to Mike Williams for organising the trip, researching the wildlife sites and leading the motley crew. Well done Mike!

Note from Mike Williams: The British-Bulgarian Friendship Society is organising its own butterfly trip for next year based on a very similar itinerary to mine. The dates are: 9-23 June and the leader is Maurice Waterhouse. Details are available from Dr. Annie Kay on phone/fax 0207-237-7616.

Conservation Corner

This is the time of year when I realise that yet again I have not managed to get around nearly as many butterfly sites as I envisaged earlier in the year. Yes, one of the main reasons for my lack of visits to nearby sites early in the summer was Foot and Mouth Disease but theoretically I should have had plenty of time since the countryside was 'reopened'. I can of course use the excuse of the demands of my young family but then one of my main pleasures this summer was seeing my eldest two children spending hours enjoying watching and identifying the butterflies in our garden.

There is no doubt that Foot and Mouth has had a huge impact on the level of recording and monitoring of Lepidoptera throughout the country, but what is less clear is the longer term impact the drastic reductions in animal numbers will have on butterfly populations particularly in areas which suffered heavily from this disease. A family picnic to the Long Mynd in south Shropshire a couple of weeks ago really brought this issue home to me as this is an area where overgrazing by sheep has been a contentious issue for a number of years, yet during my visit not a single sheep was to be seen. On other Shropshire sites it is very obvious that the lack of public access this year has resulted in some footpaths becoming more overgrown with some areas of scrub being much more difficult to penetrate.

Nevertheless, despite Foot and Mouth Disease and its associated problems, there have been a number of positive developments/projects in the West Midlands this year and these have included the following:

Regional Action Plan - the 1999 and 2000 review has now been produced and has generally been very well received. One of the main strengths of producing an annual review is that it highlights how much is going on in the West Midlands and how much we are still managing to achieve. In contrast, the main Regional Action Plan (1997) is particularly useful in identifying the importance of species and sites in a regional and national context. I am therefore keen that both the Regional Action Plan and the annual reviews should reach as many of our conservation partners as possible. So if you would like a copy

or know of anybody (local officials, Conservation Officers, site wardens etc.) you think would benefit from having a copy of the original plan and its updates please let me know (The Croft, Off Haygate Road, Wellington, Telford, TF1 2BW). In 2002 the Regional Action Plan will be due for its five year review when we will hopefully be able to use the data collected for the Millennium Atlas to update the priority ratings of many species.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary in Staffordshire - Thanks to the efforts of David Jackson and Craig Yates we were able to supply Forest Enterprise with a considerable amount of Lepidoptera information for the updating of the Forest Design Plan for Cannock Chase. We hope that this information will be used to guide management in key areas and help to safeguard the future of the important Lepidoptera that are present. A targeted survey of Cannock Chase for the **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** was also carried out by Jon Webb (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Biodiversity Officer) on behalf of Staffordshire County Council during the summer of 2001. During this survey **Small Pearl-bordered** were found to be present in three distinct areas of the Chase with timed counts being undertaken in two of these areas and management suggestions subsequently being made. We hope that this project will be the start of annual monitoring of this species both on Cannock Chase and on other Staffordshire sites and that we can persuade the relevant bodies to help us with funding for it.

Wood White - The future of one Worcestershire site for this species is now looking more positive as a result of liaison between Trevor Bucknall and the site owners and their agreement that sympathetic management for this species should be carried out. Two out of the three main Shropshire sites known to support breeding colonies of this species have also had a good year with peak counts of 64 and 18 (Bill Davidson, pers. comm.) despite the fact that part of the colony area on one of these sites had inadvertently been destroyed by contractors during the 2000/01 winter. At the one other Shropshire **Wood White** site, a roadside verge which had been identified as a **Wood White** breeding area and which should have been taken out of the annual cutting regime was mown.

These problems therefore highlight the importance of continued communication with contractors and perhaps suggest that some further thought should be given as to how best to conserve important road-side verges in our region.

Elsewhere in the region there has been a revised schedule of works for the conservation of the **Dingy Skipper** at Anchor Meadows which was seen on a remnant of this site during 2001 (Richard Southwell, pers. comm.), Andy Nicholls reports that some new butterfly trails have been opened up at Haugh Wood, Alison Loram has had a good start on her research project investigating the ecological factors which govern the persistence of butterflies in urban areas and has obtained data from around 20 sites in the West Midlands conurbation, Peter Boardman has discovered a large new site for **Grizzled** and **Dingy Skippers** in north-west Shropshire, and Mike Slater reports that Warwickshire Lepidoptera have suffered from mixed fortunes. The **Silver-**

washed Fritillary is doing well at Ryton Wood and has possibly colonised a couple of other woods in this area, the **White-letter Hairstreak** is doing well in areas where elm trees have not died and the **Forester Moth** is responding well to specific management on its one remaining Warwickshire site which has included the clearing of hawthorn scrub. Species which have not fared as well in Warwickshire include the **Brown Argus** and the **Small Blue** which may well have gone from two Wildlife Trust reserves.

Caroline Bulman has recently been appointed as a Species Ecologist at BC head office at Manor Yard. As part of Caroline's job will be to cover threatened fritillaries in the Midlands we hope that we can look forward to closer liaison between ourselves and the national office. Caroline will particularly be covering issues involving the **High Brown Fritillary** (especially in the Malverns) and the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**.

• Jenny Joy

Moth Reports

Worcestershire Moth Report - 2001

The Foot and Mouth epidemic restricted recording significantly in the earlier part of the season, but we were able to get permission to go to Shrawley Wood on 2 June and were able to confirm the presence of **Pauper Pug**. We found it to be widespread and 12 were recorded, including 2 females which laid eggs, from which I was able to rear 13 larvae through to the pupal stage and which are now overwintering.

As restrictions began to be lifted in June Corrina and Neil Gregory's light trapping & recording programme was able to go ahead in many sites although some remained closed until after the end of July. Rosemary Winnall's Wyre Forest recording sessions could not initially go ahead at Lodgehill Farm, but were run at other sites until permission to enter was given at the beginning of August. Dave Grundy has been able to do some good recording at Uffmoor Wood, Blakeshall Common, and several other sites in the relatively under-recorded north of the county. Interesting details of all these will be forthcoming at the end of the year when all the records are received.

There have been two new Macro moths recorded in the county to date this year. A new recorder, Jeff Rush, brought me some insects for identification in July. One which had come to his garden light trap at Stoke Prior in June turned out to be a **Cloaked Pug**. This rare pug feeds in the cones of Norway Spruce, and may have bred in a neighbour's Spruce tree or could possibly be a migrant. On 26 May I had 2 **Glaucous Shears** at

my garden light trap at Bransford. This species is resident on the Black Mountains and in Wales. Michael Harper has twice had similar records in past years at Ledbury at the same time of year. This suggests that these were vagrants from the west and that this is a not infrequent and rather surprisingly recurring event. Weather conditions, with warm winds from the north-west that night, would have been suitable.

Two **Red-necked Footman** have been recorded in June; Dave Grundy had one at Blakeshall Common and John Bingham sent me a record of one found flying in the day at Hurcott Woods near Kidderminster. With last year's record at Shrawley Wood this suggests that possibly migrant individuals may have given rise to a small resident population. The other **Footman** species that is making news is the **Buff Footman** which has continued its rapid expansion through the county, turning up at many new sites.

There have been very few migrants to date, with the only notable record that I am aware of being a **Gem** at Bransford in May.

Peter Garner attracted an unusual Pyralid to his porch light at West Malvern on 30 June and passed it over to Michael Harper. We have been unable to match it to any known British species and it could be something very interesting. Watch this space! Fuller report to follow at the end of the year.

• Tony Simpson

Shropshire moth review

The first year in the existence of The Shropshire Moth Group has been an interesting one. Foot and mouth disease delayed all but a handful of garden records for the first part of the year. Luckily one of the gardens involved, located at Woolston near Craven Arms and belonging to Caroline and 'H', rewarded with records of **Satin Lutestring** and **Cloaked Carpet**. Reports of the latter came also from Vesson's Wood and Wentnor Caravan Park suggesting that the moth is a recent immigrant to the county and is spreading.

Adrian Miles supplied some excellent records from his usual haunts around Dudmaston and Quatford including **Buff Footman**, **Black Arches** and **Maple Prominent** (all new to the county) whilst **Blomer's Rivuleth** had a particularly good year. Another confirmation of a new county record came from Dudleston Heath of a **Ni Moth**.

Mid to late summer enabled a few Shropshire

Moth Group events to take place and in total approximately one hundred and thirty people turned out at the venues advertised in earlier editions of this publication. The second Whixall Moss event was perhaps the best in terms of moth species with **The Crescent**, **Pale Eggar**, **Bulrush Wainscot**, **Neglected Rustic** and a good number of **Haworth's Minor**, a testament to the increase in Cottongrass at the site.

National Moth Night was celebrated in Shropshire this year at Cardingmill Valley, and despite the atrocious weather, some intrepid souls did venture out, including half a dozen members of the public, **Oak Eggar** and **Gold spot** moths. Hopefully 2002 will see the group planning more events and targeted searches for some of Shropshire's priority moth species. Watch this space.

- Peter Boardman

Birmingham, Walsall and North Worcestershire Moth Report

Walsall moth group member Gareth Robinson has trapped **Dark Spectacle** again in his garden in Rushall near Walsall. This nettle-feeder has suffered a catastrophic national population decline for unknown reasons, yet it still maintains a foothold in Walsall. Dave Haslam has reported **Burnet Companion** in the best numbers for several years on Walsall grassland sites.

At the end of August I searched Wormwood plants on "urban wasteland sites" in Walsall for the caterpillars of **Wormwood Shark** (a nationally notable - NNb - species, i.e. it occurs in less than 100 ten kilometer squares nationally) and located viable populations on two sites. Have there been any other records in the area in the last 30 years of this species that arrived on bombed sites after the last war?

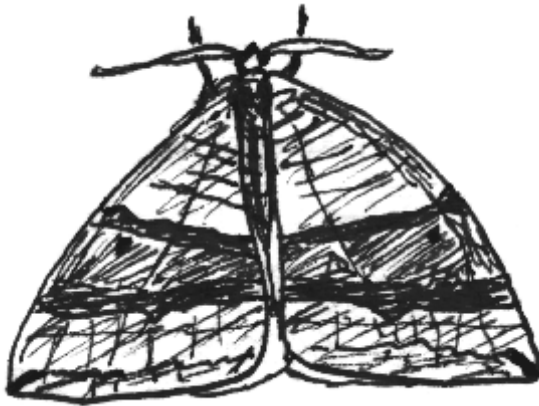
Over the year, to date, I've mothtrapped on over 30 field sessions either in the weekend programme or midweek. Major records from these have been:

Kingsford Country Park - **Red-necked Footman** (NNb, in suitable breeding habitat not far from Kinver records from the 1980s), **Angle-striped Sallow** (NNb), **Ling Pug**, **Grass Wave**, **Plain Wave**

Wyre Forest - the usual rarities, **Great Oak Beauty** (NNb), **Bilberry Pug** (NNb), **Common Fanfoot** (NNA), **Buff Footman**, **Plain Wave**
Sutton Park - **Angle-striped Sallow** (NNb), **Barred Chestnut**, **Alder Kitten**
Uffmoor Wood - **Satin Beauty** (NNb), **Angle-striped Sallow** (NNb), **Buff Footman**
Corporation Wood, Walsall - **Map-winged Swift** in June
Lickey Hills - **Beautiful Snout** and **Map-winged Swift** in July
Park Lime Pits - **White Satin Moth** in July
Monks Wood - 5 species of **Footman** including **Buff** and **Rosy** in July
Penorchard Farm (new Worcestershire Wildlife Trust reserve near Clent) - *Catoptria margaritella*, a distinctive pyralid moth (first record for Worcestershire) in July
Feckenham Wylde Moor - **Southern Wainscot** again at this wetland site in August
Brownhills Common - **Map-winged Swift** in August

- Dave Grundy

Moth Identification: Shaded Broad-bar (*Scotopteryx chenopodiata*)



This abundant Geometer moth can be seen flying in the day time from June to late August. At a first glance it may resemble The **Mallow** (*Larentia clavaria*), which has a chequered margin. The **Shaded Broad-bar** also has an apical streak (dark line at the far corner of the

forewing). You will often find this species in fields and grassy places throughout Great Britain.

Its forewings are light brown with a darker brown middle band. The inner area of this band is often paler. The brown varies from pale to smoky and the hindwing is whitish. The larva feeds on clovers and trefoils throughout the rest of the year. The adult will fly from dusk and visits ragwort, knapweed and marjoram, and is strongly attracted to light.

• Neil Gregory
Worcestershire Moth Officer
droitwich@btinternet.com

Butterfly Records still wanted

I hope that you have continued to record butterflies even after the great Millennium Atlas years. Numbers of records have dropped by about 75% since 1999. However I still enter them into our database, which is sent to head office, where our records are combined with those of the other branches. I have to get the records to head office by the first week in January, so I

would be most grateful if you could get them to me by early December, even if that means that you miss the odd sighting of a butterfly at Christmas. Please see the back cover for my address. Many thanks

• Jim Chance
(Branch Recorder)

Stop Press: Hart and Dart !

Ian Hart Joins the West Midlands Branch Committee

I am pleased to tell you all that Ian Hart, a very keen butterfly man from Herefordshire has agreed to join the Branch committee. I would like to welcome him

on behalf of you all.

• Ian Duncan

Another Pyrenees trip from Mike Williams

A number of people have expressed disappointment that the Trinidad trip is fully booked so by way of compensation I have been persuaded to organise a return trip to the Pyrenees for next year. This will be in the second half of July and will partly be a rerun of the very successful 2000 trip staying at the same gite in Miglos in Ariege and hopefully Casa Guilla in the Spanish Pyrenees, but will also visit a new location in the central Pyrenees near Gavarnie. Last time, we clocked up over 100 species of butterfly and almost as many birds and I would hope to get near this figure again. Going slightly later in the year and visiting new locations should mean that we see lots of different species. I am also planning to bring my moth trap if I can squeeze it into our suitcase while Mary is not looking! The trip would be for

14 days by air and minibus and Graham Hart who lives and works in Ariege will hopefully act as our local guide as before. He has already got a number of excellent sites lined up for us to visit. Total cost is likely to be around £800-850 including flight, accommodation, food, wine, minibus hire etc. I have managed to get a really good deal on a direct flight from Birmingham to Toulouse but need 10 people to say yes by 23rd October! Please contact me asap on 01299 824860 or email: mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk if people are interested

• Mike Williams

Staffordshire Moth Atlas The Larger Moths of Staffordshire

The above atlas (mentioned in the last Newsletter) is now available from

Potteries Museum and Art Gallery
Bethesda Street
Hanley
Stoke on Trent
ST1 3DW

Cost £10.00 + £1.50 postage and packing

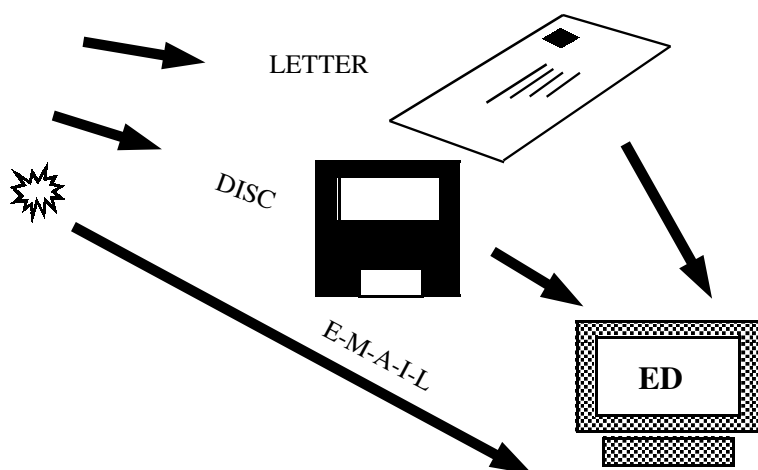
New Members

Dr N Evill	Birmingham
Mrs B Smith	Birmingham
Mr & Mrs N & A Williams	Birmingham
Mr M Hickman-Smith	Bromsgrove
Mr & Mrs P & S Patrick	Burton-on-Trent
Mr L J Coates	Cheltenham
Mr D K Pinguey	Chippenham
Mr S Barwell	Droitwich
Mr J Lawrence & Miss Osborne	Dudley
Mr C Wood & Miss Vicki Jubb	Halesowen
Miss C Millward	Hereford
Dr P Overstall	Hereford
Mr & Mrs B & J Heldman	Hereford
Mr & Mrs M & L Grady	Hereford
Mr & Mrs G & W Mansell	Leek
Mr & Mrs I & E Cooke	Leominster
Mr & Mrs Chenevik-Trench	London
Mr G Robertson	Rugby
Miss S Burgess	Rugeley
Mr G Arnold	Rugeley
Mr J Blowers & Miss H Ansell	Shrewsbury
Ms M Parsons	Smethwick
Mr & Mrs M & P Hinton	Smethwick
Mr I L Spilsbury	Stafford
Mr & Mrs C Parkes	Stoke-on-Trent
Mrs H Williams	Stoke-on-Trent
Mr & Mrs J & L Palmer	Tamworth
Mr K Pryce	Telford
Mr P Robures	Walsall
Mr J A R Collins	Wednesbury

We are pleased to welcome these new members and apologise if anybody has been inadvertently omitted.

Instructions for Contributors

**Deadline for
Spring Newsletter
contributions is
Monday
28 January 2002**



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:

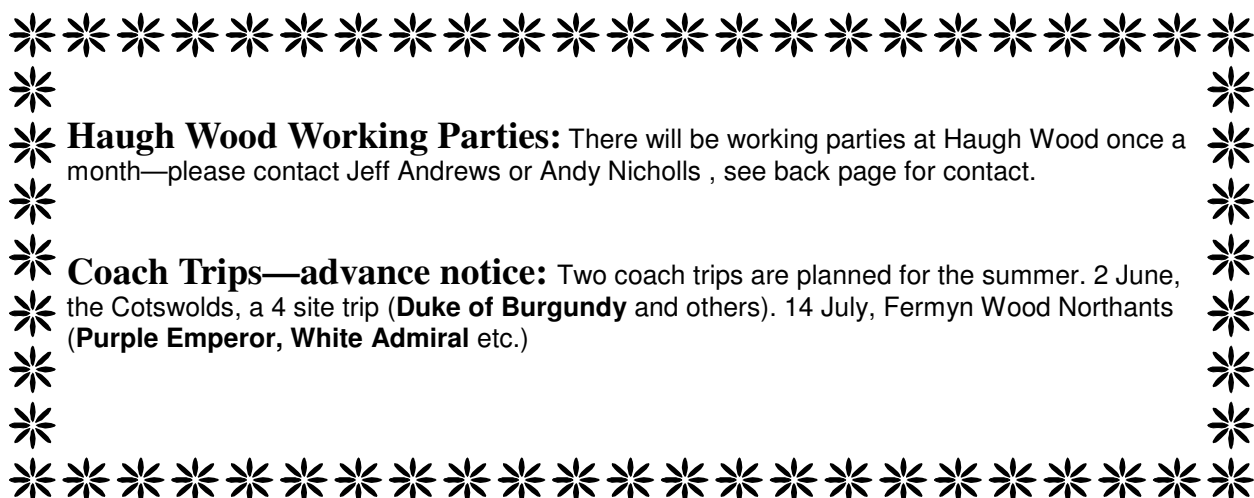
- Wear appropriate foot wear for the conditions expected underfoot.
- Wear appropriate clothing for the conditions to be expected. Protect yourself against Cold, Heat, Sun, Rain, Wind and Thorns.
- Consider what precautions you should take to prevent being bitten or stung by insect, plants, snakes or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

Coming Events



Haugh Wood Working Parties: There will be working parties at Haugh Wood once a month—please contact Jeff Andrews or Andy Nicholls , see back page for contact.

Coach Trips—advance notice: Two coach trips are planned for the summer. 2 June, the Cotswolds, a 4 site trip (**Duke of Burgundy** and others). 14 July, Fermyn Wood Northants (**Purple Emperor, White Admiral** etc.)

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

Dates for your Diary

Winter work days

OCTOBER

- 14 **October (Sunday) Conservation Task, Grafton Wood.** Meet 10.00 am at Three Parishes Hall, Grafton Flyford (next to church). Just off the A422 the Worcester—Stratford Rd. OS map 150 GR SO963557.
- 20 **October (Saturday) West Midlands Branch AGM 2.00 pm** at Dinedor Village Hall. See page 2 for details OS map 149 GR SO535366
- 21 **October (Sunday) Conservation Task—**Brash cutting. Important site for the **Wood White** and **Dingy Skipper**, Abberley Hill. Meet 10.00 am at Hundred House P.H. OS map 150 GR SO752662 .
- 28 **October (Sunday) Conservation Task Trench Wood.** Meet 10.00 am at reserve entrance on Sale Green—Dunhampstead road. OS map 150 GR SO929588.

NOVEMBER

- 4 **November (Sunday) Conservation Task – Monkwood** Meet 10.00 am in the reserve car park just off the Sinton Green-Monkwood Green road. OS map 150 GR SO803603
- 10 **November (Saturday) Log sale - Monkwood** 10.00 am until 1 pm details as 4 November. Volunteers needed to help bag the wood!
- 11 **November (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood** Meet 10.00 am Details as 14 October. Brash clearing.
- 18 **November (Sunday) Conservation Task - Great Whitley (Walsgrove Hill)** Meet at 10 am at Great Whitley OS map 150 GR SO752662, leader Trevor Bucknall tel 01905 755757.

25 **November (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood NR** - meet 10.00 am Details as 28 October.

25 **November (Sunday) Conservation Task – Witney Wood.** Meet 10.30 am at the entrance to the walled garden at rear of Dulas Court. Coppicing with hand tools. Map 149 GR SO371297.

DECEMBER

2 **December (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood NR** - details as 4 November.

9 **December (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood** Details as 14 October.

23 **December (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood** Details as 28 October.

JANUARY 2002

6 **January (Sunday) Monkwood Conservation Task — Whitbread Action Earth Event.** Meet 10.00 am. Soup and mince pies on offer. Management for the Wood White. Details as 4 November

13 **January (Sunday) Grafton Wood join us for our annual Brown Hair Streak egg hunt (full training will be given !!!)** Details as 14 October.

27 **January (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood.** Details as on 28 October.

FEBRUARY

3 **February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood**—details as 4 November.

9 **February (Saturday) Log sale- Monkwood** details as 10 November.

10 **February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton.** Details as 14 October. Ride and glade management.

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

17 **February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Prees Heath** Meet 11.00 am (note later start time) at parking area east of A49. OS Map 126 GR. SJ558367. Heather management for the Silver-studded Blue.

23 **February (Saturday) Conservation task at Ounsdale School, Ounsdale Rd. Womborne;** School grounds need management. Bramble cutting & hedge lopping. Meet 11.00 am at the school GR SO866931. Details contact Anita Ferguson 01902 892187

24 **February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood** Details as 28 October.

24 **February (Sunday) Witney Wood** Details as 25 November.

MARCH

3 **March (Sunday) Conservation Task – Monkwood** Details as 4 November. Glade management.

10 **March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood** Details as 14 October.

24 **March (Sunday) Conservation Task Trench Wood.** Details as 28 October

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Sinton Green
Hallow
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