



No. 55

# NEWSLETTER

Summer 2003

## WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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## Chairman's Notes Summer 2003

### Regional Officer Appeal

I am pleased to report that we raised £791 to help fund the Regional Officer positions, as a result of the appeal in the last newsletter. Thank you very much to all those who contributed.

This money, together with the £4,000 donated from branch funds, will go a long way towards the £7,500 required as match funding for the first year's work. The two appointees, Jenny Joy and Jane Ellis, are now starting to get to grips with the challenge of how best to conserve the butterflies and moths of the region. Initially, they are paying particular attention to the region's priority species and extra funding has already been obtained for work on the **Wood White, Argent and Sable** and the **Common Fanfoot**.

They are also actively promoting the Society and raising the profile of Butterfly Conservation in the West Midlands. I am sure that you will become increasingly aware of their activities.

### New Members

We are aware that a lot of new members have joined the branch in the last year. We are keen to meet you and encourage you to become involved in some of our activities. If you would like to see some of the region's special butterflies and moths why not attend one of our field meetings over the summer. Later in the year, you may wish to help with practical conservation work. Regular work days (or less if you prefer) are held at Monkwood, Trench Wood and Grafton Wood as well as other selected sites. Please see the back of this newsletter for details.

We would also like to receive your butterfly and moth records. Recording and monitoring provides the foundation upon which conservation is built,, allowing us to identify trends and measure the effectiveness of our work. Populations are continually changing e.g. this year already new colonies of **Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper** and **Wood White** have been discovered. Please send

your butterfly records to the Branch Recorder, Jim Chance and your moth records to the County Moth Officer. Please contact Neil Gregory for details of the latter.

### Branch AGM

On the theme of recording, I am pleased to report that Richard Fox, Surveys Manager for Butterfly Conservation, will be the guest speaker at our AGM in October (see below for full details). Richard will talk on "After the Millennium Atlas – using records

to conserve butterflies". This will be a very interesting presentation and well worth attending – I do hope to see you there.

### Digby Wood

I am sure all of you will wish to join with me in wishing Digby, my predecessor as Chairman, a speedy recovery from his recent illness.

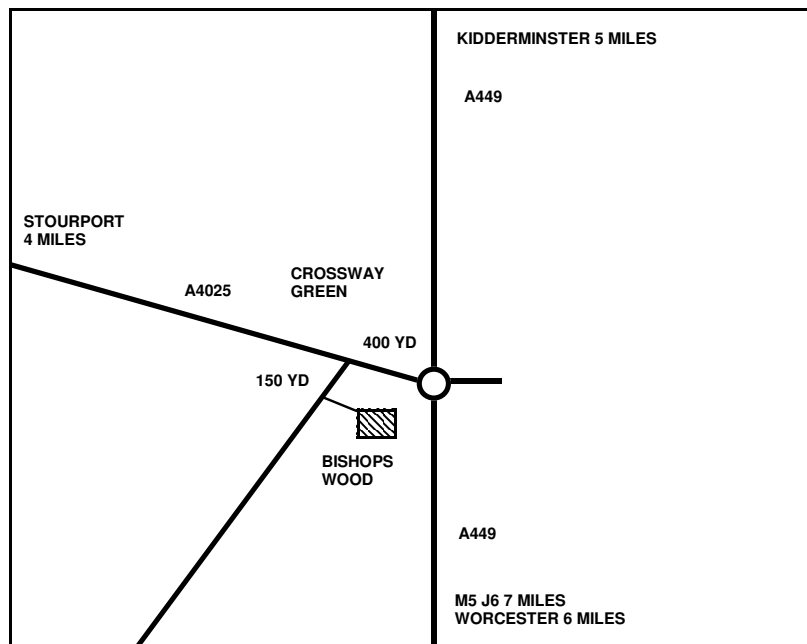
• Ian Duncan

## AGM at Bishops Wood, 11 October 2003 2.00 pm

The Branch AGM will be at Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, near Crossway Green on the A449 at the junction with the A4025, halfway between Worcester and Kidderminster. GR SO835683.

There will be a talk by Richard Fox (BC Surveys Manager) on "Using records to conserve Butterflies".

Tea and coffee will be provided. Details have yet to be finalised.



## Press Release - Grafton Wood

### From Cameroon to Flyford Flavell

A new Visitors Guide to Grafton Wood nature reserve near Flyford Flavell, which was launched last weekend, has been produced with the support of the international environmental charity Earthwatch as part of their Millennium Award scheme. The production of the guide was coordinated by Mike Williams, one of the regular band of volunteers who manage the reserve on behalf of Butterfly Conservation and the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, the joint owners. Mike was selected to go on a plant expedition to Cameroon last year by Earthwatch and spent two weeks researching rare plants with scientists from Kew.

Mike explained "it was a condition of the grant that

on my return to the UK I would use my experience overseas to develop a community project in the UK and I chose to produce a Visitors Guide for Grafton Wood. The nature reserve holds a strong population of the rare **Brown Hairstreak** butterfly and attracts visitors from far and wide who come each year in the hope of seeing the butterfly. While Cameroon is very different to rural Worcestershire, in both places wildlife is under threat and there is a need for the public to understand and appreciate the amazing variety of plants and animals that still exist if they are to survive. The new Visitors Guide is designed to help people find their way around the wood and discover more about the wildlife they may see. A waymarked trail has been established and the new leaflet also shows access routes from three different start points."

Further backing has come from Worcestershire County Council who have worked with local landowners to greatly improve access to the wood, installing new gates and removing obstructions to local footpaths. Grafton Wood is open to the public and copies of the free Visitors Guide will be available from local pubs, post offices and guest houses. Otherwise, copies can be obtained from the Reserve Manager, 9 Meadow Close, Flyford Flavell tel. 01386 792458.

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## Press Release - Woolly Bear

### In Search of the Woolly Bear

People in (county) are being asked to look out for Woolly Bears in their gardens. Woolly Bears are the familiar name for the caterpillars of the striking Garden Tiger moth, which scientists believe to be becoming rarer. National research has shown that in the past thirty years, numbers of the once common Garden Tiger moth have dropped by 44% across Great Britain. Their woolly bear caterpillars were once familiar to children everywhere but scientists fear that they will become a rare sight for future generations. Now members of the West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation, the national insect charity, are launching a survey to find out how the Woolly Bear is faring in the region.

Local Moth Officer, Neil Gregory said "*Woolly Bears are orange and black in colour and very hairy. They feed on a variety of garden weeds and can be seen basking in the sunshine during May or later crossing paths as they move off to their pupation sites. The adult moth, which is large with brown and white markings and orange underwings, flies at night during July and August and is attracted to light. We are asking that people keep a look out for the caterpillar or moth and let us know if they see it. Sightings can be reported by phoning 01905 771623 or by email to [droitwich@btinternet.com](mailto:droitwich@btinternet.com) We hope to show that, despite the national decline, Tigers are still lurking in the gardens of (county). Photographs of the Garden Tiger and its caterpillar can be viewed on the West Midlands Butterfly Conservation website: [www.westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.org.uk](http://www.westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.org.uk)*"

The decline in numbers of Garden Tigers is mirrored by that of other moths. New figures from the oldest agricultural research station in the world at Rothamsted have revealed devastating declines in numbers of once common moth species. Total numbers of moths recorded from the longest-running light-trap at Rothamsted Research Station in Hertfordshire have declined by over 60% since the 1930s. Preliminary studies of individual moth

*For further information contact Mike Williams on 0121 322 2008 (day) or 01299 824860 (eve)*

species across the Rothamsted Insect Survey's extensive national light-trap network have also triggered alarm bells. During the same period, populations of other once commonplace moths such as the Lackey and the Figure of Eight have been decimated – their numbers reduced by 72% and 64% respectively.

Nationally, Butterfly Conservation will now be working with scientists at Rothamsted to discover how hundreds of other moth species are faring, thanks to a new grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and the findings from the West Midlands survey will feed into this research.

Dr Martin Warren, Chief Executive of Butterfly Conservation said "*The preliminary findings are shocking and suggest that many common moths may be suffering considerable declines. Moths are a vital part of the food chain, and our results will help us understand how serious the knock-on effects of their declines will be for other species.*"

Ian Woiwod, Head of the Rothamsted Insect Survey, added "We are delighted to be able to expand our research with the help of Butterfly Conservation. Together we will try to identify all the factors contributing to the demise of our moths, such as climate and land use change. There is still much research to be done, but a better understanding of the situation will ensure that we take the correct action to protect these important insects."

ENDS

*For further information contact Neil Gregory on 01905 771623*

*Further information is available from: Carmel Mallinson, Publicity Officer, Butterfly Conservation  
Tel: 0870 7744309  
Email: [cmallinson@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:cmallinson@butterfly-conservation.org)*

# Good News: Unexpected Butterfly Sightings

## Dingy Skipper - a new sighting in West Herefordshire

On 14 June, a day of good weather, I was making my way through a small, south-west facing piece of unimproved grassland at Dulas near Ewyas Harold when my attention was attracted by a small brown butterfly which I had disturbed. This alighted on a plantain leaf and remained there for some five minutes, enabling me to peruse it with some care. The species was to my amazement, a **Dingy Skipper**. Although it was partly worn (corresponding with its acknowledged main flight period mid May-end June), its distinguishing features were clearly visible.

I have passed through this block of grassland many times in the past seven years, and although I have recorded **Common Blue, Large Skipper, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet** and **Six-spot Burnet** moths, this was the first record for **Dingy Skipper**. The grassland is very diverse and supports a good quantity of bird's foot trefoil (one of the Dingy Skipper's foodplants),

together with common knapweed, ox-eye daisy, common spotted orchid, fleabane and a good range of sedges and grasses.

The discovery of a **Dingy Skipper** at this location raises the obvious question whether a colony may still survive in the area. The butterfly is described by Harper and Simpson (2002) as a rare declining resident, preferring short-turfed calcareous grassland in a state of early succession and seriously threatened by loss of habitat. As far as I am aware, the only known location in Western Herefordshire for this species between the years 1970-1994 is Ewyas Harold Common (Butterfly Conservation records) which is only 1 kilometre east from Dulas as the butterfly flies. A thorough search for this butterfly will therefore definitely be on my agenda in 2004.

• Ian Hart

## The Wood White at Grafton

I was doing an inspection of the wood on 11th June after a week away, to see what had arrived in my absence. Lots of **Large Skippers** and the first few **Meadow Browns** were around. In an open area north of the orchard which had been cleared for Blackthorn re-growth (for **Brown Hairstreaks**) I saw two **Whites** nectaring on Ragged Robin. On closer examination, I identified them as **Wood Whites**. I was able to get several photographs on the Ragged Robin. How and why they were there has been the subject of much discussion. The closest recent record seems to be

Monk Wood which is 18 miles away. Old records (in Jack Green's Day) show that **Wood Whites** were in SO95 in Goosehill Wood and Yeald Wood in the Lenches. Grafton has lots of Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil and also Meadow Vetchling (laval food plants). It has open rides with flowering plants for nectar sources, so lets hope we have enough "wandering" butterflies to set up a viable colony.

• John Tilt

## Branch Spring Meeting 2003

Seventeen members attended this year's Spring Meeting, held at the Village Hall, Dinedor, in rural Herefordshire. Richard Southwell was in charge of proceedings and started things off by welcoming everyone, before calling upon John Tilt to entertain and educate us on developments at Grafton Wood. To those of you unable to attend, you all missed a finely interpreted presentation. Using a computer-generated format, John initially told us about his own introductions to conservation in Worcester, from the late 1970s and then his own involvement, specifically at Grafton Wood.

### Synopsis of John's presentation:

History: Origins of Grafton Wood, (part of Feckenham Forest), are known as far back as 972 A.D. Ownership of wood, from 1086 onwards

detailed up to 1997 purchase by BC from the Croome Estate. A map made in 1740, compared with a 1999 aerial photo showed the size of the wood not to have changed significantly in 250 years. John then outlined management history at the wood, (coppicing), from 1750 onwards. The site comprises heavy lias clay and until 1900, (when it was cleared and replanted with oak), supported Ash with Maple understorey. Site is a SSSI.

Management Plan: Simon Barker produced this. Conifers have been thinned, so far, in two areas of the wood. Former coppiced areas are being reinstated, with standards. Illustrations were shown of ride structures, reflecting wide rides and open glades and flailing management of these.

*(Continued on page 14)*

## Home thoughts from Home or Reflections on a Sunday afternoon out to Hawne Colliery 18 May 2003

This being my first time out with the members of the West Midland Butterfly group I felt honoured to be asked by Richard Southwell to write a short account of the group's brief trip to the Hawne Colliery Site near Halesowen. Strong showers had fallen right up until the meeting time of 2 p.m. Hence, in attendance, were a small but enthusiastic band, consisting of both lepidopterists and committed environmental activists:

- *Dave White (walk leader) - Active member of Butterfly Conservation. He conducts four of our transects including the ones at Hawne and Uffmoor Wood;*
- *Richard Southwell - Branch Organiser, recorder, active campaigner in Black Country and member of Dudley MBC LA21 Committee;*
- *Carole Freer - Secretary of Halesowen Township Council. Carol and her husband Mike are leading local environmental campaigners;*
- *Steve & Carole Harper - Long-standing Branch members. Steve is particularly active in Chaddesley Wood, both with regard to workday and transect-recording activities;*
- *John Wills - Branch member and active recorder;*
- *Keith Harris - New recruit. Keith has recently returned to UK after working in conservation planning in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.*

Much has already been written about Hawne in previous issues of this Newsletter. Suffice it to say the area is one of forgotten, benevolent neglect. The mine closed in 1921 when, during the National Coal Strike, the colliery irreversibly flooded. Now the site is a gem of unimproved coal slag on which has developed a variety of man-induced "natural" habitats. Sunny mini-cliffs provide ideal conditions for xerophytes. Open areas abound in vetches, ox-eye daisy, teasel, wild rose and broom. Tree scrub, made up of a rich mix of willows, alder, silver birch, oak etc. provides dappled shade ideal for woodland plants, and since the site neighbours the River Stour there exist damp, waterlogged areas home to wetland species including various rushes and yellow iris. Also important larval food plants such as nettle, birdsfoot trefoil and hawthorn are abundant. At the eastern end of the site are the grade II listed mining buildings built in 1865. The engine and fan houses and related workshops are according to N.A. Chapman (in *Some Aspects of Halesowen's Coal Mines*) the best preserved in

the Black Country and among the finest in Britain.

As Richard pointed out in his article on Hawne printed in the Spring 2001 Newsletter, this brownfield site is one of our area's most important butterfly survey locations. Out of the 40 or so transects conducted by the West Midlands Branch in 2000, Hawne had the highest numbers of Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*, was second for the Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*, and has a resident colony of Green Hairstreaks *Callophrys rubi*. Due to the tenacity and commitment of Richard and other Butterfly Conservation members, the site now has a high local profile and has featured on BBC Midlands Today.

A.D. Imms in his little work of 1947, entitled *The social behaviour of Insects*, states "The behaviour of an insect, as of any animal, consists of acts which are the ultimate effects of stimuli upon its particular type of anatomical structure." While this observation is very true for insects, its veracity is less reliable as one goes up the evolutionary scale. A fact that may well help to explain why the combined meteorological-related stimuli of rain, dull conditions and wind resulted in there being more butterfly enthusiasts recorded than actual species of butterfly during our outing. The butterflies sensibly responded directly to the stimulus of weather on their ganglia, and stayed nicely dry, tucked away on underside of leaves. Those of us with a more evolved nervous system respond to a complexity of often internally generated nerve impulses – in this case conjuring up the mental image of refracted sunlight on powdery green underwing. Having spent the best part of the last 17 years in South East Asia I get a nostalgic glow when I see such "British species" as the **Orange Tip** *Anthocharis cardamines*, or the **Small** (or was it a *Large*) **White** *Pieris rapae*/*Pieris brassicae*. Which is just as well, as that is about all I did see. David's sharp eye did see a **Common Blue**, possibly the first of the season. However, not for any of us the delights of the **Green Hairstreak**, a species that has put Hawne Colliery if not on the map than at least in the local newspapers.

Lepidopterists being a philosophical breed - at least when there are no butterflies about - discussion soon turned to the ethics of conservation. Why we mused is such a remarkable place as Hawne Colliery at risk from housing or some such other development? At the root of much ethical and moral conflict is often an unbridgeable philosophical divide between those

that follow the ethics of conviction (the Convictionlists) and those that follow the ethics of responsibility (the Utilitarians). Green Peace tends to the former, WWF towards the latter. To gauge your own ethical conservation tendencies ask yourself how many radionuclides is it safe to dump into the North Sea. The utilitarians base their answer on such things as mutation rates in marine organisms and assessment of sea-current dispersion rates. Convictionlists adopt a totally different model. They would argue radiation is harmful, ergo one Rad. above background radiation is one Rad. too many.

Take the case of the **Queen Alexandra's Butterfly** (*Ornithoptera alexandrae*) the world's largest species of lepidoptera. These giants live on the lower slopes of Mt Lamington in Papua New Guinea and are under pressure from oil palm development and the fact that the mountain is a very active volcano. The government has until very recently taken a strongly convictionlist position and banned export under CITES and also all commercial exploitation. Unfortunately such measures cannot prevent the explosive advance of either oil palm or volcanic ash. Interestingly local people plant the food vine of the caterpillar - promoting conservation through self-interest. They then catch a few of the butterflies to sell on the black market. Fortunately, most of the newly emerged imagos fly straight to the tops of very tall trees to feed on blossom. This has led some entomologists, including those from the British Museum (Natural History), the University of PNG and WWF to argue that trade in the insects should be encouraged and controlled on a legal, sustainable basis – clearly a utilitarian approach.

What you might ask has the **Alexandra's Birdwing** to do with the butterflies of Hawne? Firstly, both are being promoted by the inadvertent conservation benefits afforded by local people. While we wait to see whether or not English Nature awards Site of Interest to Nature Conservation status to the Hawne site, what are the local kids doing? They are riding their mountain and motor bikes through the site, quite oblivious of the fact they are helping to maintain a patchwork of scrub and low vegetation, perfect for a wealth of butterflies. Secondly, both the Birdwing and the Hawne butterflies are placed at serious risk from that most pervasive global threat of all, habitat loss related to socio-economic pressures. The futures of both *O. alexandrae* and its more diminutive temperate cousins half-a-world-away depend on land-use planning decisions. Just how many **Green Hairstreaks** or birdwings should be sacrificed to development? While the convictionlist in us may whisper none, in truth it is not a question that has an objective answer. Realistically all we can hope for is that government planners - including those inhabiting cold draughty offices in Dudley and their colleagues in hot sweaty Port Moresby - are endeavouring to employ their constrained powers responsibly. This necessarily involves balancing the needs of local economic development, the promotion of conservation and the safeguarding of landowner rights to profit from the use and disposal of land, considerations that apply the world over.

• Keith Harris

## A Green Introduction to Butterflies

On a wet and dismal Saturday in May the lure of the Green Hairstreak attracted a number of budding new recording volunteers to Sutton Park, one of the West Midlands top sites for this under-recorded species.

The key aim of the event was to re-establish the 2 Sutton Park transects and to encourage some new recorders in the Birmingham and Black Country area and hopefully more records for **Green Hairstreak**, a Priority species in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan.

Its vibrant green colouring and faint white streak on its underwing make **Green Hairstreak** unmistakable. Its main habitats in the West Midlands are railway cuttings, rough and scrubby grassland, heathland and old quarries, where it lays its eggs on Dogwood and Buckthorn. The

**Green Hairstreak** is a generally scarce species in the West Midlands.

Stefan Bodnar the Park's Ranger gave a fascinating introduction to the ecology of the butterflies of Sutton Park, which boasts 28 species. He also talked about the management of the site which is predominantly woodland, with the largest area of heathland in Warwickshire and a number of ponds and lakes.

I then introduced the audience to the nitty-gritty of recording, taking them through timed-counts and transect recording along with the process of filling in the many forms. The idea of the day was to encourage new recorders and to re-establish the transects at Sutton Park, as well as to try to get some timed counts for **Green Hairstreak**. Undaunted everyone did return after lunch for the field session despite the ominous grey clouds,

which didn't offer much hope of seeing any butterflies.

Stefan took us firstly to a fully enclosed rectangular clearing in the woods where **Green Hairstreak** has been recorded in numbers of up to 20 in past years. The key species on this site as a foodplant is cranberry and we did get to taste one! The site also has the rare Crowberry and lots of Cowberry. The spot is an ideal candidate for timed counts. Timed counts offer a simple and non-time consuming way of estimating the abundance of a species at a site. Comparisons with mark – release capture experiments have shown that they are a reliable method. Only one visit is needed to a site, in the right weather conditions!, at the peak flight period of the adult.

We then walked the two former transects which took us through some bog and mire habitats. Although the sun never bared itself long enough to

see any of our target species, we all learnt a lot about the habitats for **Green Hairstreak**, **Small Pearl Bordered** and **Marsh Fritillary** and to identify the foodplants. We also saw some interesting plants including Sundew and Starwort.

At the end of the day, nine of the participants, have stated that they would like to undertake survey work. We have also found volunteers to do timed counts. All in all an enjoyable and very valuable day was had by all.

Due to the success of the event Sutton Park have asked if they can host a similar event in July hopefully on day-flying moths. If you are interested or would like to help please contact Jane Ellis on 01788 543809 or email [jellis@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:jellis@butterfly-conservation.org)

• Jane Ellis

## National Moth Night (Ribbesford Wood)

12 April 2003

This year's public event on National Moth Night was held in Ribbesford Wood, near the Wyre Forest. It was well attended, with a total of 5 light traps. Unfortunately the weather was not ideal, with temperatures falling to 7 degrees. 24 species of moth were recorded, as well as some interesting woodlice and beetles. **Brindled Pug** was the most numerous, with 62 seen in total. The moths seen were all common,

nevertheless they are useful records for a national snapshot. Many people around the region also recorded the moths in their garden, and we thank them for sending in their records. Next year's National Moth Night will be held on 22 May.

• Corinna and Neil Gregory

## Search for the Drab Looper

31 May 2003

Monkwood 31 May: It was a hot, humid day in late May with temperatures reaching 28 degrees; ideal conditions for a very enjoyable walk around Monkwood in search of the **Drab Looper** moth, a Biodiversity Action Plan species. 12 people gathered, from as far afield as Manchester and Gloucestershire. We certainly weren't disappointed, seeing 3 **Drab Loopers**, each in a different part of the wood. We also saw **Wood White** in reasonable numbers, **Peacock**, **Comma**, as well as **Brimstone** larvae on the alder buckthorn. We tried hanging out some synthetic pheromones on bushes on Monkwood Common in the hope of attracting some clearwing moths, although to no avail.

The evening's moth trapping was also very successful. We set 4 light traps out in an under-recorded part of the wood called Little Monkwood. The weather conditions continued to be good, with cloud cover and temperatures falling from 17 to 13 degrees. 69 species were recorded in total. The highlights of the night were **Devon Carpet** (1st record for Worcestershire) and **Orange Footman** (3rd modern record for Worcestershire).

• Corinna and Neil Gregory

# News from the Regional Development Officers

## Events arranged by the RDOs

**Beginners' Moth Event** – Saturday 6 September 7pm – 11.30 pm. Sutton Park Visitor Centre (off Town Gate), Sutton Coldfield. This event is aimed at attracting new volunteers to moth recording. A classroom session on basic moth ecology and recording will be followed by a trapping session and return to classroom to identify the findings. To book a place please contact Jane Ellis.

**Butterflies for Beginners - New Members Event** – Saturday 16 August 10am - 1pm. Botanical Gardens, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3TR. A great beginner's introduction to butterflies and moths, how to start recording them and how to encourage them into your garden. Slide talks will be followed by a tour of the botanical gardens to discuss features of value to butterflies and to identify any that we see. Refreshments provided (not lunch). To book a place please contact Jane Ellis.

## Regional Officers' Update

Time has flown since the last issue of the newsletter and we seem to have covered a lot of ground – not least in miles! The following is just a taster of some of our work in the West Midlands Branch region:

Some progress has been made with funding for survey and monitoring work on a number of key butterfly and moth species in the region (also see Conservation Corner). In Herefordshire funding has been obtained from the Herefordshire Biodiversity Partnership to undertake survey work on both the **Wood White** and the **Argent and Sable**. In Shropshire, the County Council has supported a project on the **Argent and Sable** and the Shropshire Wildlife Trust has found funding for some butterfly and moth survey work on a number of its reserves. In Staffordshire, English Nature has funded some work on the **Common Fan-foot**, **Argent and Sable** and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. English Nature and Forest Enterprise have also continued to support work on the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and **Common Fan-foot** in the Wyre Forest and a violet survey has recently been undertaken at Bringsty Common. This is a site which has been under Countryside Stewardship since 1999 to improve the habitat for **High Brown Fritillary**. The violet survey will help to inform the future management in this area. A Fritillary action day at the Wyre Forest in May, was very well attended with representatives from key agencies including National Trust, English Nature, The Wildlife Trusts and Forestry Commission. Much good experience was shared on management techniques for the **Pearl Bordered Fritillary**.

Some initial groundwork has been undertaken into

developing a large-scale funding bid for a landscape scale project for priority butterflies and moths in Herefordshire. The aim is to de-fragment and reduce isolation of existing butterfly and moth colonies. The priority butterfly species that the project will concentrate on will be **Pearl Bordered Fritillary**, **High Brown Fritillary**, **Wood White**, **Argent and Sable** and **Drab Looper**. The key areas include Haugh Wood, Aymestry Woodlands, Doward and Coppet Hill. These areas are eligible for Leader + funding through the Herefordshire Rivers Project. The project will provide workshops and training events to enable local communities to monitor the status of these threatened butterfly species and to undertake simple habitat assessments of past and potential future sites for these species. This data will be combined with information on land management obtained through liaison with landowners and managers and trial management, to produce maps highlighting the restoration potential of different areas. Funding and advice will then be targeted where most needed to improve management.

BC is now represented on the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership. This is proving to be a valuable opportunity for networking and establishing BC as a key player in the delivery of biodiversity targets in the region. BC gets a mention on the new West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership publicity leaflet, which has been widely circulated to key agencies, landowners, managers and private enterprises. Jane also attended the recent Regional Local Agenda 21 Co-ordinators meeting and gave an overview of BC's work and how it could link in with LA21.



In terms of publicity and awareness raising BC was represented at Gardeners World Live at the NEC. Our stand created much interest (with many thanks to the volunteers from West Midlands Branch) 27 new members were signed up with a high proportion of those from the West Midlands and over 200 buddleias have been adopted for peoples gardens. A number of addresses were taken of those interested in recording. A display will be going to the foyer of the Botanical Gardens for a month over the summer and they have kindly agreed to host our New Members Day event in August (– see events listing). A new set of BC display panels for the West Midlands region are currently in production. These give a good overview of the role of BC and some of the key habitats and sites locally. These will be a vital tool for events such as conferences, LBAP launches etc where we need to obtain a good profile with potential partners and funders. We have had numerous invites to attend events including the Shrewsbury Green Festival and Dudmaston Wood open day. Unfortunately, the RO's time is limited and we can only possibly attend a small few of

these. We have been struggling on a number of occasions to find volunteers to help with events. We would like to thank all the hard work of the small number of volunteers who have been able to give their time this year. However, we do not want to take advantage of their hospitality and keep knocking on the same doors for help, so if any members out there have a particular flare for talking to the public and enthusing people about butterflies and moths and could help man a display at a local event please let us know.

It has been a steep learning curve with many new sites and contacts to familiarise ourselves with. Every turn opens up more potential opportunities for us to follow-up. We will need to keep strongly focussed on key priorities; we cannot do it all at once or alone. The ROs will continue to need the invaluable support of our local volunteers to help where it is vitally needed. Thank you for all your kind support so far.

• Jane Ellis

## **New leaflets for Brownfield Sites and Towns and Cities**

Two new informative leaflets have been produced by Head Office to raise awareness of the importance of urban sites for many species of butterflies and moths. The Brownfield leaflet is aimed at raising the importance of these habitats for butterflies, moths and other invertebrates, amongst regional government, local authorities staff, and developers. The Towns and Cities booklet is aimed at statutory and non-statutory organisations and individuals involved in practical land management in urban and urban fringe

areas. It also gives practical advice on land management for butterflies and moths in urban habitats. The booklet may also be used for a wider audience (e.g. at shows etc) and could be used as a membership incentive.

Please contact either Jane Ellis if you would like copies of these leaflets. on 01788 543809 or email [jellis@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:jellis@butterfly-conservation.org)

## **West Midlands Branch Reports Management Plans, Survey and Monitoring Reports**

A selection of the reports held by Jenny Joy is given below (for a complete listing please contact Jenny). These reports are available for loan so if you are planning a project then please look through this list and see if there are any reports which may be able to help you plan or carry out your project. Jenny also has a copy of most of the National Species Action Plans and the Regional Action Plans produced by BC Head Office.

### **Herefordshire**

Barker, S. R. J. 1997. Bringsty Common Site Management Plan. Report to Bringsty Common Manorial Court.

Barker, S. R. J. 1998. High Brown Fritillary habitat

survey in the southern Malverns. Report for EN.

### **Shropshire**

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End of RDO News

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Jenny Joy and Jane Ellis



## Appeal from Head Office

**A world where butterflies and moths can thrive for future generations to enjoy.**

Every year Butterfly Conservation receives a small number of legacies from our members and other supporters who, through their kindness, are helping to ensure that future generations will have the opportunity to observe our native butterflies and moths in the wild, as they once did.

By remembering Butterfly Conservation in your will, you can make a lasting and valuable contribution to our work.

Please contact David Bridges on 01403 256175 to talk informally and confidentially about making a bequest to Butterfly Conservation, or write to him at the Society's Head Office in Dorset.

## Conservation Corner

At last we are having a decent midsummer but the question I'm most frequently being asked is 'where are all the butterflies this year?' The Joy family have experienced this ourselves with my son Oliver spending numerous sunny days in our garden searching for elusive butterflies only to record the odd **Small Tortoiseshell** or **Holly Blue**. The recent succession of poor springs must be partially responsible together with the torrential rain that accompanied the emergence of the spring butterflies earlier this year.

However, despite the general low butterfly numbers overall there are a number of species which now appear to be having a bumper year. One of these is the **Silver-studded Blue** at Prees Heath which is doing incredibly well despite the fact that only small fragments of heathland habitat remain here. Richard Southwell recorded an incredible 1300 here on 24th June and Caroline Graham (local resident and transect walker) has reported seeing adults in areas which have previously been unoccupied. The **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** is another species which appears to be having a really good year. John Smith (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust) recorded 92 on one area of Cannock Chase on 11th June and followed this up with a count on 26th June when he said 'the northern end of the site was fantastic. There were 38 on the west side of the bank and we gave up at 50 on the east side because there were too many to count'. Unfortunately my recent count one of the Stiperstones sites could not beat this but was a very respectable 95 in 30 minutes and the maximum I have ever recorded there. Given the apparent high emergence of this species we were also hoping to solve the riddle of recent sightings in the Consall area of Staffordshire. Although a small number of **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** have been recorded here this year, none were in really good patches of suitable habitat. Conversely, no records have been obtained for areas where marsh violet are abundant and where you might expect to see this species. Although the hope of finding a thriving breeding colony in this area of Staffordshire now looks more remote we have not yet given up and we still have a number of sites to cover which we have not yet visited. Having got lost several times in areas of woodland, fallen over numerous times and felt so exhausted that I could not walk another step, I now realise this area of Staffordshire is not an easy one to cover! Very many thanks to everybody who has offered to help us here and please keep on recording - it is one of those areas where you feel anything could turn up!

We have also moved another step forward in our knowledge of the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** in the Wyre Forest this year thanks to the support of English Nature and Forest Enterprise. Searches for larvae and identification of breeding areas was the theme this year with many happy hours being spent in this way. We are very grateful to Matthew Oates for his support on this project and for teaching us how to find larvae. We had a successful West Midlands Branch field trip during which four larvae were found with subsequent searches bringing the total to 14. Unfortunately the weather was not kind to us as it was warm and sunny during the few weeks when **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** larvae are possible to find. What is wrong with that I can hear most of you saying? Using Matthew's terminology in hot weather larvae adopt a 'feed and retreat' mode which means they do not sit on vegetation basking but retreat to hide under vegetation making them much harder to find. In warm overcast conditions they will apparently bask for much longer periods. A second problem encountered was that mature larvae were being found when there were few violet leaves present. This suggests that the larvae may have been feeding underneath the litter layer and therefore would be virtually impossible to find. Given these problems a total of 14 larvae was not bad and the identification of breeding areas has already been very useful for liaison with Forest Enterprise and English Nature over various management issues. I hope to be able to return to search for larvae again next year so the challenge will be to beat the previous total!

Searches for **High Brown Fritillary** in the Malverns are currently ongoing. Three were confirmed on a branch field trip on 24 June (with 5 seen in total) and 13 seen (with 3 confirmed as **High Brown**) on a Branch field trip on 29th June. Having now spent three days searching various sites for this species I now realise how difficult it is to identify large fritillaries by getting close to them in thick bracken - they are either zooming around at great speed in the sunshine or not flying and impossible to find when it is overcast. Having not seen them in the region before this year I do not yet have the 'knack' and could certainly not yet identify them in flight - I still have a lot to learn! Incidentally, Neil and Corinna Gregory brought their moth pheromones with them on the Branch field trip on 29th June and it was great to see the two red-belted clearwings that quickly appeared. I am now definitely going to get myself some. I had thought that they could only be used once and

therefore it was a very expensive treat but I learnt they can be used repeatedly - thanks to Neil and Corinna for introducing us to this new way of recording moths.

Other snippets of news include three sightings of **Argent and Sable** by Peter Boardman on Whixall Moss in Shropshire (particularly good as this moth species has nationally had a really poor year), good numbers of Common Fan-foot recorded by Dave Grundy in the Wyre Forest, new colonies of **Wood White** and **Grizzled Skipper** being discovered by Bill Davidson at sites in south Shropshire, improvement in the **Wood White** habitat at another Shropshire site and Jane Ellis undertaking some liaison with site owners over management for **Small Blue** in Warwickshire.

*(Continued from page 4)*

Controversially, John insisted upon the clearance, off-site, of brash, as he maintains that it encourages bramble growth.

Management of Blackthorn was then outlined. The Orchard area, well known to most Branch members, was managed, following agreement with the local farmer and was partially funded by English Nature. A similar arrangement was negotiated with other local farmers. Management work intention is to encourage the **Brown Hairstreak** INTO the wood, rather than peripheral existence. Work undertaken, so far, means that Trevor Bucknall was able to note eight areas inside the wood where **Brown Hairstreak** eggs have now been noted - demonstrating the success of this strategy. John went on to explain that the culling of Muntjac Deer, known for its presence in the wood, has not proved totally effectual and so an experimental fencing regime has been substituted. We were shown slides of before/after management work.

Work parties: Various aspects of conservation orientated activities take place. A youth club from Kidderminster has contributed to practical work. One off-spin from tasks undertaken, has been charcoal burning - for which a specialist has become involved. 15,000 hours of work party activity has been donated by volunteers!

A look around the wood - what's in the wood:

**Birds** -Marsh, Coal, Willow and Long-tailed Tits. Green and Great-spotted Woodpecker, Bullfinch, Goldcrest, Jay, Pheasant. Nightingale, Cuckoo, Redwing, Woodcock, Garden Warbler. Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Black Cap.

**Flora** -Spurge Laurel, Primrose, Lady's Smock, Bugle, Birds Nest, Common Spotted, Greater Butterfly, Early Purple and Fragrant Orchids. Dog's Mercury, Twayblade, Cowslip, Bluebell, Wild Angelica, Dog Rose, St Johns Wort, Orpine, Violet, Helleborine, Common Fleabane, Marsh Ragwort, Blackthorn, Wayfarer, Midland Hawthorn.

Being a Regional Officer has very much changed the way I work. I now go out of Shropshire and visit sites I have heard about for years but never been to, I am much more involved in site management, meet many more branch members and attend many more meetings. It is a great job to do and I look forward to the next six months - who else can spend a wonderful day in the Malverns as part of their job! It is also not always the butterflies and moths that are the most memorable part of the day - seeing Simon Barker's face change as he watched a very large black cat stalk two deer on Bircher Common last week stands out - who knows what it could have been!

• Jenny Joy

**Butterflies; Brown Hairstreak, White Admiral, Purple Hairstreak, Pearl-bordered Fritillary** + the more common woodland related species.

**Snakes** - grass snake. Slow worm.

**Mammals** - Muntjac and Roe Deer, Hare, Badger Fox, Grey Squirrel, Bank Vole, Wood Mouse.

The Branch wishes to gratefully acknowledge John's huge input to management and maintenance work at Grafton and particularly for this fine presentation, that demonstrated very well the rewards gained by an effectual and acted upon management regime.

The annual quiz was abandoned, (and will be carried forward to next year), in preference to a jaunt around Haugh Wood.

Field Trip (after Spring meeting) – Jeff Andrews and Andy Nicholls led the participants on a 2 and a half hour trip around Haugh Wood (North and South sections). Initially, the weather seemed suspect but, despite not being ideal conditions, we did manage good sightings of the intended target plus six other butterfly species.

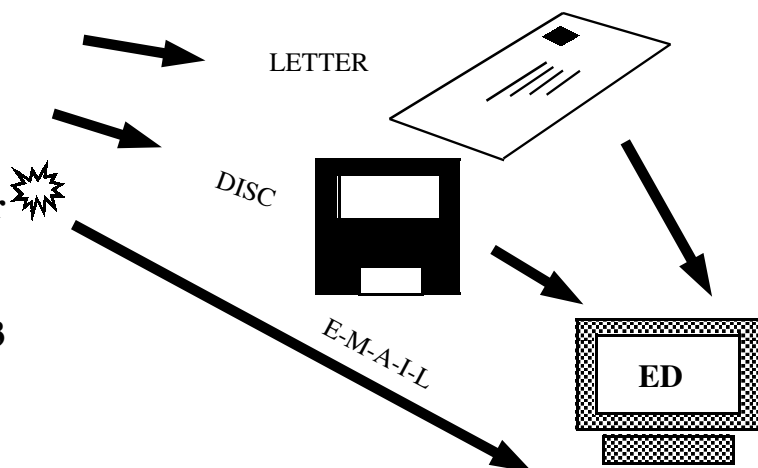
Sightings - North section: 10 **PBF** and 9 **Wood White**

South section: 5 **PBF**, 24 **Wood White**, as well as **Green-veined White**, male **Brimstone**, male **Orange Tip**, **Speckled Wood** and a pristine female **Holly Blue**. Moths; **Silver Ground Carpet**. **Flamed Carpet**, **White Ermine**, **Speckled Yellow**, **Drab Looper** plus a **Drinker** moth caterpillar. The good numbers of both **PBF** and **Wood White** demonstrated well the benefits of on-going management of rides and glades at this site. Richard Southwell was ecstatic in being able to identify and confirm **Drab Looper** (the name still conjures up a long forgotten Hollywood film star!) from the moth's distinctive flight pattern - well done indeed!

• Philip Hopson.

# Instructions for Contributors

**Deadline for Autumn Newsletter contributions is Saturday 20 September 2003**



**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."

## Dates for your Diary: Butterfly walks, workdays, moth events, meetings etc.

**September to April:** Herefordshire Work Party Every Thursday from September to April Mike Harper leads a group of volunteers to carry out work to improve the habitats for moths and butterflies in Herefordshire. Various sites are visited, mostly Queen's Wood near Dymock but also other areas such as Vinesend near Mathon and Dead Woman's Thorn near Ledbury. The work usually lasts from 9.30 to 13.30. Help with transport might be possible. If you are interested in participating please contact Mike on 01531 632030.

**12 July Baggeridge Country Park near Sedgley. Target species White-letter Hairstreak.** Meet 11.00 am Visitor Centre. Walk with Wolverhampton RSPB. 1.5 miles each way to Himley Hall. Bring packed lunch. Café and WC on site. From A449 Kidderminster to Wolverhampton Rd. take A463 Wodehouse Lane to BCP on right. Track to car park SO896937. Details David Jackson tel 01802 344716

**27 July (Sunday) Transect Training Day at the Wyre Forest.** If you are interested in setting up a butterfly transect or already carry out one but would like to learn how to use transect walker

please do join us for the day. Classroom session in the morning with afternoon practical session in the Wyre Forest. Meet at the Wyre Forest Visitor Centre at 11.00am (SO749740). Contact: Jenny Joy on 01952 245684.

**29 July (Tuesday) Survey of the Malverns for Grayling.** Meet at the British Camp Car Park (SO762403) at 11.00am. Contact: Jenny Joy on 01952 245684.

**16 August (Saturday) Botanical Gardens Birmingham. Beginners' introduction to butterflies and moths.** See page 8 for more details.

**11 October (Saturday) Monkwood a Fungal Foray with Diane and Tim Bateman.** Meet in the car park 10.30 am (probably lasting until about 1.00 pm) OS map 150 GR SO804606 Adults £1, children 50p

**11 October (Saturday) AGM; Bishops Wood.** Speaker Richard Fox (Millennium Atlas results). Please see page 2 for more details.

### Dates for your Diary—Moths

**It is essential to contact the leader if you wish to attend these events. We often go on from the meeting place and would hate to leave you behind! Further details and events can be found on the branch website**

Contact details:

Neil and Corinna Gregory 01905 771623

Rosemary Winnall: 01299 266929 (day) 01299 266489 (eve)

Dave Grundy: 0121 446 5446

**18 July Wyre Forest.** Contact Rosemary Winnall.

#### AUGUST

**16 August Trench Wood 20:30.** Meet in reserve car park OS Map 150 SO928589. Leaders: Neil and Corinna Gregory

**29 August Wyre Forest.** Contact Rosemary Winnall

#### SEPTEMBER

**6 September Sutton Park Visitor Centre** (off Town Gate), Sutton Coldfield. Classroom session on moth ecology plus recording and trapping session. Please see page 8. Please contact Jane Ellis to book.

**19 September Wyre Forest.** Contact Rosemary Winnall



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**Please see overleaf  
for more Committee members RDOs & Conservation Reserve Wardens**



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