

# 2001 West Midlands Butterfly and Moth Annual Review

## Introduction

As in previous years this review is based mainly on the transect data acquired in Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Gloucestershire.

Due to the foot and mouth outbreak, transect walking was severely restricted this year as well as leading to reduced casual recording. 29 transects were walked this year of which only 11 were walked for the entire April to September season. 15 were walked for part of the year and 3 were single species transects. These transects are shown in Table 1 which also shows the week when each transect started. Spring recording was particularly badly hit, however by the end of June 21 transects were underway and as a result, later flying species (eg Browns) were much better recorded.

The following were not walked at all due to foot and mouth:

Castlemorton Common – Ian Duncan (Worcs)

Common Hill - Jeff Andrews (Heref)

Croft Farm - Colin Dolding (Heref)

Wyre Forest West - Frank Lancaster (Shrops)

Ewyas Harold Common – Sue Young (Heref)

Grafton Wood - John Tilt (Worcs)

Penny Hill Bank – Ed Leszczynski (Worcs)

However I am pleased to report that 6 new transects were started as follows:

Blackminster - Terry Knight (Worcs)

Droitwich - Corinna Gregory (Worcs)

Melrose Meadow - Ian Duncan (Worcs)

Warley Wood - Michaela Hinton (West Mids)

Tedsmere - Alan Holder (Shrops)

Selly Oak - Neil Gregory (West Mids)

Of these, 2 cover farmland and 3 are urban sites – both habitats not previously well represented in the region.

4 transects were discontinued during the year:

Haugh Wood North – John Pembridge (Heref)

Perry Wood- Phil Williams (Worcs)

Trench Wood- Ken Thomas (Worcs)

Shelfheld Coppice – Rosemary Winnall (Worcs)

Thank you very much to these recorders for all their efforts over the past few years.

These are all long-running transects and new recorders are urgently required for the 2002 season . Please let me know if you are interested as we would really like to continue the monitoring of these sites. We are still also looking for transect walkers in Staffordshire which has very poor coverage.

I am delighted to tell you that Neil Gregory has agreed to become the Transect Coordinator for the region. With the introduction of the Transect Walker (TW) software someone with Neil's computer expertise is essential as coordinator. He and Corinna are currently undertaking the mammoth task of inputting all the historical transect data into TW. This should lead in future to much better feedback to transect walkers and better analysis of the data. Please can all future queries as well as the 2002 records be sent directly to Neil (see address at the rear of the newsletter).

**TABLE 1**  
**2001 TRANSECTS WEST MIDLANDS**

TRANSECT	RECORDER	COUNTY	WEEK STARTED	HABITAT
Bircher Common *	Beryl Petters	Herefordshire		Bracken
Blackminster	Terry Knight	Worcestershire	1	Arable
Bredon Hill	Charles Morgan	Worcestershire	not known	Grassland
Bringsty Common*	Paul Healy	Herefordshire		Bracken
Chaddesley Wood	Steve Harper	Worcestershire	17	Woodland
Cleeve Prior	Terry Knight	Worcestershire	1	Grassland
Coppett Hill	Wendy Innes	Herefordshire	8	Bracken
Crickley Hill	David Perkins	Gloucestershire	not known	Grassland
Droitwich	Corinna Gregory	Worcestershire	1	Scrub
Fenn, Whixall Moss	Pete Boardman	Shropshire	10	Lowland Bog
Haugh Wood South	Jeff Andrews	Herefordshire	1	Woodland
Hawne Colliery	Dave White	Worcestershire	1	Disused Land
Knapp & Papermill	Garth Lowe	Worcestershire	1	Woodland
Lineover Wood	Paul Arnold	Gloucestershire	not known	Woodland
Malvern Hills North	Colin Dolding	Worcestershire	2	Scrub
Malvern Hills South	Digby Wood	Worcestershire		Bracken
Melrose Meadow	Ian Duncan	Worcestershire	1	Grassland
Miserden	David Perkins	Gloucestershire	not known	Scrub
Monkwood 1	Claire Turner	Worcestershire	6	Woodland
Monkwood 2	Dave White	Worcestershire	12	Woodland
Rodborough	Matthew Oates	Gloucestershire	not known	Grassland
Selly Oak	Neil Gregory	West Midlands	1	Urban
Stinchcombe A	Chris Wiltshire	Gloucestershire	5	Grassland
Stinchcombe B	Chris Wiltshire	Gloucestershire	5	Grassland
Tedsmere	Alan Holder	Shropshire	1	Arable
Uffmoor Wood	Dave White	Worcestershire	12	Woodland
Wallbrook Wood	Jeff Andrews	Herefordshire	1	Woodland
Warley Woods	Michaela Hinton	Worcestershire	15	Urban
Wetmoor	Chris Wiltshire	Gloucestershire	14	Woodland
Wigmore Rolls	Beryl Petters	Herefordshire	16	Woodland
Windmill Hill	Terry Knight	Worcestershire	1	Grassland
Wyre Forest East	Terry Higgins	Worcestershire	10	Woodland

\* single species  
not known -transect  
was walked but data  
not received in time  
to include in this

TABLE 2

## FIRST AND LAST BUTTERFLY DATES 2001

	FIRST	LAST
Small Skipper	26/6 Ryall/Hawne (CD/DW)	4/9 Ripple (CD)
Essex Skipper	12/7 Ryall (CD)	13/8 Hawne (DW)
Large Skipper	31/5 Ryall (CD)	13/8 Hawne (DW)
Dingy Skipper	20/5 Dudley (RS)	3/6 Stinchcombe (CW)
Grizzled Skipper	19/5 Stinchcombe (CW)	27/5 Stinchcombe (CW)
Wood White	11/5 Stanton Lacy (BD)	16/8 Bury Ditches (BD)
Clouded Yellow	26/8 Shropshire (BD)	
Brimstone	30/3 Various (BD, MS , CD)	12/10 Various (MS, CD)
Large White	7/5 Shropshire (BD)	22/10 Hawne (DW)
Small White	9/4 Hawne (DW)	27/10 Shropshire (BD)
Green-veined White	21/4 Cleeve Prior (TK)	17/10 Belle Vale (DW)
Orange Tip	22/4 Melrose Meadow (ID)	22/6 Hawne (DW)
Green Hairstreak	1/5 Myndtown (BD)	27/7 Malverns (ID)
Brown Hairstreak	19/8 Grafton (MW)	29/9 Grafton (MW)
Purple Hairstreak	30/6 Monkwood (DW)	10/9 Monkwood (DW)
White-letter "	5/7 Hope Valley NR (BD)	10/8 Colstey Wood (BD)
Small Copper	13/5 Various (ID, CG, CD)	13/11 Ryall (CD)
Small Blue	22/6 Stinchcombe (CW)	29/6 Stinchcombe (CW)
Brown Argus	25/8 Stinchcombe (CW)	9/9 Stinchcombe (CW)
Chalkhill Blue	28/7 Stinchcombe (CW)	28/9 Stinchcombe (CW)
Common Blue	25/5 Various (BD, GL)	3/10 Hawne (DW)
Holly Blue	1/5 Upper Welland (ID)	26/8 Floggin (DW)
White Admiral	24/6 Wyre (TH)	5/8 Wyre (TH)
Red Admiral	1/4 Droitwich (CG)	20/11 Haden Hill (DW)
Painted Lady	25/6 Clun (BD)	4/11 Worcs (TH)
Small Tortoiseshell	13/3 Dinedor (JA)	24/11 Shropshire (BD)
Peacock	25/3 Worcs (TH)	24/11 Clun (BD)
Comma	11/3 Worcs (TH)	13/11 Lutley Field (DW)
Small Pearl-b Frit.	2/6 Shropshire (BD)	15/7 Wyre (TH)
Pearl-b Fritillary	19/5 Haugh (JA)	17/6 Coppett Hill (WI)
High Brown Frit.	21/6 Bircher (BP)	9/8 Bircher (BP)
Dark Green Frit.	26/6 Malverns (ID)	8/8 Edenhope Hill (BD)
Silver-washed Frit.	30/6 Shropshire (BD)	19/8 Various (BD, BP)
Speckled Wood	22/4 Worcs (TH)	5/11 Haden Hill (DW)
Wall	24/5 Shropshire (BD)	28/9 Shropshire (BD)
Marbled White	22/6 Various (DW,CD)	14/8 Malverns (CD)
Grayling	5/7 Shropshire (BD)	8/9 Shropshire (BD)
Gatekeeper	2/7 Offenham (CD)	25/9 Hawne (DW)
Meadow Brown	16/6 Droitwich (CG)	28/9 Ripple (CD)
Ringlet	19/6 Shropshire (BD)	21/8 Shropshire (BD)
Small Heath	23/5 Shropshire (BD)	20/9 Ripple (CD)
Large Heath	22/6 Whixall (PB)	15/7 Whixall (BD)

ID Ian Duncan  
 TH Terry Higgins  
 BD Bill Davidson  
 CD Colin Dolding  
 DW Dave White  
 MS Mike Smith

JA Jeff Andrews  
 MW Mike Williams  
 BP Beryl Petters  
 WI Wendy Innes  
 PB Pete Boardman  
 GL Garth Lowe

TK Terry Knight  
 CG Corinna Gregory  
 CW Chris Wiltshire  
 RS Richard Southwell

In summary this was a poor year for butterflies with most species doing less well than in 2000. The Whites, Browns and Vanessids declined on most transects. Only **Common Blue**, **Holly Blue**, **Essex Skipper** and **Orange Tip** showed a significant improvement.

### First and Last Sightings –see Table 2

First sightings in the period January – May were typically 2/3 weeks later than average. This was due to the cold start to the year but reduced recording due to foot and mouth was probably also a factor. Despite the increase in recording over the summer first dates remained later than usual .

There were no earliest ever sightings, however there were several latest ever records as follows:

**Green-veined White** 17/10 - 1 day later than the previous latest in 1990  
**Small Copper** 13/11 - 8 days “ “ “ “ “ in 1996  
**Comma** 13/11 – 3 days “ “ “ “ “ in 1998  
**Speckled Wood** 5/11 – 2 days “ “ “ “ “ in 1999  
 Clearly a response to the mild autumn.

### West Midlands Top Ten

2000 position in brackets with 2000 totals

1. <b>Meadow Brown</b>	7891 (1)	13256
2. <b>Ringlet</b>	6481 (3)	10815
3. <b>Gatekeeper</b>	5058 (2)	11049
4. <b>Speckled Wood</b>	2835 (4)	6543
5. <b>Green-veined White</b>	1829 (5)	3672
6. <b>Marbled White</b>	1518 (6)	3260
7. <b>Peacock</b>	1312 (7)	2538
8. <b>Large Skipper</b>	1131 (9)	1920
9. <b>Small Skipper</b>	1119 ( )	
10. <b>Small Tortoiseshell</b>	1054 ( )	

**Small White** and **Large White** lost from the list.

Please note that only valid total counts have been included – partial counts are not included. It is interesting to note that, despite all the transect changes, the overall positions are remarkably stable. The loss of the **Small** and **Large White** could be explained in part by the reduced recording of the spring broods however they clearly had a poor year, declining on most of the transects where a complete count was possible.

### Butterfly of the Year Awards

#### Butterfly of the Year:

**Essex Skipper**. This was a difficult decision as no single species stood out this year. Nominations were also received for **Gatekeeper**, **Wood White** and **Green Hairstreak** but these only did well locally. The **Essex Skipper** is given the prize for its continued expansion of range in the West Midlands. It was recorded on 5 transects this year with first records from Hawne Colliery (D. White) and Droitwich (C. Gregory). Surely it cannot be long before it reaches Shropshire.

#### Runner-up:

No award. Contenders included **Orange Tip**, **Holly Blue** and **Gatekeeper** but none did sufficiently well to get the award.

Most Improved: **Holly Blue**

#### Wooden Spoon:

In a poor butterfly year, lots of contenders. Multiple award to **Small White**, **Large White** and **Green-veined White** all of which fared particularly badly. **Speckled Wood** would also have been included however it did manage to remain in 4th spot in the top ten.

Migrant of the Year: No award. In contrast to last year, very low numbers of migrants were recorded.

## Species Accounts

> numbers of transects showing an increase over the previous year

< numbers of transects showing a decrease over the previous year

= same total as previous year

Please note that only valid total counts have been compared.

## Skippers

Small Skipper >7 <7

Mixed year although highest ever counts were recorded at Hawne Colliery and Malvern Hills North.

First sighting 10 days later than average. Typical last date in early September.

### Essex Skipper

Recorded on highest ever number of transects (4 Worcs, 1 Glos) with increased casual sightings in Worcestershire.

Typical flight period.

Large Skipper >7 <8 =1

Still well below the numbers recorded in the 1990s.

Typical flight period.

Dingy Skipper >1 <1

Records received from only 2 Gloucestershire sites.

Insufficient data to comment on the flight period.

Grizzled Skipper <2

Same comments as **Dingy Skipper**.

## Whites and Yellows

Wood White >1 <3

Did well in Haugh Wood, highest count since 1997 and 3<sup>rd</sup> highest count in last 10 years.

Continuing to decline at Monkwood.

Typical flight period.

Clouded Yellow

None recorded on transect, handful of casual sightings.

Brimstone >2 <1 =3

Average year? Difficult to comment due to restricted spring recording.

First record not until end March with last record in October – 1 month late and early respectively.

Large White <11

Poor year –well below average at many sites.

Very late first record in May with typical last date in October.

Small White >1 <8

Below average at most sites.

Late first date in April but more usual last date in October.

Green-veined White <7

Well below average at most sites.

Not recorded until 21/4 ( 2 weeks later than average). Latest ever last record 17/10.

**Orange Tip** >5 <2

Generally a good year.

First date almost 3 weeks later than average with typical last date in June.

**Hairstreaks, Coppers and Blues****Green Hairstreak** <5

Declined at all major sites particularly on the Malverns. However apparently did well in urban sites in Birmingham not monitored by transect.

Typical first date but another very late date from the Malverns 27/7.

**Brown Hairstreak**

At the time of writing (December) too early to assess the 2001 season- egg count not until January.

Typical flight period.

**Purple Hairstreak** >1 <5 =1

Numbers well below average at almost all sites.

Typical flight period.

**White-letter Hairstreak** >2 <1

Average year.

Typical flight period.

**Small Copper** >3 <3 =3

Despite increases at a number of sites numbers still well below average.

First date almost 3 weeks later than average but latest ever last date 13/11.

Blue-spotted variant caeruleopunctata recorded by Colin Dolding at Ryall from 22/10 to 12/11. This form seems to be associated with warm summers.

**Brown Argus** >1 <4

Poor year. Below average at most sites however re-appeared at Windmill Hill.

No first brood records received.

Last date almost 2 weeks earlier than average.

**Common Blue** >6 <2 =1

Slightly better year but numbers still significantly lower than in the mid 1990s.

First sighting 2 weeks later than average with typical last date.

**Chalkhill Blue** >1 <1

Records received from only 2 Gloucestershire sites. Numbers still at above average levels.

Insufficient data to comment on the flight period.

**Holly Blue** >9 <1

Following decline of last 2 years recovery underway.

Shorter flight period than normal by about 1 month at the beginning and the end.

**Silver-studded Blue**

Record numbers at the Prees Heath site corresponding with good weather at the beginning of the flight period.

**Duke of Burgundy**

No data received.

**Vanessids****White Admiral** >1 <2 =1

Another poor year. Numbers still well below average.

Typical flight period.

**Red Admiral** >5 <8 =1

Still doing badly with below average counts.  
First record not until April with typical last date.

**Painted Lady** <12 =1

Poor year after bumper 2000.

**Small Tortoiseshell** >5 <5 =2

Mixed year with above and below average counts.  
Another late first date with typical last date.

**Peacock** >6 <5

Mixed year with above and below average counts.  
Record numbers recorded at Hawne Colliery.  
Typical flight period.

**Comma** >1 <10

Could not sustain record breaking performance of 2000. Counts have recorded to more typical levels.  
First date about 1 month later than average however latest ever last date 13/11.

**Fritillaries**

**Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** <1

Complete records from only 1 site where the butterfly had a poor year.  
Slightly shorter flight period than average.

**Pearl-bordered Fritillary** >1

Complete records from only 1 site, Haugh Wood, where the butterfly had an above average year.  
First record 2 weeks later than average with a typical June last date.

**High Brown Fritillary** >1

Complete records from only 1 site, the Malverns, where the butterfly had its best year since 1997 however still in low numbers.  
Typical first date 21/6 with last date almost 2 weeks later than average.

**Dark Green Fritillary**

Complete records from only 1 site where the butterfly is only just managing to hang on.  
Typical flight period.

**Silver-washed Fritillary** >4 <1

Slightly better year at some sites but still at below average numbers.  
Typical flight period.

**Browns**

**Speckled Wood** <11

Poor year after bumper 2000.  
Late first date in April but flight period continuing to be extended –latest ever date 5/11.

**Wall Brown** >1

Complete records from only 1 site where small numbers recorded.  
Typical flight period.

**Marbled White** >5 <5

Mixed year with most counts below average.

Typical flight period.

### **Grayling** >1

Complete records only from 1 site , the Malverns, where the butterfly had an above average year. Early first record from Shropshire 5/7 also later than average last sighting 8/9 (also Shropshire).

### **Gatekeeper** >6 <10

Decline after several years of steady increase. Above and below average counts. Typical flight period.

### **Meadow Brown** >6 <8

Mixed year with record counts at Uffmoor Wood and Stinchcombe. Typical flight period.

### **Small Heath** >2 <4

Decline continues with counts well below average. Typical flight period.

### **Ringlet** >6 <9

Mixed year with above and below average counts. Highest ever count at Uffmoor Wood. Typical flight period.

### **Large Heath**

Below average year.

I would like to thank all the recorders for all their efforts in a difficult year.

Please keep sending in your records to:

Neil Gregory –transect records

Jim Chance –casual records

## **Annual Reviews 1979-2001**

Ian Duncan

These have now been published annually in some form since 1979. I thought it would be interesting to see which butterflies had been the winners and losers over the years.

### **1. Winners**

#### **Top Ten**

The Top Ten has been published since 1987 (15 times). This list is compiled from the total number of individuals of each species recorded on transects each year.

#### **Number of times in the Top Ten**

Gatekeeper	15
Meadow Brown	15
Speckled Wood	15
Ringlet	15
Green-veined White	12
Peacock	12
Marbled White	12
Large Skipper	12
Small Skipper	12
Large White	9
Common Blue	7
Small Tortoiseshell	7
Small White	5
Painted Lady	1
Brimstone	1

Only 15 species have appeared in the Top Ten. Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood and Ringlet have appeared every year. Meadow Brown has been number one 10 times, Ringlet 3 times and Gatekeeper twice. The Top Three has been dominated by Meadow Brown appearing 13 times, Ringlet 13, Gatekeeper 9, Speckled Wood 6 and Painted Lady in 1996. Despite all the changes in the transects over the years the list shows remarkable consistency over the period.

## Butterfly of the Year and Runner-Up

These have been published since 1979 – see table. Please note that these awards and the Wooden Spoon are highly subjective. 16 species have been designated as the Butterfly of the Year. 13 species have been runner-up of which 7 do not appear on the Butterfly of the Year list. Clearly species which show large population fluctuations from year to year have been favoured eg Holly Blue and Painted Lady. There are some notable omissions on the list e.g. Large Skipper, Brimstone, Common Blue and Ringlet – future compilers of the annual review please note!

## 2. Losers

### The Wooden Spoon 1990-2001 has been awarded as follows:

Wall Brown	4- 92, 95, 96, 97
High Brown Fritillary	4- 90, 98, 99, 00
Holly Blue	2- 93, 94
Dark Green Fritillary	2- 90, 00
Small Heath	2- 94, 95
Large White	2- 96, 01
Small Skipper	2- 97, 98
Grayling	2- 94, 95
Brown Hairstreak	1- 90
Large Skipper	1- 91
Painted Lady	1- 93
Comma	1- 93
Meadow Brown	1- 97
Small Copper	1- 99
Silver-washed Fritillary	1- 00
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	1- 00
Small White	1- 01
Green-veined White	1- 01

18 species appear on the list which includes all the species in serious long-term decline such as Wall Brown, Small Heath and the Fritillaries. Again it is interesting to note the species which have not received the award –Speckled Wood, Small Tortoiseshell, Green Hairstreak, Peacock, Red Admiral, Marbled White, Brown Argus and Orange Tip. 9 species appear as winners and losers-Meadow Brown, Small White, Large White, Small Copper, Small Skipper, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Green-veined White.

I think these awards are fun and when looked at over a period do show some interesting trends. Does anyone have any suggestions how these could be improved or would like to comment on the results over the last 23 years?

# Garden Butterflies in the Midlands, 2001

Margaret Vickery

## Another poor year?

Well, a strange one anyway! The least common species (Table 3) all did better than in 2000, except for Small Heath, which seems to be declining not only in the Midlands but nationally. The most common species, though, all fared worse, except for Red Admiral which stayed the same. When compared with the national averages all the most common species (Table 1) visited fewer gardens except for Small Tortoiseshell, but for this species the difference was only 4% and the national average was at a very low ebb. Small Tortoiseshell was only seen in 89% of gardens in the Midlands compared with 95% in 2000 and 96% in 1999. If our region is following the trend in the SE then the plight of this once ubiquitous garden butterfly will be serious indeed.

**Table 1 The most common garden butterflies**

% total number of gardens in the midlands and nationally (nat.)				
Species	1999	2000	2001	2001 nat.
Large White	96	94	89	91
Small White	91	88	85	88
Red Admiral	89	89	89	93
Small Tortoiseshell	96	95	89	85
Peacock	99	97	91	92

## The less common garden butterflies

Five of the less common species were seen in more gardens than the national average, Brimstone, Orange Tip and Speckled Wood being particularly noteworthy. The only species to do worse, and that only by 2%, was Holly Blue. There was good news in this class for some species, but bad for others, when compared with 2000. Common Blue, a worry for several years,

**Table 2 The less common garden butterflies**

% of total number of gardens in the midlands and nationally				
Species	1999	2000	2001	2001 nat.
Brimstone	75	72	68	58
Green-veined White	70	66	59	58
Orange-tip	89	83	83	78
Common Blue	37	27	33	33
Holly Blue	63	37	65	67
Painted Lady	47	81	53	52
Comma	86	80	80	78
Speckled Wood	85	82	81	72
Gatekeeper	82	79	77	75
Meadow Brown	86	77	81	80

improved, as did Holly Blue and Meadow Brown, but Brimstone, Green-veined White and Painted Lady were all down quite considerably. 2001 was not a good year for migrants, there were no Clouded Yellows seen in Midlands gardens and Painted Ladies were few.

### The least common garden butterflies

All except the Wall did better than the national average, and as mentioned before there was a general improvement compared with 2000. It is the least common species which seem to react most rapidly to changing conditions, so hopefully their improvement is a good auger for the future, but we shall see!

**Table 3. The least common garden butterflies**

*% of total number of gardens in the midlands and nationally*

Species	1999	2000	2001	2001 nat.
Small Skipper	31	24	29	24
Large Skipper	23	23	26	19
Small Copper	30	25	31	25
Wall	12	7	1	19
Marbled White	19	10	14	12
Small Heath	11	9	7	6
Ringlet	36	28	34	25

Altogether Midland gardens recorded 30 species compared with 33 species in 2000 and 35 in 1999. The bad weather, especially in spring, no doubt contributed to these poor results, as did the flooding in the west of the region, which must have taken its toll of the immature stages.

## Herefordshire Moths 2001

Michael Harper

A cold late spring occurred again during this year of 2001, with the first really warm spell in the last week of May. Also the restrictions on the countryside from foot and mouth disease created severe limitations to doing useful recording for most of the year, although a few field trips were made late in the year mostly around late August to October.

However for the first time this year, a single nights moth trapping was permitted at the Nature Trust headquarters at Lower House Farm, Hereford on 16 June, 2001. This site overlooked the extensive Lugg Water Meadows. Although only 21 species appeared, it was interesting to see the **Dog's Tooth** (*Lacanobia suasa* D and S). Five specimens appeared, confirming that this species does indeed breed so far inland. Normally this moth breeds near estuaries and salt marshes.

At home in my garden, I was surprised on 30 May, to record a small brown dull looking tortrix flying over a flower border containing Tansy plants. *Dichrorampha sedatana* (Busck) is a local moth whose larva feeds in the roots of Tansy only. The plants were put in 15 years ago and it is interesting to find them finally colonised by the moth.

In July several declining species made a welcome return e.g. **Light Arches** (*Apamea lithoxyloae*), **Clouded Brindle** (*A. epomidion*), **Small Scallop** (*Idea emarginata*),

**Pale-shouldered Brocade** (*Lacanobia thalassina*), and the **Miller** (*Acronicta leporina*). All these species are among the many that have become scarce over the last 10 – 15 years, and it was particularly pleasing to see a **Rustic Shoulder-knot** (*Apamea sordens*) on 15 June 2001 which completely disappeared by 1991 i.e. 10 years. Interestingly other entomologists in Worcestershire also have begun to record this species again this year. The reasons for these sharp declines are not yet understood, but with the exception of the **Miller** and **Pale-shouldered Brocade**, the other species are either grass feeders or closely associated with grassland.

From Haugh Wood, another grass feeding “*Apamea*”, the **Dusky Brocade** (*Apamea remissa* Hubn.) which has been in decline, appeared at light and one was seen flying over a grassy woodland ride after dark on 5 July 2001. On 25 August with Ian Duncan we found a single moth of the very local “micro-moth” species, *Agonopterix carduella* Hb. in the newly formed coppice at the Southern end of the wood. This species has been found recently in the coppice areas where the larvae can be found feeding on the leaves of thistles especially the Marsh Thistle.

In a recently created coppice area in Queens Wood, Kempsey, a single female of the very local **Bleached pug** (*Eupithecia expallidata*) was seen on 12 July 2001 and the first record of the **Grass moth** (*Agriphila inquinatella* D & S) which prefers a heathland habitat. Examination of small seedling birches growing amongst other coppice and heathland vegetation revealed the presence of the leaf-miner larvae of (*Stigmella betulicola* Stt.) and is also new for this woodland. This last moth is confined to coppice and also heathland in Britain, preferring the smallest plants which are sometimes only a few centimetres tall. After many years of searching for the larva of another “micro-moth” *Eucosmomorpha albersana* Hb., I was eventually successful in the same coppice clearing in this wood and interestingly the spinnings appear to occur only on trailing honeysuckle on the ground. Once again this species which is confined to coppice woodland survives in this niche because of the increased larval activity due to higher ground temperatures preferred by this and probably the previous species *Stigmella betulicola*.

Finally congratulations to Ray Birchenough who trapped in his garden in Dorstone a single specimen of the **Golden-rod Brindle** (*Lithomoia solidaginis* Hb.). Only seen once many years ago in the County, this particular moth is the same as the moths I have seen from the neighbouring county of Radnorshire. Despite several searches I have made for this in the Olchon Valley and Black Mountains, I have not so far found this attractive moth. It may have wandered from neighbouring Radnorshire but I am certain at least that the origin of this moth does not come from a continental source.

Finally on 26 May 2001 at a site near Mathon, the larva of the plume-wing moth *Leioptilus lienigianus* was found in lightly folded leaves of a few plants of Mugwort. Eight larvae in all were seen and this is a new County record. Tony Simpson tells me he has a few sites now in Worcestershire. It is possible that this species is now expanding its range.

## Worcestershire Moth Report 2001

Dr. A.N.B. Simpson

The first half of the year was overshadowed by the Foot and Mouth Epidemic which severely curtailed our access to the countryside and caused the cancellation of many planned recording activities. Some light trapping was done by Rosemary Winnall's group at her house at Blis Gate and at one site by the Dowle's Brook, but Lodgehill Farm and most of Wyre Forest was out of bounds until late in the year. The county "Mothers" group did get access to Briar Hill (Droitwich), Piper's Hill, Windmill Hill, and to Shrawley Wood, but a fuller programme of meetings did not start until the end of July and some sites remained closed throughout the year.

In December, Volume 1 of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Lepidoptera Atlas was published by the West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation (“Larger Moths and Butterflies of Herefordshire and Worcestershire”, an Atlas, by Michael Harper and Tony Simpson), and is available from:

Christine Chance, 65 Wentworth Road, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9SS, BC & Worcs. or Hfds. Wildlife Trust members £7.50+£2.00 p&p; others £10.00+£2.00 p&p.

Work is in progress on the second volume which will cover all the microlepidoptera. Once again very many thanks to all the recorders who contributed records.

## 1 Macrolepidoptera:

There were two new county records. Jeff Rush is a new recorder who has just started light trapping at his home in Stoke Prior. He showed me a **Large Pug** which had come to his garden MV Trap on 21/6/01. I was pleased to be able to tell him it was a **Cloaked Pug** (*E. abietaria*) which may be resident on some nearby large Spruces, or possibly a migrant. It will be interesting to see if he gets any more in 2002. On 26/5/01 I found two **Glaucous Shears** (*P. biren*) in my MV trap. Michael Harper has had similar records at the same time of year at Ledbury. The moth is resident on the Black Mountains and in Wales on high ground, from where they were most likely local migrants.

On a visit to Shrawley Wood on 2/6/01 **Pauper Pug** (*E. egenaria*) was found to be widespread, with twelve coming to light, including two females from which I was able to obtain ova and breed through a number to the pupal stage, which are now overwintering in my garage.

Ian Duncan obtained some pheromones of Clearwing species, as advertised in Atropos magazine, and after initial failures, attracted several **Red-belted Clearwing** (*S. myopaeformis*) near some old Apple trees at Melrose farm Meadows, and also a number of **Six-belted Clearwing** (*B. scopigera*) at a known site on a roadside bank at Clevelode.

The **Buff Footman** (*E. deplana*) has continued to spread with records from five new sites. There were two more **Red-necked Footman** (*A. rubricollis*) both from the north of the county. These could have been migrants or just possibly we now have a small recently established resident population. **Pine Carpet** and **Marbled White-spot** were two species with a number of new site records.

There were very few migrants of note. **Humming-bird Hawk-moths** (*M. stellatarum*) were reported from several sites and I had a single **Gem** (*O. obstipata*) on 24/5/01, and a **Vestal** (*R. saccharia*) on 14/10/01. Jeff Rush had a **Delicate** (*M. vitellina*) at Stoke Prior on 18/10/01.

Notable Macro records:

- Sq. 74 Upper Welland (Ian Duncan)  
**Pinion-spotted Pug** (*Eupithecia insigniata*) 10/5/01
- Sq. 74 West Malvern (Peter Garner)  
**Buff Footman** (*Eilema deplana*) 11/8/01
- Sq. 75 Bransford (Tony Simpson)  
**Marbled White-spot** (*Protodeltote pygarga*) two 16-18/6/01  
Knapp (Neil and Corinna Gregory)  
**Buff Footman** (*Eilema deplana*) one 21/7/01
- Sq. 77 Lodgehill Farm, Wyre Forest (Dave Grundy)  
**Barred Chestnut** (*Diarsia dahlia*) three 7/9/01  
Bliss Gate (Rosemary Winnall)
- Sq. 84 **Map-winged Swift** (*Hepialus fusconebulosa*) one 1/8/01  
Melrose Farm Meadows (Ian Duncan)  
**Red-belted Clearwing** (*Synanthedon myopaeformis*) 3/7/01 & 14/7/01. Three to pheromone lure.
- Sq. 86 Droitwich (Neil and Corinna Gregory)  
**Pine Carpet** (*Thera firmata*) four 12-19/10/01
- Sq. 86 **Marbled White-spot** (*Protodeltote pygarga*) at Briar Hill 16/6/01  
Crossway Green (Mike Southall)

- Clay Triple-lines** (*Cyclophora linearia*) 28/6/01  
**Pine Carpet** (*Thera firmata*) 7/7/01  
**Ruddy Carpet** (*Catarhoe rubidata*) 2/7/01  
 Sq. 86 Shrawley Wood (Worcs. moth(ers) group)  
**Pauper Pug** (*Eupithecia egenaria*) found to be widespread in the wood. 12 on 2/6/01.  
 Sq. 87 **Square Spot** (*Paradarisa consonaria*) one 2/6/01  
 Hurcott Woods (John Bingham)  
 Sq. 88 **Red-necked Footman** (*Atolmis rubricollis*) one 1/6/01  
 Kingsford Country Park (Dave Grundy)  
**Plain Wave** (*Idea straminata*) two 26/6/01  
**Ling Pug** (*Eupithecia absinthiata f. goosensiata*) eight 7/8/01  
**Grass Wave** (*Perconia strigillaria*) two 26/6/01  
**Red-necked Footman** (*Atolmis rubricollis*) one 26/6/01  
**Neglected Rustic** (*Xestia castanea*) one 11/9/01  
**Marbled White-spot** (*Protodeltote pygarga*) four 26/6/01  
 Sq. 95 Trench Wood (Dave Grundy)  
 Sq. 96 **Buff Footman** (*Eilema deplana*) five 11/8/01  
 Stoke Prior (Jeff Rush)  
**Barred Hook-tip** (*Drepana cultraria*) 31/7/01  
**Juniper Carpet** (*Thera juniperata*) 20 between 12/10/01-8/11/01  
**Buff Footman** (*Eilema deplana*) 26/8/01  
 Sq. 07 Lickey Hills (Dave Grundy)  
 Sq. 98 **Beautiful Snout** (*Hypena crassalis*) two 3/7/01  
 Uffmoor Wood (Dave Grundy)  
**Satin Beauty** (*Deileptenia ribeata*) 17/7/01  
 Sq. 08 **Buff Footman** (*Eilema deplana*) 17/7/01  
 King's Heath (Dave Grundy)  
**Pale Pinion** (*Lithophane hepatica*) one 22/4/01  
 Balsall Heath (Dave Grundy)  
**Gold Spot** (*Plusia festucae*) one 5/9/01

## 2 Microlepidoptera:

There were five species new to the county last year.

*Elachista subocellea* one flying over a path at Windmill Hill, near Evesham on 23/6/001, and a larva mining the grass *Brachypodium sylvaticum* on the same date, and which pupated and hatched on 6/7/01.

*Phthorimaea operculella* (Potato Tuber moth) one bred from a larva found crawling over an Italian potato in a greengrocer's shop in St. Johns Worcestershire 17/07/01. New county record.

*Duponchelia fovealis* which came to Peter Garner's porch light on 30/6/01, and was passed to Michael Harper. This was either a migrant, or more likely adventitious, the species feeding in polythene tunnels and greenhouses on various horticultural plant species, and which is spreading quite rapidly in the U.K. at present.

*Catoptria margaritella* one taken by Dave Grundy at the new WWT reserve at Penorchard Farm on 31/7/01 in a wet acidic old pasture, and is therefore probably a resident.

*Loxostege (Margaritia) sticticalis* Jeff Rush had one of this uncommon migrant species come to light at Stoke Prior on 23/9/01.

Hopefully 2002 will be free of Foot and Mouth Disease and we will all have a happy and Entomologically interesting year.

# Moths in Birmingham and the Black Country - 2001

Dave Grundy

I will restrict my report to the above area as my recording in North Worcestershire will be reported elsewhere, and I didn't manage any recording in the modern county of Staffordshire. The Staffordshire county moth recorder succeeded in producing the up to date Staffordshire Moth Atlas during the year but unfortunately, apart from him, recording is very limited in the county. Hopefully the new atlas will inspire new recorders in the county in 2002.

In Birmingham and the Black Country recording is growing with a few new recorders adding to the regular efforts at Saltwells Wood and in the Walsall area. The area continues to produce an interesting range of moths, being a cross-over between the more northerly fauna of Staffordshire and the southerly fauna of Warwickshire and Worcestershire. The **Gold Spot** is regularly recorded in Staffordshire and the Walsall area, but quite scarce in Worcestershire, so a record in inner city Balsall Heath, Birmingham in September was of note. Many of the more rural species are absent, but other species of urban wasteland can be quite common. I located caterpillars of the Nationally Notable **Wormwood Shark** at 2 sites in Walsall in late August, and I am sure that further searches will reveal it as being quite widespread. But, a plea to the government - please don't encourage house-building on all 'brown field sites', or important species like this could be lost.

Also of value are the surviving pockets of grassland, which because they are in the urban area haven't been re-seeded, fertilised or pesticide-sprayed. So, species of moth that are getting scarce in rural Herefordshire are still in good numbers, such as **Chimney Sweeper**, **Latticed Heath**, and in particularly good numbers in 2001 - **Burnet Companion** and **Blackneck**.

New records have 'come to light' from Allan Nolan in Northfield of **Small Emerald** and **Barred Chestnut** in most years. Also an old record, which if it can be confirmed will be important, of **Cream-bordered Green Pea** on 9/7/92 at Bromwich Wood.

Records from Sutton Park this year included **Alder Kitten**, **Barred Chestnut** and 6 **Angle-striped Sallow**. There will be a visit in August 2002 to try and check further the distribution of this nationally notable species, with the help of the Warwickshire moth group and hopefully at least a dozen traps! **Map-winged Swifts** were trapped again at Brownhills Common and Corporation Wood (along with the scarce beech-feeding tortrix *Cydia fagiglandana* - recorded for the second time at the latter site). The tiny pale micro moth *Elachista triatomea*, which is less than half a centimetre long, was recorded at Winterley Canal near Walsall in August - is this species really so scarce or is it just overlooked because of its size?

A programme of events is already being compiled for 2002 and there are a growing number of recorders in the area. If you want to find out more about a different form of big city night-life then please get in touch and come along.

## Shropshire Moths

The Shropshire moth report is not available at the time of going to press. -Ed

## 2001 Weather Summary

Mike Averill

**Table showing the number of Rainfall and Sunshine days as well as the number of Potential Butterfly Flying Days - 2001 (WEST MIDLANDS)**

**Weather Summary for the Summer 2001 (Values expressed as a percentage of monthly average)**

	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT
Days with >1.0mm rainfall	12	15	7	6	8	9	13	18
Days with >1.0mm rainfall 10-1700 (BST)	6	6	2	4	5	5	8	9
Days with >1.0mm rainfall 10-1700- weekends	0	3	0	1	0	1	3	3
No of days with at least 1 hours sunshine	19	24	24	27	26	26	18	22
No of days with at least 1 hrs sunshine & 13c or dull & 17c (Potential adult flying days)	2	8	25	28	30	31	22	24

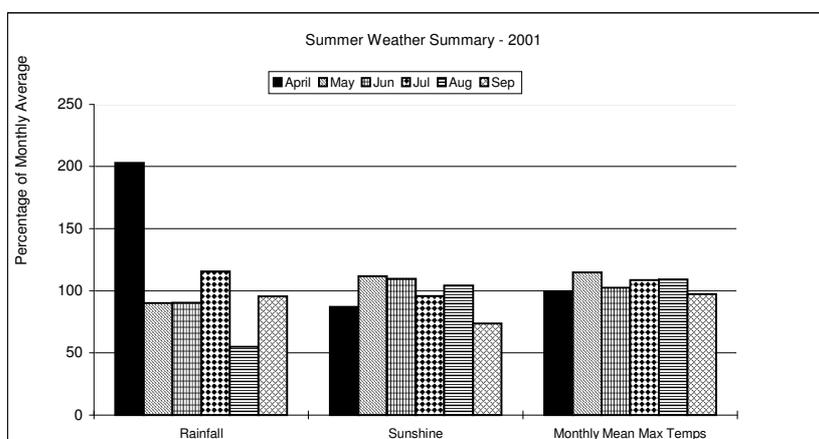
Weather-wise 2001 was a fairly average year overall, with a few extreme months. The number of potential flying days was quite high but the season was very slow to start, with cool days in **March** and **April**. The summer months were warm and sunny and an Indian summer in **October** gave some flying time for late species.

The first month of the year was the sunniest **January** since 1959 with temperatures and rainfall near average. **February** was sunny, warm with about average rainfall. Although **March** began promisingly, it became dull and wet later in the month and gave a poor start to the butterfly flying

	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
Monthly Rainfall	203	90	90	116	55	96
Monthly Sunshine	87	112	110	96	104	74
Monthly Mean Maximum Temp	100	115	103	109	109	97

season.  
**April** was changeable and very wet overall

although not as wet as 2000. After the wet start with some thundery rain, a short dry sunny spell followed. The third week produced northerly winds and wintry showers. Frequent outbreaks of rain, thundery showers and hail featured for the remainder of the month. **May** became very warm with some thunder after a chilly start. Mid-month was cool and wet with thunderstorms. The remainder of



the month was mostly dry, very warm and sunny. **June** was a dry and sunny month with a cool first half with some thunderstorms followed by a wet thundery spell mid month. A heat wave during the last week ended with an outbreak of scattered thunderstorms. At Barbourne near Worcester a high of 32.6 °C was reached on the 26th, the highest for the UK up to that point and the highest for that area all year. The month ended with

sunny spells alternating with occasional outbreaks of rain or showers, some of these were thundery. **July** had a near normal month statistically, starting with a hot thundery first week followed by cool wet unsettled conditions during the middle fortnight, with some heavy thundery downpours later. The 17th produced a storm of 36.6mm in Kidderminster. The last week saw dry, sunny, hot weather almost everywhere for most of the time.

Statistically **August** was a near normal month with hot days alternating with cooler unsettled conditions with hail and thunderstorms affecting many places but generally quite dry. **September** was generally unsettled with wet spells alternating with quieter, drier interludes and ended up being the dullest since 1993. There was a bit of a recovery in **October** when this month turned out to be quite mild although unsettled at times.

The year ended with generally dry, warm and occasionally sunny weather making 2001 the driest year since 1997.