

The Comma

No. 64, Spring 2006



Wood White Photo: © Patrick Clement

This issue includes:

- Looking for Purple Emperors
- The thrill of the Chase
- Joining our chat site
- Six months' event listings
- Emma Hutchinson and the Comma
- Great Butterfly Days (2)
- Regional Officers' reports

**NEWSLETTER OF WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH,
BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION**

Registered charity ... No. 254937



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BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

REGISTERED OFFICE: MANOR YARD, EAST LULWORTH, WAREHAM, DORSET BH20 5QP

REGISTERED IN ENGLAND No. 2206468 REGISTERED CHARITY No. 254937

Editorial

This issue has the latest on Prees Heath. It features the results of research by Digby Wood on the **Purple Emperor** in our region, plus a second historical article by Dave Jackson, this time on a famous Herefordshire naturalist. Special thanks to Patrick Clement, who has made his superb portfolio of photographs available.

This issue lists all events planned for the summer, six pages in all. If you've never attended one, try it – you'll never have a bigger choice!

The deadline for contributions to the next issue is 14 October 2006. Hand-written articles, typed documents and text in any standard text editor format are welcome. Articles may be edited for reasons of style and space. Pictures in most formats are fine, but if possible do not send large bitmap (.BMP) files. Pictures for publication must be free of copyright restrictions.

The address for contributions is:

Dean Fenton (dean.fenton@malvern.co.uk)

Little Bury Farm, Luston, Leominster HR6 0EB Tel. 01568 611575

Chairman's Notes

Richard Southwell

Prees Heath

The 'fat lady' has been tuning her tonsils for a long time on this project. I won't bore you with the details but even at the last gasp suddenly there were new legalities thrown at us causing further delays. Head Office has signed off the contacts and the Charity Commissioners have accepted the proposal. We will now be appointing a full-time officer to develop the site into a heathland ten times its current size. I can't wait for Shropshire to take off with many new activities and active members.

Right by Prees is a DEFRA owned 'grain intervention' storage plot. This is now on the market. Most of this site is SSSI and has good numbers of **Silver-studded Blue** present. Please write to your Local MP to influence DEFRA to give it to us. Please phone me if you want advice on this.

Due to the late signing of the contact, Prees will get good publicity this summer but it is agreed the formal opening will be in 2007. The bets are on Alan Titchmarsh as the guest figure. Anyone prepared to make a book?

Brownfield Project

Jane Ellis will be championing conservation on these sites in her new role. I recently attended the launch of this project that was sponsored by Tarmac PLC. It was a successful event and there will be others that I hope focus on getting property developers and commercial interests into the audience.

All members living near disused railway lines, canals, old factory sites, spoil heaps of any description, and canals do please look for **Grizzled** and **Dingy Skipper**, **Green Hairstreak** and **Grayling** this year. Records with accurate grid references are vital and should be sent to Jim Chance but please also inform Jane to keep project momentum on a high.

Committee Changes

Tony Hatton has moved away from our patch and has found it increasingly difficult to continue as Treasurer. Andy Littlely, a longstanding member, takes over. Andy has recently retired from what we know as the 'old' MEB where he was Group Financial Controller. His expertise and convenient location will be vital to the branch given our situation, both financially and operationally.

James Hill has resigned from the post of Secretary for personal reasons and I appeal for a volunteer to take on this role. Further resignations include Ron Hatton (work commitments), Anita Ferguson due to her becoming Chair of the local wildlife group and Phil Hopson due to 'tempus fugit'. JP Brayford also stands down for family reasons but more about him later.

Joining us are Jim Creswell and John Dover. Jim is conducting a transect on Cannock Chase and will shortly determine his role whilst John will use his university experience as Branch Research and Training Officer. Thanks to all those leaving and best wishes to those joining.

Local Funding Initiative

I am delighted to report that this project is to continue even though we are financially constrained. There is £150 available to enhance the cause of conservation in each of our counties plus Birmingham & the Black Country. Do speak to Dave Jackson or myself if you have an idea that needs immediate financial pump-priming.

Fundraising – I know the Newsletter is not the medium to ask members to respond by using your contacts to raise funds for the branch, but prove me wrong. We need more ‘filthy lucre’ with our expanding range of activities.

‘JP’ Brayford has an environmental landscaping business that knocks spots off most environmental consultancies in terms of conservation knowledge, real solutions and most importantly cost. Just ask John Tilt, the reserve manager of Grafton Wood for a reference. We’ve agreed with JP that for every contract he wins through a member’s recommendation he will donate 10% of the proceeds to the branch. Do call him on 07971 174071 or 01743 270481 for advice.

Finally

Our recording activity has been quite poor compared to other branches over the last five years so please let’s record those habitats close to your home this year. Contact Jim Chance on 0121 427 1706 for casual recording advice and John Tilt on 01386 792458 should you wish to start a transect.

There is no justice in this world. I am writing this article on the evening of Saturday 25th March and earlier in the day my eldest, Kirsty, just back from Loughborough University, informs me she has positively identified a **Red Admiral** in our garden. This is further evidence of our warmer winters so if you spot one this spring do let Jim know immediately. For me? I have yet to see anything after a six week cold dry spell of weather. Have a great butterfly and moth year.

Our sponsors

To offset some of our printing costs, this issue is sponsored by **Forest Vision**:

Forest Vision from the Wyre Forest Visitor Centre is pleased to be associated with and to sponsor this edition of The Comma. Forest Vision is committed to bringing about a renewed relationship between people and their local environment. For more details see our website:



Purple Emperors in the West Midlands?

Digby Wood (01905 830391)

The lure of the Emperor

Why is it that we are all intrigued by the prospect of seeing a **Purple Emperor**? Over the years the Branch has organised several trips to the “classic” sites in Surrey and Hampshire and members have spent hours craning their necks, looking at the tree tops hoping in vain for a glimpse of purple. On most occasions returning home on the coach with the distinct feeling that it would have been better to have spent the time looking at the delights to be found in our own WM woodlands. However the desire to see the **Purple Emperor** still persists and the flame was rekindled at the national AGM in Nov. '04 by a paper given by Matthew Oates and some members of the Herts and Middlesex Branch. They had been surveying some local woods where old records existed, but where the butterflies were now thought to be extinct. Using the information given in Ken Wilmot's booklet – “The Purple Emperor Butterfly”- (No. 12 in BC booklet series) to find where to look, how to look and when to look, they rediscovered the Emperors in about a dozen sites, confirming Ken Wilmot's belief that whilst the Emperor is a difficult butterfly to observe, it may well be quite widespread, although in small numbers. This paper was published in **The Butterfly** Issue 88, Spring '05, and is also available on the BC Website, Species section.

A possible sighting in the West Midlands?

Returning from the AGM there was enthusiastic talk about the possibility of finding sites in our patch but no action. Then a phone call from Ian Rowatt of the Malvern Hills Conservators reporting a possible sighting got things going again. Two ladies, well acquainted with wildlife matters, were acting as stewards on the west gate at the Three Counties Show and had reported seeing a large, dark butterfly, with purple iridescence, on the wing in the car park on the 18 and 19 June, the first time mid-morning and the second midday. Was this a possible Emperor sighting? The dates were very early. Most authorities suggest about 10 July for first consistent sightings, but also say that in exceptional years they may be seen in the last week of June. These two sightings may have been newly-emerged males (purple iridescence) flying out from the breeding area to take up their territories. What about the location? I'm told that Goat Willows, the larval food plant, are quite common around this area (Map Ref. 783425), but Wilmot states that “correct” siting of the trees is vital if they are to be utilised as food plants. The nearest woodlands where Emperors might congregate (Langdale and Blackmoor woods) are less than a mile away, but these are both quite small. However Emperors are quite capable of following hedgerows and strips of woodland to link their breeding sites to suitable areas of high woodland, but the high woodlands around the Gullet are some 3 miles away. Too far, perhaps? The

alternative explanation for such sightings is the release of captive bred specimens and this may be consistent with the early date; captive bred specimens often emerge early because of the “soft” raising conditions and Emperors are favourite species with breeders. A large number were released in Ryton wood (Warwicks) some years ago, and I was once told of a GP from the Ludlow area who raised batches of Emperors each year for release!

Historical records from the West Midlands

This table shows historical Purple Emperor sites in the branch area:

Map Ref.	Date	Recorded Site Name	Possible Woodlands
Shropshire			
SL 20	1950		Woods S & E of Welshpool?
SJ33	1908		Ellesmere
SJ51	1881		Haughmond Hill, Shrewsbury
SO49	1889	Church Stretton	
Herefords			
SO32	1908	Pontrilas	
SO51	1908	The Doward	
SO51	1939	Wye Valley	
SO56	1918	Tenbury Wells	Woods to South?
SO65	1908	Cowarne	
SO73		Old Eastnor	Coneygree, Mayhill, Clenchers, Bircher woods
SO74	1899	Great Malvern, 6 mile radius	Many woods to W of hills and E of Ledbury
Worcs.			
SO73	1964	Gullet, Malvern	Gullet, Hollybush, News, High, Whiteleaved Oak, Pendock's
SO74	1864	Park Wood, Malvern	
SO74	1899	Gt. Malvern, 6 mile radius	Blackmore, Cliffey, Frieze, Madresfield Estate woodlands
SO74	1950	Malvern	As above
SO84	1960		Madresfield to W of Severn
SO85	1901	Nunnery Wood, Worcester	
SO94	1953/1982	W of Pershore	Tiddesley, Deerfold, Croome, Perry woods.
Warwicks.			
SP23	1904	Wolford wood	E of Moreton in the Marsh
SP24	1904	Ettingham Park	SE of Stratford
SP35	1904	Oakley Wood	
SP36	1904	Print Hill	Leamington Spa
SP37	1904	Brandon wood, Rugby	
SP37	1950		
West Midlands			
SP38	1904	Corley wood, N of Coventry	

Wilmot includes the West Midlands in his list of historical sites. Jack Green (“Butterflies of Worcestershire”) gives “woods west of Pershore” (Tiddesley?) 1982, Storridge 1953, Gullet 1964 and Eastnor Park as Worcestershire sites. The Millennium Atlas shows no less than 10 historical sites within the Branch area, all but one are pre-1970. The Atlas references are 10km squares, which are vast areas, but Richard Fox has kindly gone back to the source data for us

to give more accurate locations where these are available. These are listed above together with Green's data. Some of them are really ancient!

Notes on the table:

- Warwickshire is not in our Branch area but, as the data was supplied, it seems sensible to include it.
- The information listed in column 4 is largely gleaned from OS maps and is Worcs. biased.
- Some of the historical woods are now shown as conifer plantations!

Searching for the Emperor

Having found the possible sites from the records, the strategy suggested for locating the Emperors was, first of all, to determine where the "assembly areas" (master trees) are likely to be and then, from a knowledge of the butterfly's behaviour, to look at the most likely places at the most likely time.

Assembly areas are usually a group of two to 10 large trees, mostly on high ground, but on level ground the tallest trees are selected (check the contours). Shelter from prevailing winds (usually from South and West) is important and can be provided by high ground or belts of trees. Northern and Eastern woodland edges are often utilised. Similarly on other sites, the areas have been found facing east, just over the crest of a westerly facing slope. Note that the immediate presence of Goat Willow is not important.

Good numbers of Emperors may be found at around 10th July, earlier in a "good year". Males are more in evidence than females and may be seen taking minerals from the soil or from dung, usually between 10.30 and 11.30am and usually only in the early part of the flight period. Flight tends to be at low level in the morning, but by noon they will have made their way up to the assembly points and by 13.00 territorial disputes will have broken out. Males perch on the outer branches of the assembly trees to get a good view around and are particularly active during fine weather after a period of cool. They only stay perched for a short time so, if nothing is seen after five minutes, look elsewhere.

Females are much less obvious and tend to fly at lower level. Eggs are laid on Goat Willow usually from 12.00 - 14.00hrs (later if it's cloudy then), high up in the shaded crown of mature trees. Breeding areas often consist of groups of 40 to 50 mature sallows growing either in a rough block or spread out along a track or ride and may be a significant distance from the assembly area.

"Sightings" in your neck of the woods?

Apart from the recent report from the Three Counties Showground referred to above, about five years ago I was given an account of a possible sighting by a fellow enthusiast I met whilst on my Malvern Hills transect walk. He had been

in the Chase End Hill area at the south end of the Malverns and spotted a large “black” butterfly mud-puddling on an earth bank. He got to within a couple of yards of it before it took off and shot up over the adjacent woodland canopy; typical Emperor behaviour. I questioned him quite closely and became convinced that he had indeed seen a **Purple Emperor** but, of course, it could have been a released specimen.

What's your story? Have you heard of any credible sightings? It would be very interesting to hear them. Give me a ring or E-Mail me on josephine@wood8379.freeserve.co.uk. And how about spending a couple of warm, early July days, equipped with binoculars, a packed lunch and something comfortable to lie on, and let's see if there are any of these fabulous butterflies still lurking in our own beautiful woodlands.

Emma Hutchinson and her Herefordshire Commas

Dave Jackson

At least three English women have had their names associated with British Butterflies. Lady Eleanor Glanville's story is remarkable and I hope to relate it in a future issue. Valezina Viscountess Bolingbrooke was so named by her father F. W. Frohawk, the famous entomologist, after one of his favourite butterflies the *valezina* form of **Silver-washed Fritillary**.

Closer to home in Herefordshire, Emma Hutchinson (1820 to 1906) is remembered in the name of the *hutchinsoni* form of the **Comma** (*Polygonia c-album*), whose early spring caterpillars hatch into adult butterflies which have golden brown undersides to their wings. 'Normal' Commas have a light charcoal and greyish brown wash to their underwings. Both forms have the white comma mark on the lower hindwing, which is echoed in the Latin name.

The **Comma** is of course our Branch emblem and the name of this journal and we are rightly proud to remember one of the foremost early entomologists. In her day Emma Hutchinson (nee Gill) was a 'renowned breeder' of moths and butterflies. She lived most of her life in rural Herefordshire and was married in 1847 to Thomas the Vicar of Grantsfield near Kimbolton.

Her skill in rearing butterflies and moths from the egg enabled her to work out the life cycles of certain Lepidoptera for the first time, including the double-brooded nature of the **Comma** butterfly, with its contrasting generations.

Although she travelled little and probably never visited London, Mrs Hutchinson corresponded with many of the well-known entomologists of her day, including Newman, Henry Doubleday, Buckler and Frowhawk.

In 1881, a letter was published in *The Entomologist*, commenting on the belief that the **Comma** butterfly was declining and perhaps in danger of extinction. Emma, who probably knew more about Commas than anyone alive at the time, disagreed. She replied:

“Herefordshire is its greatest stronghold in this kingdom. I am an old entomologist and have lived in this county and noted the habits of the Comma for fifty years; and I can safely say that I never remember this species so common in any autumn as the present one, except in the year 1875, when every blackberry bush was covered with specimens of this lovely and distinct species until late in the autumn.”

She suggested that the reason for its decline in its former stronghold of Kent was that the Comma’s foodplant there, cultivated hop-bines, were being burned after the harvest, resulting in the destruction of countless larvae and pupae.

In Herefordshire Emma Hutchinson excelled at conserving the Comma as she, in her own words: *“for many years bribed those over whom I have no control in this parish to collect for me every larvae and pupa they can find, and by this means I have preserved many thousands of this lovely butterfly.”*

She stated that she *“had sent hundreds of larvae to and pupae for liberation in Surrey and elsewhere, in an attempt to reintroduce the species”*, although her endeavours were seemingly without great success.

Family

Emma had more than her fair share of sorrows and bereavements. Of her family all were keen naturalists, four children and her husband predeceased her. Thomas, her eldest son, and two other surviving children all became distinguished entomologists. John gathered a large collection of butterflies from Natal, South Africa, and he lived until 1945.

Emma Hutchinson and her family are all buried in Kimbolton churchyard.

Her daughter presented her mother’s historically important collection to the Natural History Society in London in 1937. Emma’s notebooks and diaries are in the library of the Woolhope Naturalists’ Field Club in Hereford.

The Comma

Adult Commas hibernate and can be seen on warm days from late March onwards. The first generation in summer is those of the *hutchinsoni* form. But why are they different to the late summer adults?

Research on the colour change in both forms by Soren Mylin in Scandinavia shows that English springtime caterpillars can switch development, either into golden brown *hutchinsoni* adults that will breed the same summer, or into normal (dark) adults that will hibernate.

Emma’s studies discovered that the caterpillars were influenced by two main factors, the length of day experienced by the caterpillars during their development and whether the days became shorter or longer as they grow.

When English caterpillars are given just 12 hours of light every day, all turn into dark hibernating adults – but with 18 or 20 hours of light each day, 90 per cent turn into golden *hutchinsoni* Commas!

The Comma is now a fairly familiar butterfly in much of England and Wales, becoming scarcer in the far north. It does not now occur in Scotland but seems to be spreading and will hopefully re-colonise one day.

This represents an extraordinary change in status as signalled in Emma's day when the population crashed and was seemingly on the verge of extinction in Britain. It was then more or less confined to the Welsh Border country and there were fewer than half a dozen records from 1830 to 1929 from counties such as Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex and Dorset. Thankfully nowadays it has re-colonised these parts, the recovery was first noticed in 1914 and by 1935 can now be seen in most woodlands and scrubby areas in the south.

In July, if you encounter a Comma basking with open wings, glowing like a hot coal in full sunlight, wait for cloud cover and remember Emma when you see the golden wash on this lovely butterfly's underwings.

Acknowledgment and References:

Special thanks to Dr. Michael Salmon author of *The Aurelian Legacy – British Butterflies and their Collectors*, for granting me permission to extract and adapt this article from his wonderful book.

Thanks also to Annette Harley of Harley Books – the publishers:
harley@harleybooks.co.uk.

British and Irish Butterflies by Jeremy Thomas and Richard Lewington – Dorling Kindersley publishers.

Let's Talk

John Bryan

I have set up a Butterfly Conservation West Midlands Egroup through Yahoo! An egroup? What's one of those? For those who may not have come across one before, an egroup is a membership based 'chat site.' Once registered, you have an opportunity to talk about.... well, anything you want. Subjects could range from 'does anyone know where I can see Dingy Skipper near to Walsall?' to 'I'm going to The Staffordshire Moorlands on Sunday and have two places in the car spare, any takers? The possibilities are endless. Other egroups that I'm a member of have proved very interesting and extremely useful, but it doesn't just stop at 'chat'.

The site will also allow you to post pictures for identification (both butterflies and moths are welcome) to ask the more knowledgeable out there, or to simply post them to show off your prowess as a photographer!

The site also has links to other Midland-based branches, namely Warwickshire and East Midlands as there are certain members in the far flung corners who would be nearer to their events but may not be aware of them.

The site will be an-ever evolving entity. We are planning to set up county files to list all the sites, in respective counties, where you can see the 'premium' species.

This site is by invite only, none of the information you surrender is used for commercial gain by either Yahoo! or Butterfly Conservation, and it is guaranteed spam-free.

To join this group, email Johnpbryan15@aol.com for an invitation. Then:

1. Once your invitation hits your inbox, click the 'show images & enable links' in the top of the email.
2. Double click 'Join this group.'
3. Are you already a member of Yahoo? If so log in with your Yahoo! ID and password. If you aren't already a member, you will have to sign up to Yahoo! It is at this stage that many fail, as it easy to become confused. There are two sections at this point. One asks for you for your ID. Below this is the 'Sign In' option. If you don't have a Yahoo! ID click the 'Sign In' box.
4. Signing up to Yahoo! is easy. Fill in the required information they ask for. (Remember this is a totally secure site and none of the information you give is ever used elsewhere.) Selecting your own Yahoo! ID can be both fun and exasperate as you have to come up with an original email address!
5. Follow the interactions and make sure you fill all the boxes in. If you don't fill it out correctly you will get an error message highlighting where you went wrong.
6. When you have been accepted by Yahoo! you will receive a page with all of your information on, it is advisable to print this off lest you forget any of the details.
7. Choose which level of activity you want to receive, for example the level of individual emails, a brief summary or none at all.
8. At the bottom of this page enter the generated security text and then click **join group**.
9. You will, if all has gone well, receive an email from Yahoo! asking you to activate your account (there are no charges). Once activated you can join the rest of us!

Speak to you soon,

John

Great Butterfly Days (2)

Mike Williams

Over the years, I have been fortunate to have experienced many memorable butterfly days and I find it really difficult to pick out just one. Chalk grassland has always had a particular appeal and I remember a fantastic day on Watlington Hill in the Chilterns in the early 80s surrounded by large numbers of **Chalkhill Blues** and **Silver-spotted Skippers**. In similar vein, was the first West Midlands branch coach trip to the MOD establishment at Porton Down where butterflies were in an abundance I have never experienced in Britain before or since. I have always had a somewhat love/hate relationship with **Purple Emperors** and, while most days were instantly forgettable as we never saw one, there was an amazing day at Bentley Wood in 1988 where, along with Rob Mabbett, we saw dozens, including a mating pair and up to five at once feasting on sap from a damaged branch. Closer to home, I remember well a day on the Malverns surrounded by **High Brown Fritillaries** (those were the days), including photographing a group of five down on a track drinking from a puddle. Then, of course, there have been the visits abroad: my first ever sighting of a **Large Blue** in the Drome region of France, **Apollos** in Norway and, more recently, Kazakhstan, stunning meadows on both sides of the Pyrenees heaving with butterflies, the experience of tropical butterflies and moths in profusion in Ecuador; all stick in the memory.

The day I have decided to select, however, is much more recent: 8th July, 2003 during the branch's first visit to Hungary. We had already spent 10 days in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic and had experienced a rich variety of butterflies up to this point, especially in the Bakony Hills of western Hungary. Our destination for the day was the Aggtelek National Park, an area of karst limestone which extends into nearby Slovakia. The day got off to a good start when we enjoyed a close view of a Short-toed Eagle en route from a petrol station stop in Miskolc (!), followed by excellent sightings of several Bee-eaters in an old quarry. On arrival, we went for a short walk near the Visitor Centre along a flower-filled valley which was heaving with butterflies, including species like **Chequered** and **Meleager's Blue**, **Lesser Purple Emperor**, **Camberwell Beauty** and High Brown Fritillary, the latter proving to be one of the commonest butterflies present (42 species in this one small valley alone). This was only the start, however, as after lunch we moved on to the village of Josvafo and parked in the centre of the village near a stream. The number of mud-puddling butterflies was truly astounding with **Silver-studded Blues**, **Wood Whites**, **Scarce Swallowtails** and **Grizzled & Dingy Skippers** all involved. It was fascinating to observe how each species kept to their own kind, clustered together in little, and not so little, groups rather than being evenly spread across the vast assemblage of butterflies. **Silver-studded Blues**, in particular, were present in their hundreds, if not thousands, while the **Wood Whites** were all grouped together, looking rather like sailing boats jostling for space in the harbour. It was really an incredible spectacle

and I have certainly never witnessed mud-puddling on this kind of scale before or since anywhere else in Europe. It was rather like those photographs one sometimes sees of tropical butterflies gathering on the banks of the Amazon - truly amazing. The rest of the day could easily have been an anti-climax but as we climbed out of the village into the national park proper we saw more and more **Silver-studded Blues**, joined by good numbers of **Lesser Purple Emperor**, **Common Glider**, **Large Tortoiseshell**, and **Mountain Alcon Blue**, including dozens of their eggs on Cross Gentian. Many of these species I had seen before on previous trips abroad, but there was just something about seeing butterflies en masse in this way that was so evocative and an experience that was truly memorable.

P.S. It is not too late to get a taste of the Josvafo experience for yourself this summer by joining our special conservation working holiday this Summer. There are still three places left for the first week when we will be staying in the Aggtelek National Park and six places for week two in Orseg. A special leaflet together with booking form is available from myself.

Activities – Health and Safety Guidelines

Guidelines for health and safety during Butterfly Conservation activities 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 act according to the following guidelines at any of our events:

- Wear appropriate footwear for the conditions expected.
- Wear appropriate clothing for the conditions 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 leads. Ask leaders for permission before bringing dogs.
- Listen carefully to instructions given by the leader before starting.
- Beware of branches swinging back after the person in front passes them.
- 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.
- Site-specific hazards will be outlined by the leader at the start.

Dates for your Diary

Please remember that further dates may be added to the website at short notice during the summer. Check <http://www.westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.org.uk>

April

Sunday, 23rd 11am-5pm Grafton Wood Open Day

Three Parishes Hall, Grafton Flyford (next to the Church off A422 Worcester-Stratford Road) Grid Ref. SO 962557. Guided bluebell and butterfly walks, children's nature trail, demonstrations, displays, crafts and home-made refreshments. Contact: John Tilt 01386 792458

Saturday 29th 10.30am Gib Tor/Swallow Moss, Staffordshire

Target species: **Emperor/Fox Moth** plus moorland birds a plenty. Meet in The Winking Man car park on A53 Leek/Buxton Road. Walking boots essential, some strenuous and steep climbing; bring packed lunch. Contact John Bryan: 01782 518900

May

Saturday 6th 2pm Butterfly & moth survey and recording in the Malverns

Welland Village Hall, Welland - Introductory talk by Sue Clarke.

Saturday 6th 19:30 Moth Recording - Chaddesley Wood

Leaders Mervyn Needham (01562 777461) and Alan Prior (0121 778 2973)
OS map 150 : Grid ref : SO914736

Friday 12th, 19:30 Moth Recording - Chaddesley Wood

Leader Mervyn Needham (above). Part of Worcs Wildlife Trust event week.

Saturday 13th Branch Spring meeting, Woolhope Village Hall, Herefordshire

See page 20 for directions and a description of this event.

Saturday 13th Gib Tor and surrounds Green Hairstreak survey

A day trying to establish the true extent of this species' distribution across the moorlands. Stout footwear essential as strenuous walking/climbing involved; bring packed lunch and binoculars. Contact John Bryan: 01782 518900.

Meet 10.30am in The Winking Man car park on A53 Leek/Buxton road.

Saturday 13th Moth Recording - Snitterfield Bushes (Warks)

Contact David Brown for details on 01789 840295.

Friday 19th Moth Recording Wyre Forest visitor centre at 19:30

SO 750740. Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 for details.

Saturday 20th Chatterley Whitfield for the Dingy Skipper

Come and explore the globe's newest World Heritage Site, a history lesson in Europe's only disused mine still standing and knee deep in Dingy and other

species. Meet 10.30am in allotment car park opposite fish'n chip shop in Fegg Hayes Rd. SJ878529.

Wednesday 24th Threatened Moths Workshop, Monmouth

Run by the Wye Valley AONB. Workshop focussing on two day flying moths, **Drab Looper** and **Argent and Sable**. **Booking essential as places are limited**. Contact Anna Jordan: 01531 635234.

Saturday 27th Wyre Forest Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Grizzled Skipper, etc.

Meet at visitor centre 10.30. GR SO750740. Walk led by our Chairman Richard Southwell, who will take a question and answer session in the afternoon on his role. Contact John Bryan: 01782 518900.

Sun, 28th 11.00am Caterpillar Hunt, Grafton Wood, Worcs.

Meet Grafton Flyford church to search for **Brown Hairstreak** and other caterpillars. Grid Ref. SO 962557. Contact Mike Williams 01299 824860.

June

Saturday 3rd Moth Recording - Chaddesley Wood

Meet 20:30. Leaders Mervyn Needham (01562 777461) and Alan Prior (0121 778 2973) OS map 150 : Grid ref : SO914736

Thursday 8th Threatened Moths Workshop, Monmouth

Run by the Wye Valley AONB. Managing open spaces in woodlands as a prime habitat for butterflies and moths. **Booking essential as places are limited**. Contact Anna Jordan: 01531 635234.

Tuesday 13th Butterfly & moth recording day at Castlemorton Common

Target species: **Green Hairstreak**, **Speckled Yellow** and **Brown Silver-lines**. Meet at 11am at the Swinyard Hill car park (SO766383). Bring packed lunch and £2 for car parking.

Tuesday 13th Moth Recording at Hazelslade N.R.

Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 before attending in case of changes.

Friday 16th - Sunday 18th Three Counties Show, Malvern

Still to be confirmed, BC may be attending with an information stand. **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** to help run the stand. Free entry to the show included!. Contact Anna Jordan: 01531 635234.

Friday 16th Moth Recording at Wyre Forest

Visitor centre (SO 750740) at 20:30. Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446.

Saturday 17th 10:30 Bishop's Wood, Staffs Argent & Sable adult hunt

Meet at 'The Hostels' SJ 745309. We need help to find out just how extensive this moth is in this part of Staffordshire. Contact John Bryan 01782 518900

Saturday 17th June 20:30 – Moth night Norton Covert

BBQ and moth trapping – this is a fund raising evening for this local initiative so be prepared to make a donation and bring your own drink. The GR is SO

886822. Contact Linda Dukes 01384 393216 so she can organise for the required numbers. Richard Southwell and Alan Prior will be attending.

Saturday 24th Cannock Chase

Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Clouded Buff, Oak Eggar. Meet 10.15am at visitor centre on Marquis Drive. SK003154 Contact John Bryan 01782 518900.

July

Saturday 1st Hunt for Welsh Clearwing at Cannock Chase

Sponsored by Anglian Lepidopterists who are supplying pheromones. Contact John Bryan: 01782 518900. Led by Andrew Graham, an expert on this species. The last time it was reliably recorded in England was in 1922!

Meet 09:30 at the visitor centre on Marquis Drive (SK 003154).

Saturday 1st Moth Recording - Chaddesley Wood

Meet 20:30. Leaders Mervyn Needham (01562 777461) and Alan Prior (0121 778 2973) OS map 150 : Grid ref : SO914736

Sunday 2nd Ewya's Harold Common, Herefordshire

Dark Green Fritillary, botany and more. Meet 11:00 at Abbey Dore entrance to Ewya's Harold Common (SO 382300). Bring packed lunch. Contact Ian Hart on 01789 840295.

Sunday 2nd Moth Recording - Cross Hands Quarry (Warks)

Warwickshire Moth Group meeting. Contact David Brown on 01789 840295.

Saturday 8th Bircher Common, Herefordshire

Dark Green Fritillary and more. Meet 13:30 at top of lane up to common (SO 458659). Contact Dean Fenton on 01568 611575.

Sunday 9th Butterfly Safari, Bishops Wood, Crossway Green, nr. Stourport

Meet 2.00pm Grid Ref. SO 837685 Contact: John Rhymer 01299 250513

Sunday 9th Moth Recording at Hazelslade N.R.

Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 for details.

Monday 10th Moth Recording at Hednesford Hills

Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 for details.

Tuesday 11th Butterfly & moth recording day at Castlemorton Common

Target species: **Marbled White** and **Six-spot Burnet**. Meet 11am at the Swinyard Hill car park (SO766383). Bring packed lunch and £2 for car parking.

Tuesday 11th Moth Recording at Hednesford Hills

Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 for details.

Saturday 15th 11am Bishop's Wood, Staffs Argent & Sable larvae hunt

Meet 10:30am at The Hostels SJ 745309. Help us learn more about the breeding habitats of this moth in Staffordshire. John Bryan 01782 518900

Saturday 15th 10.30-1.30 Monkwood Discovery Day

A guided walk in search of butterflies, dragonflies, birds and flowers. Meet Monkwood car park (signposted from A443 at Hallow). Grid Ref. SO 804606. Contact Paddy Harrison 01905 641523.

Save our Butterflies Week, 21-31st July

Friday 21st Moth Recording at Wyre Forest

Visitor centre (SO 750740) at 20:00. Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446.

Friday 21st Moth Recording at Queenswood, Herefordshire

Public event. Meet at 20:00 at visitor centre (SO 516505). Contact Anna Jordan on 01531 635234.

Saturday 22nd Moth Recording at Windmill Hill, Nuneaton

Meet at car park (SP340936) at 19:30 for a barbeque and moth recording.

Saturday 22nd Butterflies and moths at Queenswood, Herefordshire

Public event - open day with guided walks. 10:30 – 15:30 at visitor centre (SO 516505). Contact Anna Jordan on 01531 635234. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!!

Saturday 29th 10.00am Brown Hairstreak Assembly Tree survey

Meet Grafton Flyford church (for directions see above). Please bring binoculars/telescope. Ring Rob Mabbett 01242 233792 if weather poor.

Saturday 29th Moth Recording at Tiddesley Wood

Leader - Mike Southall (01299 251467). 8pm. at the main entrance SO 929461

Saturday 29th Moth Recording at Hednesford Hills

Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 for details.

Saturday 29th Moth Recording - Toft Farm (Warks)

Warwickshire Moth Group meeting. Contact David Brown on 01789 840295.

Sunday 30th Butterfly & Bug Hunt Baggeridge Country Park, Wolverhampton

Save our Butterflies Week event. Bring the Family. Meet in front of the Visitor Centre at 10.00am. Walk for around two hours. (Please bring 90 pence car parking charge.) Leader Dave Jackson . Tel 01902 344716.

Sunday 30th Moth Recording at Hednesford Hills

Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 for details.

Monday 31st Butterfly & moth recording day in the northern Malvern Hills

Target species: **Grayling**. Meet 11am at the West of England car park (SO766449). Please bring packed lunch and £2 for car parking.

August

Friday 4th Moth Recording at Hazelslade N.R.

Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 for details.

Saturday 5th Moth Recording at Stourbridge Golf Club

Moth night to confirm breeding habitat exists for Archers Dart. Lord Foley, who owns the land, would like to build houses on it whilst golfers would like to play on it. We don't care as long as the habitat remains. Dudley Council supports the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and will provide the necessary Planning Consents if the species is confirmed as breeding there. Meet at club house SO 905824 at 8.30pm. Contact Mike Southall on 01299 251467.

Saturday 5th Moth Recording - Chaddesley Wood

Meet 20:00. Leaders Mervyn Needham (01562 777461) and Alan Prior (0121 778 2973) OS map 150 : Grid ref : SO914736

Saturday 5th 10.00am Brown Hairstreak Assembly Tree survey

Meet Grafton Flyford church (for directions see above). Please bring binoculars/telescope. Ring Rob Mabbett 01242 233792 if weather poor.

Monday 7th Moth Recording at Hednesford Hills

Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 for details.

Tuesday 8th Moth Recording at Hednesford Hills

Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446 for details.

Saturday 12th Moth Recording at Belvide Reservoir, Staffs

"Moths-in-the-Middle" field meeting. Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446.

Friday 18th, 19:30 - Moth Recording at Wyre Forest

Meet visitor centre (SO 750740). Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446.

Saturday 19th 7.30pm Moth Recording at Monkwood

Meet at reserve car park SO 804606. Leader - Mike Southall (01299 251467).

Saturday 19th 8.00pm Moth Recording at Croft Castle, Herefordshire

Meet at NT car park SO 452657. Leader: Dean Fenton (01568 611575).

Thursday 31st Monmouth Show

Anna Jordan will be running a stand at this show. If you're attending the show, look out for her. If you'd like to help her contact Anna Jordan: 01531 635234. You should get free entry to the show for your trouble.

September

Saturday 2nd 19:30 Moth Recording - Chaddesley Wood

Leaders Mervyn Needham (01562 777461) and Alan Prior (0121 778 2973)

Sunday 3rd 2.00 Brown Hairstreak Day

Joint event with BC Works branch. Meet at Grafton Flyford church. Chance to see adult Brown Hairstreaks in Grafton Wood.

Friday 15th 19:00 Moth Recording at Wyre Forest

Meet at visitor centre (SO 750740). Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446.

Saturday 23rd - National Moth Night - Bishops Wood (SO 835683)

Contact Mike Southall 01299 251467 for details. Trappers meet at 7pm (no charge) public at 8.30pm (£3 adult, £1 child) The money is spent on the wood.

Saturday 23rd - National Moth Night in Herefordshire

An event will be organised somewhere in the county. For details ring Anna Jordan (01531 635234) in September or see our website.

Saturday 30th - Moth Recording - Chaddesley Wood

Meet 18:30. Leaders Mervyn Needham (01562 777461) and Alan Prior (0121 778 2973) OS map 150 : Grid ref : SO914736

Training events (all run in Herefordshire)

These events aim to improve peoples' skills in the field. They are open to all comers, except for the **Common two fan-foot** events which are informal and for branch members only. For details of all these contact Anna Jordan: 01531 635234.

Saturday 20th May Butterfly transect training, Haugh Wood

From 10:00-15:00. **Booking essential as places are limited.**

Sun, 21st May Timed Count Training, Coppett Hill Common

From 1:30 to 3:30pm. Timed count training focussing on identification of **Pearl-bordered** and **Small pearl-bordered fritillaries**. **Booking essential as places are limited.**

Tuesday 23rd May Twig snapping for Common fan-foot, Haugh Wood

Dave Grundy will demonstrate this technique. **Not a public event.** Branch members welcome to come along. Preparation of larval foodplant for public event on 12th September.

Saturday 10th June Habitat Assessment training, Bircher Common

Training in new habitat assessment techniques for butterflies. **Booking essential as places are limited.**

Sunday 11th June Butterfly survey and monitoring training, Bircher Common

The day will cover various techniques for survey and monitoring, including transects. **Booking essential as places are limited.**

Tuesday 27th June Moth trapping for Common fan-foot, Haugh Wood

Meet at Haugh Wood SO 593365. **Not a public event**, but Branch members welcome. Please contact Anna Jordan for meeting time.

Tuesday 12th Sept. Common fan-foot larvae training at Haugh Wood

Public training event learning about **Common fan-foot**. Indoor session then a larvae hunt in Haugh Wood. **Booking essential as places are limited.**

Sutton Park events (see issue 63 for background)

These are listed separately as they're all at similar locations.

Saturday 20th May Butterflies and day-flying moths at Sutton Park

Meet 14:00 at Park House (Toby Inn) car park, (near Sutton Town Gate).
Grid Ref : SP114964, contact Harvey Skelcher on 0121 605 9823.

Saturday 20th May Moth recording at Streetly Heath, Sutton Park

Meet at 20:00 at Streetly Gate. Grid Ref : SP087986. Contact David Brown on 01789 840295.

Sunday 21st May Moth identification training at Sutton Park

Meet 10:30 at Park House (see above). Contact David Brown on 01789 840295.

Saturday 17th June Moth recording at Blackroot heathland, Sutton Park

Meet at 20:30 at Park House. Contact Nigel Stone on 02476 335189.

Sunday 18th June Moth identification training at Sutton Park

Meet at 14:00 at Park House. Contact Nigel Stone on 02476 335189.

Saturday 15th July Moth recording at Longmoor Valley, Sutton Park

Meet at 20:00 at Park House. Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446.

Sunday 16th July Moth identification training at Sutton Park

Meet at 10:30 at Park House. Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446.

Saturday 19th August - Moth recording at Rowtons Bank, Sutton Park

Meet at 19:30 at Park House. Contact David Brown on 01789 840295.

Saturday 9th September Moth recording near Four Oaks, Sutton Park

Meet at 19:30 at Park House. Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446.

Sunday 10th September Moth identification training at Sutton Park

Meet at 10:30 at Park House. Contact Dave Grundy on 0121 446 5446.

County leaders

The first two county leaders have "volunteered" to be first point of contact in their area. Contact them with any queries:

- Staffordshire – John Bryan 01782 518900
- Herefordshire – Dean Fenton 01568-611575

Wanted – Branch secretary

We are looking for someone to take on this role. It involves taking minutes at two committee meetings a year and typing these up for emailing to the committee.

Branch Spring meeting

This is on Saturday 13th May at Woolhope Village Hall, Herefordshire.

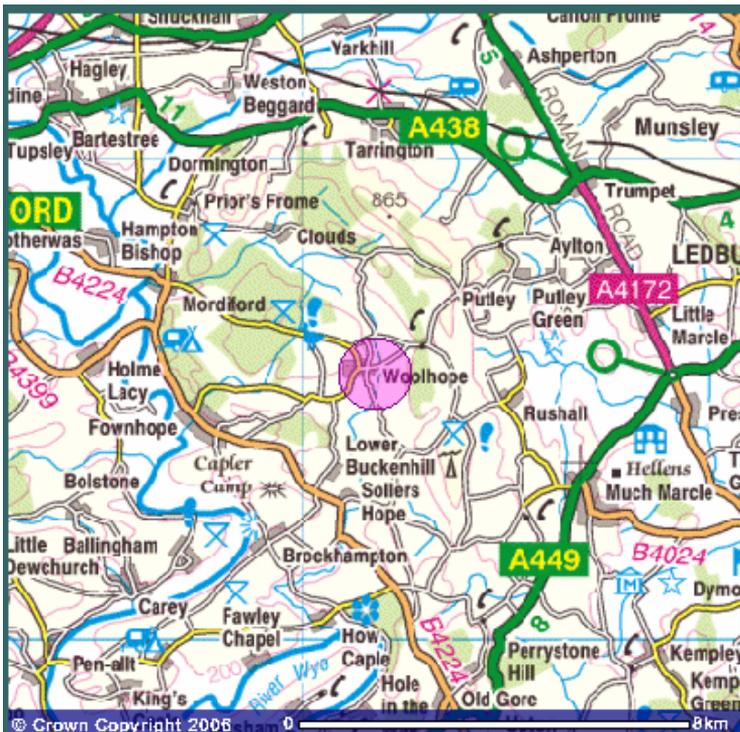
Grid ref : SO 611357. The map below shows the location. All members will be made very welcome.

Our local contact says “from the phone box in the centre of Woolhope there is a pub called the Crown on the right hand side. Turn right after the Crown signed to Broadmoor Common. The Village Hall is up the road less than a quarter of a mile on the left.”

The day is split into two parts:

- 10.30am – 12.00pm indoor session in hall. John Davies from Butterfly Conservation HQ at Lulworth should be speaking about Prees Heath (this is still to be confirmed at time of writing).
- 1.00pm – 3.30pm **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** search in Haugh Wood (SO 593365). The afternoon is open to members of the public.

If you're attending both, and we hope you will, bring lunch.



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Regional Officers' Reports – January to March 2006

Jenny Joy (JJ) and Jane Ellis (JE)

We write this report after finally hearing ten days ago that we will still be working for Butterfly Conservation after the end of March. Obviously this is fantastic news and will help us to build on our successes of the past three years as well as moving us into new work areas. We will, however, now be much more focussed on discrete 'landscape areas' with the aim of progressing specific research, survey and management objectives within each of these areas (but there are 16 of them!). Jenny will still largely concentrate on areas within the West Midlands region whereas Jane will cover both the East and West Midlands regions but will mainly be concentrating on brownfield sites.

One of our important work areas we will again be supporting next year is the Regional Conservation Day. The aim of this day is for the branches, the ROs and head office to exchange information and tell each other what we are doing so we can all learn from our successes and failures. This year's Regional Conservation Day was arranged by Jane and took place on 11th February at the Birmingham and Midland Institute with representatives attending from the East Midlands Branch, West Midlands Branch and the Warwickshire Branch of Butterfly Conservation. Local talks were given by:

- Barry Prater who provided a fascinating insight into progress with the Conservation of **Grizzled Skipper** and **Dingy Skipper** in the East Midlands where data has now been gathered from over 130 sites with 80 of them still supporting at least one of these key butterflies.
- Mike Slater who gave an inspiring talk on the Landscape Approach to Conservation in Warwickshire which is based on prime Lepidoptera areas such as Sutton Park, the Princethorpe Woodlands and the Southam lias Grasslands. Key sites have now been identified in each of these key areas as well as the important links between them.
- John Tilt who gave a very informative talk about ongoing management work at Grafton Wood in Worcestershire where an eight year blackthorn management rotation has resulted in **Brown Hairstreak** breeding extensively in this area.
- John Bryan who talked about the extensive Brownfield sites around Stoke on Trent and the **Argent & Sable** in Staffordshire.
- Morag McCracken came from BC Head Office to talk about the Species Action Plans for Forestry Commission Woodlands where 100 sites have now been graded for their importance for butterflies and moths. It is hoped that more publicity, more liaison with FC (and with volunteers) and more resources will help make this new plan more successful than the last.

Thanks very much to all the above speakers who made it such an interesting day. If anybody reading this is keen to give a talk at the next regional conservation day (probably in March 2007) please let Jenny or Jane know. Suggestions for locations or themes for the next event also gratefully received!

Other work areas

Implementing the Regional Action Plan

Dingy Skipper – JE has been in contact with David Broom (ecologist for Tarmac) over a trial restoration area for **Dingy Skipper** at Mancetter Quarry, Nuneaton. JE has had positive feedback on the proposal to Stoke City Council for works that need to be undertaken prior to development of the huge former colliery site at Chatterley Whitfield to conserve a large **Dingy Skipper** colony.

Brown Hairstreak – JE gave advice to over a dozen landowners on management for **Brown Hairstreak** at a Training workshop for farmers organised by the Worcestershire Vision Mapping Project on 26th January. The Forestry Commission, FWAG and DEFRA were also there to provide advice on environmental grant schemes and environmental management. Six landowners agreed to look for eggs on their landholdings and report back any findings.

White Letter Hairstreak – JJ delivered Dutch Elm Disease resistant elms to two sites in Shropshire (Severn Valley Country Park and the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust) as well as to Martin Dukes (for planting at Norton Covert) in January. A press release sent out by JE about the elm planting at Severn Valley Country Park was very successful and resulted in two local radio interviews as well as good paper coverage in the Shropshire Star.

High Brown Fritillary – JJ met with Rob Harvard (new conservation officer for the Malvern Hills Conservators) to discuss management plans for a number of MHC sites. We discussed how we can best work together in future, along with the need to get more local recorders. With this in mind a booklet on the butterflies and moths of the Malvern Hills is currently 'in press' thanks to financial support from the Countryside Agency (through the Malvern Hills AONB unit) and Bromesberrow Estate (through Dr Gilbert Greenall). We hope to run four general butterfly and moth events in the Malvern Hills this summer to encourage local people to get out recording both the common species and the local 'rarities' when they go out onto the hills (see the events listings).

Moth work

In January JE attended a meeting of interested parties including key moth recorders to help firm up details of a series of moth and butterfly training events at Sutton Park to ensure that the events lead to a good baseline set of data covering key habitats and species (see the list in the events section!).

JJ helped to organise and chaired a national meeting on the **Argent & Sable** moth at Ledbury on 23rd January. Priority sites for monitoring were identified on both a regional and national level and the BC management guidelines for this species re-visited.

JJ attended a meeting at Oversley Wood in Warks on 7th February with FC and Dave Grundy to discuss management for two of the particularly important moths present here (**Sciota hostilis** and **Salebriopsis albicilla** whose larval foodplants are Aspen and Small-leaved Lime).

JJ and John Bryan attended a meeting with FC on 21st March to discuss the Forest Design Plans for two of the key **Argent & Sable** areas in Staffordshire (Swynnerton and Bishop's Wood).

Other Liaison meetings held with key partners

JE attended a West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership meeting on 19th January.

JJ attended a meeting at the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust with Claire Waterson (Staffordshire LBAP officer) John Bryan and James Hill on 18th January where the need to have species lists included in the LBAP revision was discussed as well as a way forward for Cannock Chase.

JJ organised/chaired a meeting of the Wyre Forest Lepidoptera Liaison Group on 28th February when the results of various 2005 projects was discussed. A new pipeline is proposed to go through the entire Wyre Forest area. Obviously this could have huge implications (both positive and negative!) and a project where BC will want to ensure we have lots of input – the existing pipeline is the main area for **Grizzled Skipper** and **Dingy Skipper** in the Wyre Forest.

Brownfield sites dossier report

Jane breathed a huge sigh of relief with the recent printing and launch of a report on 134 key brownfield sites important for Lepidoptera in the WM. Thanks to all the dedicated volunteers who provided so much vital information for the 80 page report. The launch, held on 23rd March in Birmingham was sponsored by Tarmac. Talks were provided by Martin Warren, David Broom (ecologist for Tarmac) Maurice Arnold (Chief Planning Officer for Solihull MBC and Chair of the Brownfield Land Working Group) and Jane herself. 28 people attended with organisations represented including Buglife, English Nature, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Ecorecord, Staffordshire Environmental Records Centre, Sustrans, Warwickshire County Council, Sandwell District Council and Stoke City Council. The report is just the start of the process of protecting these valuable habitats. Now funding has been secured BC can move forward to fill the key information gaps, determining links between existing sites, trialing habitat restoration and management, promoting good practice and providing management advice to landowners and managers in key brownfield areas. The launch provided some useful leads to follow-up over the coming months.

Committee Meeting, Saturday 28th January 2006

The main points of this meeting were as follows:

Committee Changes

These are covered in the Chair's Notes.

Committee Structure.

Greater numbers of volunteers from branch members and outside people/organisations are vital to keep progress going. It was accepted LBAP Leaders could be the interface between existing committee local officers and the members. It was announced Dean Fenton takes on this role in Hereford.

Communication Supporting Structures

A discussion took place how to best achieve a workable Excel spreadsheet with contact details for all branch members and other outside contacts. There is also a need for an Excel spreadsheet for Conservation Projects.

It was felt these databases must be contributed to by all (including Society Staff) to be of use. They should be simple, standardised and speedy, volunteers do not have the time for long inputs. It was felt the following could be used as a starter:

Date – who – activity – who involved – outcome – further action – contact point.

Chat Room – a number believed this would be of benefit to members at large. Hampshire have a very active chat room. John Bryan has set up the site; see his article on page 9.

Fundraising

We need to consider ways of fundraising. If current cash flows continue the branch will run out of funds within 18 months. There is a 'Big Lottery Awards for All' scheme granting £5k to £10k and we need to identify someone prepared to write and submit these bids.

Annual Budget

Branch Current Account budget stands at £3,000. Branch membership is currently about 590 with a contribution of £6 per member paid by Head Office from the annual subscription. Committee approved the 2006/07 budget as:

- Newsletter print/stamps. 3 issues @ approx. £900 per issue = £2700
- Branch Insurance = Circa £150.
- Grafton Wood costs = £1500.
- Prees Heath Opening = £500.
- Committee expenses incl. Room Hire charges = £500.

- Local Funding Initiative = £750
- **Total £6130 approved**

Future Work Parties

We discussed the current difficulties in completing successful management work at reserves, where work parties are required to have a trained First Aider and trained Chain Saw operative. These are seen as 'limiting factors' and programmed essential works on reserves and at vulnerable species key sites may have to be delayed or even temporarily abated until these issues are satisfactorily resolved

The Herefordshire Woodlands Project

Training Opportunities

The aim of this project on **Celebrating and Conserving the Butterflies and Moths of Herefordshire's Ancient Woodlands** is to find out where some of the most threatened species are holding on in Herefordshire, and how many of them there are. Over the next two years we will be running free training courses in identification and survey, leading guided walks and habitat management days, giving talks, and providing advice. Details of up-coming events can be found on the following websites:

www.butterfly-conservation.org

www.westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.org.uk

www.herefordshirerivers.org

If you, as a group or individual, would like to have a practical day out in the woods, get some training, or want to be involved in any way contact

Anna Jordan, Herefordshire Woodlands Project Officer

Tel: 01531 635234, email: ajordan@butterfly-conservation.org

Request for Help

The Herefordshire Woodland Project is holding a series of events and open days throughout 2006, including attending County Shows with information stands and activities. Any help with these would be much appreciated. Some volunteer expenses can be covered. If you would like to help out on a moth night, help promote Butterfly Conservation at a County Show or open day, or come along on a guided walk as a back up I would be over the moon to hear from you. Anna Jordan (contact details as above).

Down and Dirty at Doley

John Bryan

Doley Common, just outside Gnosall, south-west Staffordshire is notable for two reasons:

- It's a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- More importantly it's one of only three known sites, that is home to **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** in the county. Unfortunately, data from the transect walked by local Vince Smith has shown adult numbers have fallen in recent times.

One of Vince's greatest concerns and, in his opinion, the reason for the decline, was the encroachment of birch on one of the major patches of Marsh Violet, the larval foodplant. The local knowledge of those on the ground goes a long way in Butterfly Conservation so, after protracted discussions with the land agent and English Nature, permission was finally granted so that the work needed could go ahead.

Before:



After:



On one Sunday morning, kind weather for February, a group of volunteers descended on Doley Common armed with bow-saw and axe. After a solid four hours of hewing, chopping and sawing, the local vista had changed somewhat and many muscles were aching.

After the morning's work, sixty birch stumps were left gleaming white in the afternoon sun, guaranteeing that shade won't be a factor the Marsh Violets will have to contend with this summer. The benefits of this work won't show through for at least a couple of years, but hopefully it will result, in years to come in higher adult numbers and an added boost to the chances of survival for this colony.

Interested in joining work parties? Phone John Bryan 01782-518900

The Thrill of The Chase

John Bryan

As part of Butterfly Conservation's ever-growing importance in the preservation of Cannock Chase's lepidoptera, we have been asked by the leading authorities in its management to increase our role. In recent years, surveying for **Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillary** has been sporadic and in some years minimal.

Work has been carried out in certain areas to increase viable breeding habitat, some of which is away from the traditional haunts. What is needed is a band of volunteers to survey for this fritillary throughout June. If you have one week spare and wish to survey throughout its flight period, or already walk The Chase but don't record your sightings, any time you can give would be invaluable. Survey maps for certain areas are being drawn up and you will be supplied with one. Volunteers are also required to help with surveys to gauge the extent of The Chases's **Green Hairstreak** and **Dingy Skipper** populations and, for the intrepid, searches for **Grizzled Skipper**.

Anyone looking for a thrill, telephone John Bryan 01782 518900 or email Johnpbryan15@aol.com

Junior Conservation Corner

David Jackson, Conservation Committee Chair

(Adults – please show this section of the Newsletter to a young person)

A very special welcome to junior readers of the Branch newsletter.

I wonder if we are going to have a late spring like last year, when the weather was so unpredictable. The ups and downs in temperatures make it very difficult for butterflies and moths to get on with their normal lives and for conservation-minded people to plan for butterfly watching and recording trips and moth nights. All a bit hit and miss really – but fingers crossed the weather will be kind, and that we and our 'winged jewels' have a good season in store.

The importance of keeping written notes and records

Some people find making field notes and keeping records a bit of a chore, whilst others record their butterfly and moth sightings in detail, even drawing and painting their observations: great fun, making your finds more memorable.

I find it is nice to delve back into my notebooks and remind myself of what I was lucky enough to see during previous seasons. Better still, some members record images on film, and if you or your have a digital camera it can be even more pleasing is to see your finds back home recorded on computer screen.

To start record keeping all you need is a pocket sized notebook. If you are a 'whizz kid' like my nine year old son, you may wish to put records on a

computer – it's difficult to add drawings unless you have access to a scanner though. Digital images would help you identify tricky species at your leisure.

Keeping records is very important, as it allows you to create a picture of how butterflies and moth numbers may change over the years.

For instance, three years ago I located a small colony of **Ringlets** near my home and they were still there last summer although not in as many numbers – I am sure they were not at this site when I moved there ten years previously.

I may soon have to seek the permission of the landowner to clear some scrub, as the site of this isolated colony is becoming overgrown and may soon be unsuitable for the **Ringlet**. Small-scale conservation.

Butterfly Conservation would welcome receiving your records. Please share them with us. You can send them to me if you wish at the end of each autumn, and I will pass them on or send them direct to Jim Chance, our Branch Recorder.

Your records are and will in future be very valuable to us in order to help protect certain species and their habitats and show how butterflies and moths are fairing year on year in your County.

Ten years ago Aileen Gould, our retired National Secretary at that time, wrote from her home in Birmingham for the National Magazine: *"We can obtain knowledge of butterflies from books either buying them or from Libraries, or from observation. Much more exciting is to hear a success story in saving wild places through personal involvement"*

She then goes on to add: *"May I urge members to let their voices be heard clearly whenever habitat is threatened" and not to leave it to – chance that someone else will fight to protect valuable wildlife areas."*

If you see or hear of a threatened area, which is good for Lepidoptera – please contact one of our Committee members or myself and we will see if we can help in any way.

Who am I?

Some of our butterflies have colours in their names – can you re-arrange and unscramble their true identity? Have fun:

EDR LARIMDA

NWORB REAKTSRAIH

URPLEP EROREMP

ALLMS PPERCO

EKUD FO YDNUGRUB

LLYOH LUBE

RANOGE PIT

Answers inside the back cover.

Herefordshire Community Commons Project Needs Your Help!

The Community Commons Project (CCP) is a five-year project looking at 12 commons in the county: Badley Wood, Brimfield, Cefn Hill, Climbing Jack, Eywas Harold, Garway, Hergest Ridge, Herrock Hill, Merbach, Vagar Hill, Wyson, and Yatton Hill.

The basic premise underpinning the project is that local people are the key to ensuring long-term sustainable management of the commons. We are in the process of working with local communities to help people find out more about their commons and helping them to plan practical action to improve the commons' habitat value.

As part of the implementation of management plans formulated with local communities, we are exploring ways of increasing species recording. This includes moths and butterflies, for which many of the commons featured in the project are important.

Butterfly Conservation was commissioned by the CCP in 2005 to carry out Lepidoptera surveys on the commons, and their recommendations are being fed into the plans. We also have dedicated butterfly recorders on some commons such as Eywas Harold.

However, we would like to build up a longer-term picture of butterfly use on all of the commons, and for surveys and monitoring to continue after the project has finished.

Additionally, some local people have expressed an interest in being trained up for wildlife surveys and it would be enormously useful if we could form links between people already experienced in carrying out butterfly surveys (yourselves!) and keen local people.

Moreover, monitoring beyond the life of the project will help to determine whether or not our management has been successful.

If you are interested in getting involved, or would like more information about the project, please contact:

The Community Commons Project,

Lugwardine Court, Lugwardine, Hereford, HR1 4AE

Call 01432 853205 or e-mail tim.breakwell@hnt-commons.co.uk

Committee members

This list gives members you are most likely to want to contact; for other committee members see the branch website or January newsletter.

Chairman	Richard Southwell Sandilands@yesit.co.uk Sandilands, 48 Whitehall Rd, Stourbridge DY8 2JT	01384-397066 (after 4pm)
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Shropshire		

(Answers to **Who am I?**)

Red Admiral; Purple Emperor; Orange Tip; Brown Hairstreak, Small Copper, Holly Blue.

Caloptilia alchimiella (This micro has a wingspan of just 10-13mm. It flies from May to July and sometimes comes to light)



Photo: © Patrick Clement

Mother Shipton



Photo: © Patrick Clement