The Comma

No. 65 Autumn 2006

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This issue includes:

- The Countdown 2010 project
- Brownfield butterflies and moths
- Regional officers' reports
- Hungary trip reports
- News from Mull
- Prees heath latest
- Herefordshire news
- Winter events details
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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

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Editorial

This issue has the news on the Countdown 2010 projects in our region. It also features reports on the Spring meeting at Haugh Wood and from trips to Mull and Hungary attended by over 40 people in total this year.

Special thanks to all who contributed articles, especially Christopher Johnson who responded at a few hours' notice, and the photographers who made their pictures available.

The deadline for contributions to the next issue is 14 January 2007. 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. 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

Some might argue but I see West Midlands and Hampshire branches as the leaders within the society, with many others hot on our heels. We are certainly both in the forefront given the range and quantity of conservation activities we pursue. Hampshire has succeeded in forming local groups whilst we are still developing our network. Local activity certainly flushes out people prepared to join the society and become active within it and the new members list that follows this article certainly demonstrates clear evidence that this statement is correct. You are needed. The growing number of activities requiring support is forever expanding, particularly since the arrival over the last few years of employed staff who now number four who are directly associated with our patch. Do look at the list of the full committee and make a pledge to contact one of us that is relevant to your personal interest or concern. If you are also interested in sounding me out on what is entailed for any of the vacant posts do give me a call. Preference should be given to female members looking at the current composition of the committee!

Sad to report but three who have been leading figures over the last few years have retired from the committee. I have fond memories of Jeff Andrews, particularly on recording missions to North Wales and the Cairngorms, for his positive can-do approach to conservation. His efforts at improving the habitat in Haugh Wood in Hereford were recognised in our national magazine. Jim and Christine Chance have also retired. Where do I start with these two? As Newsletter Editor, Christine was renowned for garnering the most diverse range of articles from the greatest number of branch members of any branch newsletter. Jim took on the difficult role of Branch Recorder after the huge task of the Millennium Atlas. Both helped to make reality the macro and micro moth atlases for Hereford and Worcester. A great many thanks from us to all of you.

Stephen Lewis joins our staff as Prees Heath Officer. He has a record of engendering local voluntary activity so remember his name and keep your head below the parapet. Only kidding! Apart from recreating Prees into it's previous landscape over the next five years, it is vital that the support is there to keep the heath in a sustainable condition thereafter. We wish Stephen every success. Anna Jordan has bedded into her role as Hereford Woodlands Officer, now converted into a full-time post. Jane Ellis is now well involved in the brownfield project covering East and West Midlands. I attended a most successful project launch earlier this year at Aston University. It was sponsored by Tarmac PLC following a contact I made with an employee on a brownfield walk in Walsall, who I passed onto Jane. Jane has clearly taken full advantage of this introduction. Working with local authorities and businesses is increasingly becoming a feature of this project and I hope to report on a major initiative we have launched with St Modwen Properties PLC, the largest brownfield developer in the UK, in the next newsletter. Jenny Joy is now in charge

of all this as well as continuing with her many conservation projects over the whole area and keeping us in check! Please try and save her from emails, it is the committee you should contact.

Given our growth in membership numbers and activities, the committee feels it is about time we sounded you out on your views on how things should be. We are interested in your interests and concerns but the corollary is, to misquote President Kennedy, 'don't ask what can your branch do for you but what you can do for the branch'. A questionnaire accompanies this newsletter. I want every single member to complete it, add their own thoughts and return it before Christmas. Your views will alter how we conduct our activities. It has in Staffordshire where John Bryan, Lyn Martin and James Hill conducted a similar survey two years ago.

If you miss our AGM in Worcester this December (details below) you will kick yourself. It is a great opportunity to meet and question one of our key Head Office Staff who is responsible for all our UK reserves. John Davis is a cracking chap and a thought-provoking speaker. You will also learn much of the thought processes that take place behind closed doors. Mike Southall will also present his Worcester moth discoveries this year to give a local flavour. Last year there was even laughter during the formal AGM. That was a first, though I can't promise it two years running!

There is also an annual spring event organised by Richard Fox and Tom Brereton, of head office that takes place annually in Birmingham that I rate the best in Butterfly Conservation. Recorders and activists from all over the UK, which always include the entertaining Irish contingent, come to it. You will hear many interesting presentations during the day, whilst there are unequalled opportunities to network. At the time of writing dates are not finalised, but do check BC's national website.

See you at the AGM.

Branch AGM, 2nd December 11am

The venue is Bishop's Wood north of Worcester just to the west of the A449 - turn west at the roundabout signposted Stourport A4025 - first left up minor road and then very quickly left into car park OS map 138 GR SO 835683.

Mike Southall, Worcester Moth Officer will report on his county moth discoveries this year.

John Davis from Head Office at Lulworth will give a a general presentation on BC reserves in the afternoon.

New Members over the last year

The branch is pleased to welcome the following new members. We hope you enjoy participating in our activities. The names are categorised by area:

Birmingham & Black Country - 30

Dudley - Mrs S Adams, Mrs A Allen, Mr K Bowerman, Mr S Brownhill, Miss Browning, Mr D Finney, Mr C Hale, Miss J Morgan, Mr AM Pettigrew, Mr PC Samson & Ms F Wade, Miss E Tyers, Mr R Watson, Mr I Wells

Birmingham - Ms A Bowery, Miss S Cahill, Mr A Charles, Mr I Cole, Ms J Lunt, Mr N Turner, Mr I Wilkinson

Wolverhampton - Ms K Griffiths, Mr T & Mrs V Penny Stewart, Mrs CL Portlock, Mrs J Postles, Miss S Smith, Mr J Taylor, Mr T Taylor

Walsall - Mr R Caddy, Mrs M West

Sandwell - Mr D Bromley

Staffordshire - 23

Mrs A Amison, Miss S Browning, Dr DR Carlton, Mrs HJ Chadwick, Dr JW Dover, Mr NG & Mrs Greatholder, Mr M Green, Mr A Hancock, Mr CR & Mrs JE Heath, Mr JE Hill, Ms J Lunt, Mr G Mills, Dr Z Mohd-Isa, Mr A Moore, Mrs J Moreau, Mr J & Mrs L Palmer, Mr N Pomiankowski, Mrs E Rollins, Mrs J Sharpe, Ms K Shipton, Mrs E Turner, Mr CW Whitaker, Mr CP Yates.

Worcestershire - 21

Mrs CA Behrendt, Mr D Burman, Mr P Burman, Ms H Curtis, Dr A Darley, Mr CG Evans, Mr M Gregson, Ms KM Haynes, Mr M Hickman-Smith, Master JJR Hill, Mrs CR Jones, Mr CJ Lane, Mrs R McNally, Mr T & Mrs V Penny-Stewart, Dr MTM Roberts, Mrs H Sayner, Mr J Staley, Mr G Stevens, Mr RDE Stott, Mr G Whiting, Mr B & Mrs P Woodcock.

Shropshire - 11

Mr E Andrews, Mr D Beath, Mr D Evans, Mr M Fallon, Mr JMC Fleet, Mr S & Mrs J Freeman, Mr JD Hartnell-Beavis, Mr CD Knight, Mr R Linington, Mr A Miles, Mr N Turner.

Herefordshire - 10

Miss R Collins, Mr G Dawe, Mrs B Eggleton, Mrs P Hope, Mrs N Hughes, Dr IJ Liebert, Mr G & Mrs A Phillips, Mr PJ Relf, Ms J Tilson & Mr A Wright, Ms J Wise.

Outside branch area -13

Mr J Barrett, Mr DJ Cole, Mr DC Gardner, Mr RG Gibbs, Miss J Gidley, Mr CD Johnson & Ms V Hill, Mr JK Knight, Mr AW Pratley, Mr J & Mrs S Stone, Mr J Ward, Mr M Waring, Mr R Wasley.

Countdown 2010: Conserving Butterflies and Moths at a Landscape Level

Jenny Joy

The 1st April was a very special date for Butterfly Conservation in the East and West Midlands as it was the starting date for a new project 'Conserving Butterflies and Moths at a Landscape level'. The grant for this project was provided from the Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund run by English Nature on behalf of Defra, to help the UK Government achieve its commitment to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 (with some additional funding for the Butterfly Conservation project coming from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation). A wide range of projects were funded by the Countdown 2010 Action Fund in every region of England ranging from the 'Cool Seas Roadshow' put forward by the Marine Conservation Society to the 'Yorkshire Dales Woodland Restoration Project' but the plan is that all these projects will directly contribute to Biodiversity Action Plan and England Biodiversity Strategy targets.

The Butterfly Conservation project 'Conserving Butterflies and Moths at a Landscape Level' aims to implement a targeted programme of action in 30 priority landscape areas across the Midlands and the East of England (covering three English regions). It is anticipated that this will involved giving management advice on more than 250 sites across these priority landscape areas. Developing effective partnerships with a range of government agencies, voluntary organisations and landowners etc in these landscape areas will also be a key part of this process.

The Countdown 2010 project is now funding four Butterfly Conservation staff, Jenny Joy, Jane Ellis and Anna Jordan in the Midlands, and Sharon Hearle in the East of England. In the Midlands area, the way the Countdown project is organised is that Jane is now the Midlands Brownfields sites officer (see Jane's separate brownfields update). Anna is the Herefordshire Woodlands Project Officer (with Countdown funding allowing Anna to increase her hours to full time, see Anna's separate article), and Jenny is the West Midlands Regional Officer working in eleven landscape areas spread across the region. Jenny is also now the senior officer in the region who organises the Midlands team which also includes Stephen Lewis (the Prees Heath Project officer' see Stephen's separate article). As the Countdown 2010 grants run for two years we have obviously set ourselves ambitious targets and that is where you as branch members can really help us achieve this project (and in many places and landscape areas are already doing so!).

During the first six months of Countdown I have been focusing on trying to ensure that essential survey and monitoring work takes place on important butterflies and moths in each of my eleven landscape areas. This has been done:

a) by trying to encourage more volunteer recording.

b) by employing contractors to undertake specific projects often involving research.

c) by carrying out survey work myself.

In some places, efforts by volunteer recorders have substantially increased our knowledge of key species e.g. **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** at Cannock Chase, **Wood White** in south Shropshire, and **Grayling** and **High Brown Fritillary** on the Malvern Hills. This winter I will be working to ensure that these records now inform site management by developing partnerships with key local organisations. Projects undertaken by contractors funded through my part of the Countdown project have included survey and research work on **Argent & Sable** moth in Shropshire and Staffordshire, Common Standards Monitoring for **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** in the Oswestry area, and **High Brown Fritillary** work in the Malvern Hills.

Butterfly Conservation has also been successful in attracting funds from other organisations to carry out specific survey and monitoring projects which are as follows:

- survey for **Welsh Clearwing** and **Argent & Sable** on Cannock Chase Country Park (mostly as a result of funding from Staffordshire County Council but with some funding from Countdown).
- survey and monitoring work on **Dingy Skipper** in the Telford & Wrekin area (with funding from Telford & Wrekin Council).
- butterfly and moth survey of selected Herefordshire Commons (with funding from the Herefordshire Nature Trust).
- **Grayling** survey in the Malvern Hills (with funding from the Malvern Hills Conservators) and e) monitoring work on **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** in the Wyre Forest (with funding from English Nature).

We are very grateful to all these organisations for providing these extra funds for this specific work which has enabled our knowledge of these species to go one stage further. As it is a requirement that all consultants carrying out specific survey work for Butterfly Conservation, write up their project in the form of a report, in future a brief summary of each report will be posted on branch web sites so that any branch members then interested in learning more about specific projects can contact the appropriate Butterfly Conservation officer to obtain more details. The first report summary to go on the web site will be 'Common Standards Monitoring in the Oswestry Area JCA 2006' by Peter Boardman.

So where so I go from here in the next six months? Obviously my work will move away from the field into writing reports and having meetings to make sure we raise the profile of butterflies and moths in my landscape areas by making key organisations and local groups more aware of their presence. Perhaps one thing we have not done well in the past is to make the most of our good news stories by writing press releases and getting articles into magazines - the winter months are obviously

a good time to be doing this! Ultimately what Butterfly Conservation really wants is for this improved knowledge of butterflies and moths to lead to their better conservation on the ground. We will obviously not achieve this on all sites we are currently involved with but we can hopefully begin to make a good start by giving sound management advice.

So if you are thinking of perhaps doing more recording next year and think you could help with this landscape project please do get in touch with Jane, Anna or myself. Our landscape areas in the West Midlands are currently: Warwickshire brownfields, Black Country brownfields, Telford & Wrekin brownfields, Princethorpe Woodlands, South Shropshire Metal Mines, Cannock Chase, Forest of Feckenham, Malvern Hills, Herefordshire Commons, South Shropshire and Herefordshire Woods, Wyre Forest, South Shropshire wet flushes and rush pasture, Oswestry Uplands, and the North Shropshire and Staffordshire Mosses and woodlands.

The summer in Herefordshire

Anna Jordan/Dean Fenton

The project **Celebrating and Conserving the Butterflies and Moths of Herefordshire's Ancient Woodlands** was launched on 13.05.06 with presentations and a guided walk in the Woolhope area, followed by a search for **Pearl-bordered fritillaries** in Haugh Wood. The butterfly season was late starting because of the cold spring, but luckily the first Pearl-bordered fritillaries emerged just a day or two before the launch event. Throughout the summer there has been a full programme of training and events. The horrendous weather early in the season meant that some of the first training days were a little damp. Jeff Andrews very kindly ran a transect training day on 20th May which was well attended, but very wet. The bad weather didn't dampen people's enthusiasm and several people have taken up transects as a result.

Other training workshops have included habitat assessment and survey and monitoring techniques run by Sue Clarke (see photo on page 9), woodland management run by John Davis and a threatened moths workshop run by Dave Green. Volunteers have carried out searches at Haugh Wood for adult **Argent and Sable** moths, and **Drab Looper** have been recorded. A defunct transect on the north side of Haugh Wood has been taken on by a group of four volunteers, and a new transect is being set up in Lord's Wood where clear felling is planned for the future. There are other volunteers keen to take up transects. The areas and routes are currently in the planning stages.

Several events have been held to raise public awareness including two moth trapping nights with Dean Fenton and Robin Hemmings on hand to identify the moths. An Open Day was held at Queenswood Country Park in July, where Nicky Davies the Herefordshire Biodiversity Officer showed off her face-painting prowess. Robin also ran a trap at Bodenham for National Moth Night on 23rd September.

Information boards have been produced for the project and the Project Officer has attended shows and events with information about the project, and given talks at other events in Herefordshire. Advice has been given on management of bracken on Coppett Hill this summer to provide the optimum violet/bracken habitat for **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** next season.

Dave Grundy was contracted to carry out a **Common Fan-foot** survey in an area where it was known to occur in the past (Haugh Wood). Oak twigs have been snapped in suitable habitat to provide the ideal conditions for the larvae in late summer, when there will be a training day followed by a search of the wood. On 27th June, 13 traps were run all night in an attempt to attract the adult moths. No Common fan-foot were caught, but a comprehensive moth list was drawn up, including another UK BAP species.

NEXT YEAR… The project will continue to monitor key sites and build the skills of existing volunteers, recruit new volunteers, hold seminars and workshops for land owners, produce site dossiers and interpretation panels for key sites.

Dean Fenton adds

In previous years Herefordshire, which has only 50 BC members, has not offered many events apart from those at Haugh Wood. This year we had many non-members at events and discovered there are quite a few keen people out there, some of them primarily birdwatchers, who we hope to encourage to keep in touch next year.

We held the following additional public events:

- Ian Hart led a walk at Ewyas Harold common. Five of us saw how bracken and scrub are encroaching on the common. We felt it was not warm enough for the target **Dark Green Fritillary**, but I saw two as I drove away from the common in mid afternoon.
- A week later 10 people came to Bircher Common. Beryl Petters showed us her transect and we then searched a large area of the common without getting good views of any **Dark Green Fritillary**. We did though see a selection of other typical species.
- The moth night at Queenswood has a good attendance. Almost everyone stayed until midnight and got very enthusiastic. 30 species of moth were seen and a few bats detected.
- The following day I led two butterfly walks at Queenswood, attracting about a dozen people on each. I was able to show people all the common woodland species including **Silver Washed Fritillary**. Anna did face painting and lots of kids had a fun time. Robin brought a number of moths trapped the previous night.
- We ran a moth trap at Croft Castle on a poor night. Four hardy souls saw almost as many hornets as moths!

Sue Clarke teaching at Bircher Common, Herefordshire:

© Anna Jordan

Lilac Beauty

© Rosemary Winnall

A flying start for brownfield butterflies and moths in the Midlands

Jane Ellis

Exciting progress has been made since the launch in March this year of "Brownfield Sites of Importance for Butterflies and Moths in the West Midlands", a report based on the brownfield sites dossier. This report was a compilation of existing species records and other site information gathered with the help of Butterfly Conservation volunteers across the region and was a key output of the Regional Officer's EAF funded project which finished in March 2006.

The report could not have been produced without the tremendous input from volunteers and thanks go to them for spending time on some of our less attractive and sometimes intimidating local sites. Particular thanks go to Phil Parr, Mike Slater, Chris Johnson, Maurice Arnold, John Bryan, Dave Jackson, James Hill, Richard Southwell, Chris Johnson and Phil Thompson for their substantial help.

The report lists 134 sites across the West Midlands with information on the colony size, landownership and type and level of threat to the colonies on the site. The biggest threat to the sites visited was succession (52%) followed by development (17%). However, the process of compiling the report highlighted the fact that there are many brownfield sites in the West Midlands with potential to hold colonies of key species such as **Dingy Skipper**, **Grizzled Skipper, Green Hairstreak** and **Chalk Carpet** moth which have never been surveyed for butterflies and moths.

The report highlighted the need for better awareness of the importance of brownfield sites for declining Lepidoptera and the need for BC to work with developers and planners at an earlier stage of the planning process to ensure better outcomes for brownfield species. However, in order to do this we need more data on brownfield sites. We need to consider networks of sites at a landscape scale and the number of habitat patches needed at any one time.

Fortunately, funding from Esmee Fairbain and Countdown 2010 has enabled staff in the Midlands to start to implement some of the actions identified in the brownfields sites dossier in a number of brownfield landscape areas.

This stage of work commenced in April 2006 focusing on the following landscape areas: Southam Lias Quarries, Warwickshire, North Warwickshire brownfields, Black Country Brownfields (including Cannock and Stoke-on-Trent), Telford and Wrekin brownfields (Shropshire), Nottinghamshire / Derbyshire Coalfields and the Ketton Limestone area of Rutland.

Progress since April 2006

A new habitat and survey recording form for brownfields has helped BC to work effectively with volunteers to gather detailed information about new and existing sites. These forms are proving invaluable for prioritising effort and the information obtained from them will be used to develop a GIS database.

Jane has visited many of the sites in the key areas and has been thrilled at the opportunities that are out there.

One example is an 11-13 hectare site on former colliery land which is being restored to limestone meadow by Nottinghamshire County Council. Jane and Barry Prater of East Midlands Branch met with the Restoration Engineer and Ecologist and were invited to draw up plans of whatever features we wanted for **Dingy Skipper**! Hundreds of tonnes of crushed limestone, maerl, something called paper crumble (made from waste paper, inert and slightly alkaline it can be used to provide a rooting material) and a couple of bulldozers were already on site.

As this is being written a 300m south-facing bank of maerl and crushed limestone is being sown with Bird's-foot Trefoil. A broken hedgerow of hawthorn will be planted later in the season to provide further shelter. A series of trial plots with different substrates and seed mixes has also been established and will be monitored to determine which techniques give the best results. There are plans to work with the local community through Nottinghamshire County Council to do further planting and seeding, produce interpretation and to record the butterflies on the site.

Another example is the chance to work with the Groundwork Trust on the development of a Quarryman's footpath around the Hart's-hill quarries complex near Nuneaton in Warwickshire. The aims of the footpath are to raise awareness of the history of quarrying, local geology and impacts of quarrying on the area. Following a meeting with the project officer, BC is looking at opportunities to raise awareness of the importance of these quarries for **Dingy Skipper** through mentions in the project leaflet, a guided walk for the footpath launch in May. There is also the chance to create habitat corridors between the quarries where footpath maintenance can be adapted to benefit **Dingy Skipper** e.g by seeding Bird's-foot Trefoil and by scrub clearance.

A meeting of those with an influence over land management in the areas around the Blue Lias quarries near Southam, Warwickshire was held in August to discuss opportunities for managing, restoring and re-connecting sites in this area of huge importance for butterflies, moths and many other invertebrates. The Southam area has the only two sites for **Small Blue** in the West Midlands and the only site for **Chalk Carpet** moth in the whole of Warwickshire, as well as strong populations of **Grizzled Skipper**, **Green Hairstreak** and **Dingy Skipper**.

Attendees at the meeting included English Nature, Cemex, the Wildlife Trust and Warwickshire County ecologists. The day went well and generated a number of

actions to follow-up. A project proposal for the area will be produced from the meeting. A key outcome from the meeting is that Cemex are keen to be involved with management and restoration work that benefits key species on a number of their sites in this part of Warwickshire which include Nelson's Quarry, Southam Quarry and parts of Stockton Cutting.

Since the start of Countdown 2010 in April this year, four training events have been held within the Midlands involving over 60 individuals, looking at habitat assessment, management and survey for **Dingy Skipper**, **Grizzled Skipper**, **Chalk Carpet** and **Four-spotted**. The habitat assessment training event for **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak** at Cannock Chase has led to the discovery of 5 **Dingy Skipper** sites in the Cannock Chase District previously unknown to BC. A report has been sent to Staffordshire County Council with recommendations for management and habitat creation for three sites that they own in the Cannock Chase area.

Contact has also been made with The Coal Authority who own one of the newly discovered colony sites at Huntington. They are keen to work with BC to manage the site appropriately and to do some small scale habitat enhancement works. Hopefully, this collaboration will lead to positive outcomes at other coalfield sites across England and Wales.

The first three to six months of the Countdown 2010 project have been much about filling gaps in survey information for key species and determining potential opportunities to protect and where possible expand or link existing colonies. We are now starting to focus effort in areas which can be used to demonstrate good practice and where the project can make a real difference.

If you would like more information on the brownfields and butterflies project or perhaps you would like to help with some species survey work or habitat monitoring in one of the key areas then please contact Jane Ellis on 01788 510695 or email jellis@butterfly-conservation.org.

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.

Events diary

November

4th November (Saturday) - Moth Recording - Chaddesley Wood

Meet 16:00. Leaders: Mervyn Needham (01562 777461) and Alan Prior (0121 778 2973)

OS map 150 : Grid ref : SO914736

December/January

Brown Hairstreak egg counts around Grafton Wood

Sunday, 17th Dec, Sun 31st Dec (mulled wine and a mince pie on offer for everyone who finds an egg!) and Sun 21st Jan. Any additional dates Mike Williams will publish through the Brown Hairstreak ebulletin.

Meeting place for all is Grafton Flyford Church at 10.00 am. Contact Mike Williams.

Winter work days (all start at 10a.m.)

If you know of a butterfly or a site in trouble contact Trevor Bucknall on 01905-755757 - his team may be able to help.

Regular monthly days (same Sunday every month)

First Sunday - Monkwood NR, Worcs.

Meet at car park (SO803603). Leader: Paddy Harrison (01905-642523)

Second Sunday - Grafton Wood NR, Worcs.

Meet at Grafton Flyford Church (SO963557). Leader: John Tilt (01386-792458).

Third Sunday - Chaddesley Woods NNR

Meet at entrance to Jubilee Ride. Leader: Mervyn Needham (01562-777461)

Fourth Sunday - Trench Wood NR., Worcs.

Meet 10 am at car park (SO928589). Leader: Neil Maclean (01905-795381)

Update on Prees Heath

Stephen Lewis

Butterfly Conservation became the legal owners of Prees Heath Common Reserve on 30th May 2006. It's a 148 acre site lying in a triangle between the A49 and A41 trunk roads a couple of miles to the south of Whitchurch, and is the only place in the Midlands for the **Silver-studded Blue**. The other half of Prees Heath Common lies on the eastern side of the A41, and to date has not been sold. Funding for purchasing the reserve, employing a full-time project officer until 2010 and undertaking heathland/grassland restoration work has been provided by Grantscape and English Nature.

It was very much a case of 'hit the ground running' when I was appointed as Prees Heath Officer in July.

- **Priority No. 1** - Secure the site. Ditches were dug with a JCB around much of the perimeter of the site to keep unauthorised vehicles off. This has been done, and so far, although motorbikes continue to access the site, the travellers and fly-tippers have not been back on.
- **Priority No. 2** - Clear the rubbish from the site. Sadly, there was a huge quantity of domestic waste, builders' waste and wood imported onto the site, and much of this was on the old airfield runway which is SSSI land and a favourite spot for the **Silver-studded Blue** on account of the heather that grows there. BC West Midlands Branch organised a massive clear-up day on 8th July (see photo on back cover), and a further one was held on 9th September. On both days two JCBs, two large skips and around 20 heroic volunteers were deployed, and by the end of the second day the site had been transformed.
- **Priority No. 3** - The Ragwort. Much of the non-SSSI land on the site has been used for arable cultivation in recent years, not only destroying the heathland habitat and enriching the soil, but also leading to massive (and I mean massive) quantities of ragwort flowering this summer. Various neighbouring properties have horse pastures and a decision was made to cut the ragwort (there was far too much to hand-pull) on the non-SSSI land, but to hand pull it on the SSSI land, all before it seeded.

  Some people may think this was wrong given that ragwort is the larval host plant for the **Cinnabar moth**, which was unfortunately not present in enough numbers to eat the plants, and is a good nectar source for butterflies, but in reality we had little choice. A big challenge now is to restore these enriched areas to heathland/grassland, and expert advice is being sought on this at present.

In June and again in August the BBC came and did some filming on the reserve for the series 'Nature in Britain' presented by Alan Titchmarsh, due to be screened on BBC1 in the autumn of 2007. An early morning start enabled them to film **Silver-**

studded Blues freshly emerged and still attended by black ants as they pumped up their wings. A butterfly egg hunt, moth trapping, gorse clearance, bird watching and litter picking were some of the other activities filmed. The bits that don't end up on the cutting room floor will be featured in the regional slot at the end of the programme on heathland habitats.

Engaging with the Prees Heath commoners, local people and volunteers is an essential part of the project, and success depends on raising the profile of the reserve. Part of my role is to put in place arrangements for local people to look after the reserve when my contract ends.

20 people attended National Moth Night on the reserve and were delighted when **Merveille du Jour** appeared, and other events, such as a Fungi Foray on 14th October and a Dawn Chorus Walk in the spring, will be held. A volunteer work party programme for the next three months has been drawn up. Contact is being made with local schools to get them involved. A grand opening of the reserve is being planned for summer 2007, and this should be a big local event. Interpreting the site will also see local people getting involved, and already a lot of information about the reserve and what's going on has been made available at a website run by a keen amateur, www.woodlanereserve.co.uk

There is a lot more I could write about what's happening, but I want to finish with a vote of thanks to both the officers and members of the BC West Midlands Branch for all they have done over many, many years and in the face of many setbacks to finally secure the reserve for generations to come.

Stephen Lewis,

Prees Heath Officer

Butterfly Conservation,

193 Abbey Foregate,

Shrewsbury, SY2 6AH

Tel/Fax: 01743 340721, Mobile: 07900 886809

email: slewis@butterfly-conservation.org

Prees Heath Common Reserve
Volunteer Work Parties

Help to restore Prees Heath to heathland and grassland for the benefit of wildlife and for people to enjoy quiet recreation, and be part of this long-term high profile project. Enjoy a day in the open air.

Date	Activity	Location
Wednesday 11th October	Access work/litter clearance	Near Warren House
Saturday 28th October ('Make a Difference Day')	Scrub clearance	Near access track
Wednesday 8th November	Scrub clearance	Runway
Sunday 19th November	Sign installation & litter clearance	Access track & towards grain stores
Wednesday 6th December	Scrub clearance	Towards grain stores
Saturday 16th December	Scrub clearance	Runway

Please note:

- All work parties start at 10.30am and finish at 4.00pm.
- Come for half a day or all day, as you wish.
- No previous experience required - you will be shown how to use the hand tools.
- Work at your own pace.
- Meet on the access track off the A49 opposite the Steel Heath turning.
- Wear suitable clothing and footwear.
- Bring a packed lunch and a drink.
- All tools and gloves are provided.
- Let me know if you need a lift - I will help if I can.

Contact Stephen Lewis, Prees Heath Warden, if you would like to come (contact details on previous page).

GrantScape funding for the environment

ENGLISH NATURE

Spring Meeting

Philip Hopson

21 people attended this meeting on 13th May at Woolhope, Herefordshire, but only a few Herefordshire members; the majority were from the West Midlands conurbation. After a brief introduction from the chairman, we were introduced to Anna Jordan, the branch's Herefordshire Woodlands Project Officer. Anna made a short presentation on "Celebrating and conserving the butterflies and moths of Herefordshire." Anna informed us that her remit included:

- Local, county monitoring of Herefordshire butterflies and moths.
- Providing and supporting guidance for local volunteers in habitat management.
- To encourage local land owners in land management beneficial to Lepidoptera.
- Monitoring **Argent and Sable**, **Common Fanfoot** and **Drab Looper**, **Pearl-Bordered Fritillary** and **Wood White** in the county. BC factsheets on these species were provided for our edification and Anna asked for anyone interested, particularly in habitat management, to approach her and she would be more than willing to share her expertise.

Our next presenter was Kate Wollen, Wildlife Ranger for the Forestry Commission. Again, a brief presentation by Kate on conservation work and habitat management for the **Pearl Bordered Fritillar**y within Herefordshire. A segment from Jeff Andrews on ongoing habitat management work within Haugh Wood was included.

After a refreshment break, the majority of us accompanied host, Mark O'Brien to view Siege Wood, to search for **Wood Whites**. The weather outlook had not been impressive, however, on arrival at the wood, it gave rise to some optimism as it was fairly warm with hazy, sunny periods. The site, Ma\rk told us, held populations of **Wood White**, Glow worms and Dormice. We were on site for around half an hour and managed just a solitary **Wood White** laboriously flying around - possibly a female searching out suitable Bitter Vetch on which to lay.

Next, a short walk to a private piece of woodland, owned by Mark himself and close to Herefordshire N.T. Lea and Pagets Wood site. Mark kindly showed us around his woodland, explaining his management regime.and the expected benefits as a result. The weather was overcast at this point, so no butterflies were seen, but an opportunity to view practical habitat management work, undertaken by a landowner, that will have positive benefits for wildlife along with commercial considerations. This was a wood in transition.

Early afternoon saw us at Haugh Wood (south), by which time, we had sunny periods and it was sporadically very warm. The swarm of midges were a mild irritation, as we observed freshly-emerged **Pearl Bordered Fritillaries** paying short nectar-

ing visits whilst **Wood Whites** moved along the ride in their own doggedly determined way.

Various micro moths were "captured" and passed around for us to check out and admire their markings and there was much mirth as to how the **Drab Looper** acquired its common name. A splendid Slow worm was an added bonus.

All in all, a pleasant day - the indoor event short enough to be informative and interesting with the field trip being surprisingly good in spite of not being completely ideal in terms of the weather.

Special thanks to Anna Jordan, Kath Wollen, Jeff Andrews for their individual inputs; to Dean Fenton (Herefordshire county leader), for organizing the day. In particular, a vote of thanks to Mark O'Brien for taking the time to lead the field trip and for his obvious enthusiasm in what he hopes to achieve as a result of his management work.

The following were seen on the day at the two sites:

Siege Wood: Speckled Yellow moth (numerous), Treble-Barred moth, Green Veined White, Wood White (singleton), Speckled Wood.

Haugh Wood (south): Speckled Yellow moth, Drab Looper moth (4), Micropterix Calthella, Albonia Geoffrella, Slow Shield Bug, Carder Bee, Slow worm, Holly Blue (singleton), Red Admiral (singleton), Green Veined White (singleton), Pearl Bordered Fritillary (5), Wood White (11), Twenty Plume moth

Land of the “Meadow Blue”

Neil Thompson

The second week of the Branch/Butterfly Conservation Europe trip to Hungary started for some of us with the regulation early morning minibus trip to the airport. However, arrangements proceeded smoothly and by lunchtime we were being met at Budapest airport by Gabor and the rest of the team, who had already completed the Week 1 assignment. We made a swift stop in Budapest at a traditional pancake restaurant for lunch before heading south westwards towards our destination of Örség (pronounced Ur-sheg) National Park.

On arrival at Örség we had a quick introduction to our accommodation before returning the several kilometres to the Park Headquarters for dinner. The food here was to prove to be one of the highlights of the trip - one of the ladies from the village had been drafted in to cook for us and she was very ably assisted by her two young daughters as waitresses.

The work that was planned for us fell into two broad categories, one of general lepidoptera recording and one of specific research work on Maculinea species. The general recording was required in order to provide a better picture of the butterfly and moth fauna of Örség National Park. The Maculinea work involved providing assistance to two researchers from the Hungarian Natural History Museum; Péter was investigating the use of edge habitats while Noémi was investigating general habitat patch usage.

Three Maculinea species are common in Örség, **Alcon Blue**, **Scarce Large Blue** and **Dusky Large Blue**. **Large Blue** itself is reportedly present but very uncommon - we saw only small amounts of the larval food plant. **Alcon Blue** had largely finished by the time we arrived and only a few individuals were seen, but the eggs were almost impossible to miss when Marsh Gentians were present. What amazed us most of all though was the sheer number of meadows containing Salad Burnet, the larval food plant of both the **Scarce** and **Dusky Large Blues**. The meadows went on for miles, interspersed by blocks of woodland, cultivated fields, streams or villages. And everywhere we looked there were **Scarce** and **Dusky Large Blues**, as ubiquitous as the **Meadow Brown** here, they are truly Örség's “Meadow Blues”.

As we were to find, the two large Blues seemed to have a preference for edge habitat, hence Péter's research work. He had 50 metre fixed transects in a number of different meadows, looking at both "soft" and "hard" edges. Soft edges are ones the butterflies can easily traverse, such as the boundary with a road, hard ones they cannot, such as tall woodland. Transects were carried out at both five and 15 metres from the boundary itself. Péter's work is not yet complete, but we could see that the **Dusky Large Blue** seemed to prefer the edges, particularly shady ones, even more than the **Scarce Large Blue**.

The preference for edge habitat was illustrated on many occasions when we found both species on roadside verges, often in greater numbers than in the fields!

One of the perceived problems with the Maculinea species' long term survival prospects at Örség is that there are almost no farm animals now and so the need for hay has disappeared. The Salad Burnet meadows were the traditional hay meadows, traditionally cut in May and September. This was perfectly timed for large Blue egg laying, which mostly occurs in early August into the flower heads of Salad Burnet. After the second moult the larvae drop to the ground and are taken into ants' nests, where they are safe from the autumn hay cut. The situation is not quite that bad however, as there is a (partly obeyed) government regulation that all meadows have to be cut at least once a year, although the timing is unspecified.

We saw evidence of scrub encroachment and, worst of all, the mass invasion of some meadows by Canadian Golden Rod, a serious alien problem weed in many parts of Hungary. Having said that we saw large Blues in meadows cut only a few weeks beforehand, drawn in by the odd Salad Burnet flower, and one meadow, which a neighbour informed us hadn't been cut for at least 18 years, was full of large Blues. The butterflies are clearly mobile and so will be able to respond quickly if the right conditions are created.

Noémi was researching the usage of meadows by the large Blues, counting their numbers on fixed length (but not fixed route) transects, assessing their food plant density and the level of scrub encroachment and Golden Rod invasion. Again, her work is not yet complete.

The meadows of Örség also hold significant populations of other threatened European butterflies, for example **Large Copper**, **Marsh Fritillary** and **Large Chequered Skipper**. And we recorded 119 macro moth species in the week, almost all just around our accommodation, an impressive total! So there is much in Örség to cherish, protect and hopefully enhance. We hope that our efforts will begin that process and the Land of the “Meadow Blue” will survive for generations to come.

P.S. If you'd like to read the more detailed, formal report we made for the Park authorities, refer to the branch website.

Painted Lady

© Patrick Clement

Marbled White

© Patrick Clement

Hungary Trip Week 2

Nick and Maike Williams

A small group of new arrivals were picked up from Budapest Airport and whisked off ... to the other side of the airport to get a glimpse of our first new species for the trip, a Suslik, a European Ground Squirrel. After skirting around the capital city for a while, we were soon on our way south westwards to Örség.

A brief and rather sultry walkabout in the Varpalota uplands gave many of us our first east European butterfly species - **Hermit**, **Lesser Clouded Yellow**, **Mountain Small White**, and **Large Copper** being the highlights here.

We found the accommodation at Keseruszer heavily populated with school children on their summer camp, so the meals were provided in the National Park Centre a few miles away in Oriszentpeter. Next morning, our Hungarian lepidopterist, Szafi, explained the aims and objectives for the group, showing us the two key species involved, **Scarce Large Blue** and **Dusky Large Blue**, and introducing Peter and Neomi, two PhD students who had been carrying out research into these species for the last two years. They explained their work and the methods used, so we had an idea what we were supposed to be doing.

It was still cloudy and cool, so the whole group set off for a site in the middle of the three valleys we would be working in. As the day began to warm up, a succession of species either rare or unknown in Britain began to appear - **Brown Hairstreak**, **Duke of Burgundy**, **Wood White**, the two target Blues, **Common Glider** and many more. When Peter and Neomi called in to collect some of the group to go transecting, a small group remained behind to continue more generalised recording. In about four hours they had totted up 49 species! By the end of the week this had extended to 72 species.

Peter's group went off in his car to the Szentgyorgy valley to record the **Scarce** and **Dusky Large Blues** in transects parallel to either 'soft' or 'hard edges' to the meadows; a soft edge could be a track or road dividing the different patches of ground whereas a hard edge meant the band of trees along the steam course - in other words a barrier to dispersal. The transects were 20m long, parallel and close to the edge of the patch and again 15m further into the meadow. Both hard and soft edges were recorded in each meadow and also temperature, humidity and wind speed for each transect.

In addition Peter counted the number of host plants within a meter of the transect line.

Neomi's group also went off to do transects, but on a rather different basis. Hers were much longer, with the number of steps calculated from the patch size and the individual recorder's average stride. Thus a zigzag route across the area to be recorded might be several hundred paces long - with firm instructions to record only

Large Blues. This was difficult when at every other step something would flutter by that you desperately wanted to identify. Big floppy **Dryads**, Fritillaries both large and small which might prove to be **Dark Green**, **Silver Washed** or **High Brown** or, alternatively, **Heath Fritillary** or **Nickerl's Fritillary**.

Later in the week, when the weather was not good enough for the recording described above, we also helped Neomi with vegetation recording; numbers of food plants (Greater Burnet) within a metre of random transects, average food plant height, average general vegetation height and the proportion of the patch invaded by Golden rod, a seriously invasive weed in Hungary. For the first few days the weather continued to be just as hot as it had been in England, low to mid 30's Centigrade, but with high humidity to boot. But for Ibolya's excellent and plentiful food some of us might have been in danger of shedding a few pounds!

On the Monday a new general recording group set off in Simon's camper van for the woods to the west to see how the grassland patches within extensive forest areas compared to the other meadows. These, too, were mostly uncut and some of them, like some of the valley meadows, had obviously not been cut for years. So it was surprising how little succession had taken place in terms of tree and shrub species spreading into the open areas. Nonetheless, the damper areas had Cross Gentians - mostly bearing the little white specks of **Alcon Blue** eggs and, eventually, one or two adults of this third Maculinea species were found. A dryer, open patch in the forest close to an old hut yielded **Woodland Grayling**, **Essex Skipper**, **Small Pearl-bordered**, **Heath**, **Nickerl's**, **Silver Washed** and **Dark Green Fritillaries**.

Overnight John and Tony ran a moth trap most nights, clocking up over 200 species during Week Two.

Most of the group also went off exploring the area around the accommodation, some visited the nearby honey farm and, on a different day, the local potteries.

The last couple of days were markedly cooler and cloudier so, while a few of us helped with vegetation recording, others were busy working on the report, interviewing Szafi and Gabor or filming the rather slower-moving butterflies.

On the Thursday we all gathered in the hall for the report to be presented to the Deputy Director of the National Park, with Szafi and Gabor translating where necessary. We can only hope that it will be read and taken into consideration by those involved in deciding the future course for Örség National Park. Discussions following Mike Williams' introduction centred on the vital need for management of the meadows to be maintained or restored and the impossibility of building up eco-tourism without the essential biodiversity (still impressive despite the problems) being conserved and actively managed. Cross-border cooperation, in the Örség case, with partners in Slovenia, was also suggested. Gabor's colleague and Ecotours partner, Boracs, confirmed next day in Budapest that this was likely to be the key to unlocking additional funding form the EU to support the National Parks in Hungary.

We were slightly stunned to be told that the branch visit to Aggtelek had already resulted in some areas of that National Park being removed from the 'For Sale' list and that one of their rangers had resorted to buying land to give back to the National Park. I wondered how long it would be before that land was on sale again!

The last day was taken up with travelling back to the outskirts of Budapest after dropping Szafi off at a suspiciously deserted-looking train station. We presume that a train did indeed take him home!

Branch and friends' visit to Mull 2006

Chris Johnson

It is now Friday the 23rd June and we have packed our bags ready for our visit to Mull. After having such a wonderful time in Kingussie the year before, we are looking forward to not only experiencing Mull but also meeting up with the very good friends we made in Kingussie.

Mike Williams, Neil and Corinna Gregory are the organisers and have planned a long weekend of wildlife adventure.

After a long drive up (some clever people decided to fly up and hire a mini bus!), we met up at Oban for the 4.00pm ferry crossing. There were 27 in the party, all keen, knowledgeable enthusiasts.

Our ferry trip over to Mull was full of anticipation. Eyes peeled were the order for the crossing. Whales, Dolphins, Seals and any other sea creatures were on our checklist. Nothing was seen, but that wasn't going to dampen our great expectations.

The short ferry crossing to Craignure and a rather hairy drive along a tarmac road, single-track in places, took us to Balamory, sorry Tobermory. The two B & B places our organisers had booked were perfect and overlooking the harbour. After we had unpacked and changed we all met up at; you guessed it, a pub for our evening meal.

Saturday morning now and our trip to the RSPB hide to view the White-tailed Sea Eagles at one of their nests were on the agenda. We met the warden and he gave an excellent talk about their aims and plans to increase the population of such a magnificent bird. We all felt very privileged to be there and pleased to hear this success story. Then we saw the male Sea Eagle; he was perched on a nearby conifer looking as though he hadn't a care in the world. Some of the ladies in the group said "a typical male". About half a mile to the left was the female sitting on the nest. Out came the cameras, zoom lenses, stands and all the paraphernalia that goes with taking the "perfect image". A very pleasant morning was had by all.

In the afternoon we went to Calgary bay to look for the Transparent Burnet moth. We found hundreds of this rare moth on the hillside looking over the bay. It must

have looked very odd to the locals seeing people crawling over the hill shouting "one here" and "four over here".

The morning breakfast was intermingled with moth ID that was supervised by Neil and Corinna's young son Oliver. Neil had brought his moth trap so the catch the night before was potted and put on display for viewing at breakfast time.

Today, Sunday, was Whale watching! The sea was placid, the weather perfect and the Captain and crew were very optimistic about our sighting a sea creature. Every member of the group had their bins trained on the seas to win the Mars bar that was pinned to the mast. A couple of hours into the four hour trip we still had not seen anything and the bins were hanging round our necks. Neither the Captain nor the crew could understand why nothing had been seen. So to improve the day he took us near a rock face with a nest of Peregrine Falcon young. This unexpected tonic boosted our morale and out came the cameras. Our final treat was to see Common seals and Grey seals just before we entered Tobermory harbour. They were a delight to see and watching them darting through the water were amazing. Although no basking sharks, any whales, porpoises or dolphins were seen we had a lovely boat trip and saw parts of Mull not normally seen. One final memory of the boat trip is young Oliver kitted out with a small lifebelt, shorts, sunglasses and a hat.

Monday and the long weekend was nearly over, for most of us anyway. Today, again after a terrific cooked breakfast with the tastiest black pudding I have ever eaten, it was a visit to the island of Ulva. Mainly a butterfly and moth day searching for the **Slender Scotch** and **Transparent Burnet**, **Marsh Fritillary**, **Large Heath** and **Argent and Sable**. To get to the island is quite a long drive from Tobermory and a few minutes ferry ride in an amphibious vehicle. Our first stop, on the island, was a welcome cup of tea and a piece a home made cake, at the Tea and Cake shop. Yum! Yum! After tea we started our search and immediately one of our party found the **Marsh Fritillary**. What a splendid start! We then had a very pleasant walk following a path that covered a fair part of the island. The path in some cases was quite steep and a little dangerous with loose stones and wet areas. We managed to see all our targets except Large Heath. I am sure we did see some but were not able to net to confirm. We did manage to see **Dark Green Fritillary**. It was on this island that two of the party saw the illusive Otter.

Every member of the party was determined to see an Otter during our stay on Mull. These two lucky people were the only ones to see any. The other "must see" were the Golden Eagles. Again only a small number of the party saw these birds. Sadly, I was not one of them.

Today is Tuesday and back home after a lovely weekend. Hang on a minute, we are staying a few extra days on this beautiful, unspoilt island. Yippee! . Two other couples were able to stay a bit longer too and we met up in the evenings for dinner. It was still sad to see the main party leave as we had made some more good friends.

On our extra few days we ashamedly did the tourist bit. One of the best trips was to Staffa Island. A really magical place with its amazing rock formations and birdlife which include Puffins. Amazingly, I discovered a colony of **Common Blue** butterflies on the island. Mull and its islands are fascinating and I would recommend everyone must go there at least once.

My gratitude to Mike, Neil and Corinna for organising such a wonderful time and my thanks to all the lovely people in the party.

Footnote A note of congratulations on the birth of Neil & Corinna's daughter, Flora Isla on 9th October. Corinna was expecting when we were all in Mull so I am sure people in the party would be interested to know.

A Question of Taste

Richard Southwell

I was sent away to school in north Nottingham back in the sixties and looked forward to my parents coming up to see me from their home in Surrey once a term; or was it really the roast beef Sunday lunch? We invariably went to The Old Bell at Barnby Moor a very traditional coaching inn on the original A1 route. Well if the inn was traditional the owner certainly wasn't. He was a Dutch Jew and delighted in telling my father that he financed the business by stealing gold off the Nazis who had in turn reclaimed it from tooth fillings in the extermination camps during the Second World War. He used his ill-gotten gains to good use.

Yes, the bedrooms were kitted out to top London standards, but the real star was the Sunday roast beef. The noblesse oblige came from as far as Sheffield to partake and this during a time when the M1 only went as far as Leicester. The meat had a taste you only dream of these days whilst its excellence was of the highest even then, but why?

It was not by chance. He had his own herd, the heifers were fed on his own land, and he used a local abattoir but then hung the carcasses in a suitable outbuilding and undertook the butchering himself. North Notts is not renowned for its grasslands compared to Hereford and East Scotland but he absolutely insisted his cattle grazed on unimproved meadows that where full of herbs and flowers. He believed buttercups gave that extra sweetness to his meat. How could anyone disagree?

Looking at things now he was a man before his time and I compare his stance against some very concerning research findings that have just been published. Scientists have compared the nutritional value of today's 'natural' foods with those applying in 1940. It is disturbing reading. You would need to eat four oranges today to get the same amount of vitamin C compared to one in 1940. There is 57% less calcium in streaky bacon, 45% less magnesium in stilton and 55% less iron in rump steak. There is even more recent evidence emerging that pesticides look as though they are a causative of cancer. It's enough to make you want to start smoking!

What has all this got to do with conservation? In my opinion, everything. There used to be rotational agriculture, meadows were not ploughed up and re-seeded with sterile rye grass and when hedges were cut it was done by hand. I am not asking to turn back the clock, but I am suggesting that there are consequences to our activities in the countryside that need to be changed. Clearly one way of doing this is championing the cause of biodiversity and our experts based at Lulworth, and around the Isles, are doing a superb job at lobbying government. For us it is different, we could challenge planning consents, or we could approach local authorities and property developers or farmers directly but our 'natural British reserve' probably stops most of us making such approaches.

However, do consider telling your meat and vegetable supplier, whether they be Tesco or the local shop, if something just doesn't taste. Unfortunately, any reader under 50 years old is most unlikely to know what the 'real' taste of an egg or a chicken is. The consequence of our insistence for taste will be one of the best commercial influences for improvement of the habitat for our moths and butterflies. If we do the days of reinvigorating tired out soils through the use of chemical fertilisers, the over-use of herbicides and pesticides will be things of the past. France has better biodiversity than we do in the UK, they probably always did, but their shoppers are renowned for being more picky and opinionated than us. It can and does happen in the UK, just ask Mike Southall a farmer who is also on our committee. He has proved these hopes and views are not 'pie in the sky'. Earlier this year I also fortuitously met a director of AC Neilsen, one of the most respected market research companies in the world. One of his main accounts is a major supermarket chain. He has read this article and reacted positively but also stated we have an uphill battle to bring about change.

I suggest there is nothing like enlightened self-interest to improve the habitat for our biodiversity. Can I dream you, and your friends, will all send letters to the Chief Executives and Chairmen of our major retail chains? I hope you will, their influence is just as great as the Brussels bureaucrats. It will have an affect if enough of us write. Conservation is not just about recording species or wildlife research projects. It is also about personal commitment to bringing change in attitudes in a positive 'can-do' way, in particular with individuals who commercially influence our society.

Miscellany

Sycamore moths

Mike Williams sent me a photo of the Sycamore moth caterpillar found at his son Robert's school back in August. What is rather extraordinary for such a rare moth is that in late September another was seen and photographed this time by his daughter Emma on the Malvern Hills. Both proved new 10km square records. As he says, it does seem a bit of a coincidence for two members of the same family to find the moth within a short period of time in two widely differing places. He would also be interested in finding out whether this has been a particularly good year for the Sycamore and whether there are any other records out there. Email Mike with details.

Errata

In issue 63 the article *Getting to Grips with Grizzled Skipper* gave Baggeridge Country Park as a site for this skipper. This is incorrect and should have referred to **Dingy Skipper**; **Grizzled Skipper** does not occur at this site.

In issue 64 the article on Emma Hutchinson referred to Emma discovering that the caterpillars were influenced by light factors - this should have been credited to Soren Mylin.

Printer cartridges appeal

Our membership currently stands around the 800 member mark and growing. Of those how many would you guess owns or has access to a computer? 75 %? 90%?

Well, what ever the figure, those of us who have one at home could help our cause financially. I personally, get through 2-3 ink jet cartridges every year and for West Midlands Butterfly Conservation, that would mean £6 going in to our coffers. I have set up an account with a recycling firm who pays better rates than the average company out there. So next time you change your cartridge, don't bin it, but put it in to an envelope and send in to me and I'll bank it.

To put in to perspective how much difference one cartridge would make to our very strained resources, did you know, that of your yearly subscription fee, only £6 makes its way back to your own branch? A year's supply of empty cartridges would mean you doubling your local financial contribution.

I hope the postman starts complaining about the bulky parcels. Please send to :

John Bryan, 15 Patrick Place, Brinkley Ford, Staffs ST8 7RF

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)
Vice-chairman	David Jackson jacksongrus@btinternet.com 11 Hyperion Drive, Penn, Wolverhampton WV4 5QW	01902-344716
Secretary	Vacant	
Treasurer/ secretary	Andy Littley andylittley@supanet.com Cherrywood, Brake Lane, Hagley, Stourbridge DY8 2XW	01562 887117
Regional Development Officers:		
Dr. Jenny Joy	joy.croft@btinternet.com The Croft, off Haygate Rd, Wellington, Telford TF1 2BW	01952-245684
Jane Ellis	jellis@butterfly-conservation.org 15 Morrison Park Road, West Haddon, Northants NN6 7BJ	01788 510695
Research/training	John Dover, jdover@nymph.demon.co.uk	01789-299288
Recorder & Webmaster	Nigel Stone Njstone@hotmail.com 8 Grove Lane, Keresley End, Coventry CV7 8PN	02476-335189
Transects	John Tilt (see below)	
Brown Hairstreak Champion	Mike Williams mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk 2 Dewberry Close, Stourport, Worcs DY13 8TB	01299-824860
Reserve managers:		
Grafton Wood	John Tilt John.tilt2@btopenworld.com 9 Meadow Close, Flyford Flavell, WR7 4DE	01386-792458
Monkwood	Paddy Harrison Moorcroft Barn, Sinton Green, Hallow WR2 6NW	01905-641523
Trench Wood	Neil McLean 10 Hammond Close, Droitwich WR9 7SZ	01905-795381
Conservation officers: (for Shropshire see Jenny Joy, above)		
Worcs.	Trevor Bucknall t.bucknall@ntlworld.com 26 Vine Street, Northwick, Worcester WR3 7DY	01905-755757
Herefords.	Ian Hart yellowrattle4@aol.com Laurel Cottage, Newton St. Margarets, Hereford HR2 0QN	01981 510259
Moth officers:		
Mike Southall (Worcs.)	Michael_southall58@hotmail.co.uk Wells Cottage, Pepwell Lane, Crossway Green, Stourport, DY13 9SN	01299 251467

The great Prees Heath clear up

© Mike Williams