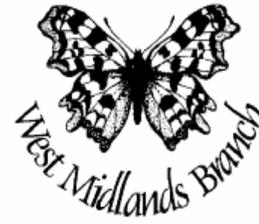


The Comma



No. 67, Spring 2007



Lesser Swallow Prominent Photo: © Patrick Clement

This issue includes:

- New survey initiative
- Worcestershire heathlands
- Summer event listings
- Disease resistant Elm trees
- White-letter Hairstreaks
- Shropshire BC group
- Regional Officers' reports
- Global warming

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

Registered charity ... No. 254937



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BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION
COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
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REGISTERED IN ENGLAND No. 2206468 REGISTERED CHARITY No. 254937

Editorial

This issue features a big new survey initiative from Dave Jackson. The enclosed maps are for use with this. Rob Thorne reports on his searches for **White-letter Hairstreak** in Shropshire. Mike Southall and John Bryan keep up their record of contributing regularly to the magazine. Thanks to all who have provided articles and photographs for this issue.

This issue lists all events planned for the summer. If you've never attended one, why not make 2007 the year you try it?

The branch website is <http://www.westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.org.uk>. It has a lot of information including past newsletters.

The deadline for contributions to the next issue is 7th October 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, but pictures must be free of copyright restrictions.

The address for contributions is:

Dean Fenton (dean.fenton@malvern.com)

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

Chairman's Notes

Richard Southwell

In the last newsletter I made reference to this being the year for fun. First evidence for this is in our events programme. There are many new locations and many new names leading events. Do support those people who have been prepared to commit by attending these. I must make special reference to Kay and Harry Downes, who are opening up their smallholding in Clee Hills on two occasions, and in addition laying on a spread of food and drinks to attendees. You should see rare butterflies if the weather is kind, but there will also be much to offer for those interested in plants and dragonflies.

Secondly, we are making a special push to encourage recording, another pleasurable activity that can be done alone or in company. Dave Jackson's article gives a focus to these activities. The maps show what might be waiting to be discovered in your area. The results, assuming enough of you participate, will also inform the debate as to whether the changing weather patterns that allow the parasitic fly of the **Small Tortoiseshell** to spread are now affecting our territory. Last year abundance was down in South Worcestershire but was normal in Shropshire and Staffordshire. We need to know.

The brownfield initiative started in the West Midlands after the Millennium Atlas, which not only confirmed the decline of species such as **Grizzled** and **Dingy Skipper** but also how they were successfully hanging on in urban and brownfield sites. Now it's your turn to make the discoveries. Don't ever assume we know it all, we don't.

Teamwork also brings its rewards. In our patch we have 12 landscape scale projects that our regional officers are required to develop under the Countdown 2010 scheme. It has been agreed that we will assist them on this project and at the time of writing we are identifying Landscape Champions who will build up their teams of local members prepared to assist. The motto in this is 'a problem shared is a problem halved'. Get in touch with Dave Jackson or me if you want to get involved in any of the following:

Oswestry Uplands, North Shropshire & Stafford Meres & Mosses, South Shropshire Metal Mines, Telford & Wrekin Brownfields, Cannock Chase, South Shropshire Wet Flushes & Rush Pasture, Wyre Forest, Black Country Brownfields, South Shropshire & North Hereford Woodlands, Hereford Commons, Forest of Feckenham and finally Malvern Hills.

However, conservation initiatives do not just occur here. Riding on the back of our involvement with St Modwen Properties PLC, two new projects have already started in the Stoke and Long Marston areas with the support of local members. A great many thanks for your time and commitment. In passing, do get a copy of their Annual Report where there is mention of this project. Surely

they must be the first quoted company to have a picture of the **Green Hairstreak** in their report? A sign of changing times which again shows how conservation must move with them or run the risk of withering on the vine. The new buzz words are 'carbon-footprint' and 'ethical investment', which our landscaping recommendations have given to St Modwen.

Trevor Bucknall also is developing a long-term project to re-establish a habitat corridor linking Wyre Forest to the Malverns through such places as Abberley and Alfrick. Of course if anyone can lay their hands on the odd £1million for this cause I am sure Trevor won't have too many grey hairs by the time it is completed!

My reference to the possibility of forming a Landowners Club seems to have hit a chord. At least ten members have come forward who want to share concerns, ideas and information about improving habitat for butterflies and moths. I do hope you gain from this but do remember to pick up the phone to get the show on the road. Please also let other landowners know of this initiative.

Anna Jordan is now on maternity leave and we wish her prospective twins all the best and also Bernadette Noake who is taking on her role in the interim.

Come on, this is the year to get stuck in. Have a great season to all of you.

Prees Heath opening

All members are invited to the official opening of the reserve this summer. This will be held in late June/early July to coincide with the main flight period of the **Silver-studded Blue** butterfly.

We cannot confirm the exact date yet, but it will be advertised on the branch website when known. If you cannot access the web but want to attend, phone Stephen Lewis (07900 886809) for details any time after June 10th.

Pick n' mix - the fun way to record

David Jackson

It appears that I am not the only enthusiast to have recorded a **Red Admiral** sunbathing in mid-February this year – the butterfly not me that is!

Sometime during the past winter, if we can consider it to really have been a winter, I discussed with Richard Southwell the possibility of targeting a single species in each West Midlands county for recording, with the intention that over the next five years, Branch members could become involved in charting the ups and downs of certain species across the whole region (outside the extremely valuable transect walked areas).

Richard asked me to consider expanding the range of species and to include some day flying moths so that Branch members could pick n' match the species listed below, some of which may or may not occur within your county

boundaries. This new style recording initiative is open to all Branch members, hardened past recorders and newcomers, whatever your level of expertise. I hope the pick n'mix selection below will give you the encouragement to go out and make new discoveries.

To help with the choice of species you might wish to concentrate on, Richard Fox from BC Head Office has kindly supplied distribution dot maps representing records for the period 2000 to 2005, submitted by Branch volunteer recorders – that's you and your predecessors.

A belated BIG THANKS for your past efforts. Please use the recording sheet enclosed and continue to record as many species as possible that are on the list. There is, however, a very serious side to our new recording initiative.

Butterflies as Key Biodiversity Indicators

The *State of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* covering 2000 to 2004 highlighted dramatic downward trends in most of our habitat specialist resident butterfly species populations. This important document proposed each species to varying levels of UK Biodiversity Action Plan Status. This document is now superseded by *The State of Britain's Butterflies 2007*. The Government just had to sit up and take notice at the alarming rates of decline of some species affected by both habitat loss and climate change.

Thankfully they did. You may recall the recent article *Butterflies Point the Way* (Spring 2007 edition of *Butterfly* magazine), as for the past ten years BC has been lobbying the Government for the adoption of butterflies as governmental indicators of climate change.

We have picked 12 target butterfly species, some of which have specific habitat requirements, together with a few day flying moths, for you to match on your county distribution maps, and have set a challenge to monitor their status, and better still locate new colonies.

Here is how you can play your part in the continuation of recording species to assist BC's efforts to produce meaningful data, which will form part of the information process to be presented to Government in the coming years.

We should not be complacent by excluding species not listed in the UK BAP as yet; the fortunes of all our butterflies will either go up or down with the anticipated changes to our climate.

Ironically, prolonged periods of hot weather can spell doom for butterflies and moths if the caterpillar's food-plants wither and die off at the crucial times before or during the larval stages, or if nectar sources are in short supply for the adults.

I understand that when Tony Blair finally gives up office, he will go on a lecture circuit, and, like Al Gore, Mr Blair intends to talk about climate change. I hope someone at Head Office sends him a membership form!

I would recommend *The State of Britain's Butterflies 2007*, which can be freely downloaded from the BC website. The comment on the decline of each species is taken from that document.

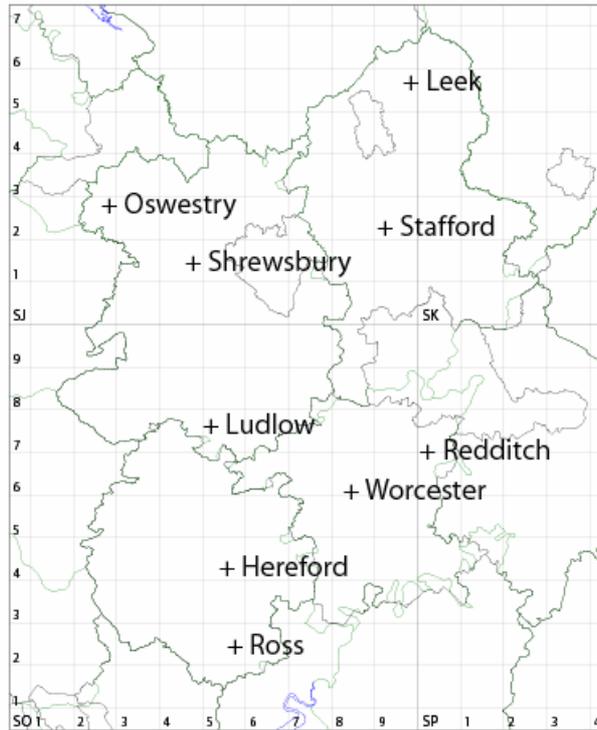
A trick I have taught myself over the past few years is to look for the favoured food plant or nectar source of a butterfly as you go.

Butterflies

Please see the enclosed distribution dot maps and, if possible, concentrate your efforts on the gap areas. (I know they're not all easy to see.)

- Purple dot = recorded in both 1995-99 and 2000-05.
- Blue dot = recorded in 1995-99 only.
- Orange dot = recorded in 2000-05 only.

The map below shows where some towns are to help you use the dot maps:



Notes:

- AFP = Average flight period (some species can have two to three broods in favourable years).
- The maps show part of Warwickshire as well as this was part of the BC data set and I could not easily remove it (ed.).

Dingy Skipper – Severe decline in range.

AFP: Mid May to late June. It likes brownfield sites, rough ground, old mine workings, etc. The caterpillar's preferred food-plant is Common Bird's-foot trefoil.

Our Branch may be national trend setters in recording this species, as more new locations have been added in north Staffordshire and beyond. Local groups are already putting conservation measures into action.

Stephen Lewis (Prees Heath Reserve Warden) is majoring on this species in the Telford area – surely we can push the boundaries and find more sites? There are additional projects based on St Modwen Properties PLC sites in Stoke and LCP Properties sites in Burntwood and Dudley.

Grizzled Skipper – Severe decline in range and abundance.

AFP: early May to late June. The favoured food plants include Agrimony, Creeping Cinquefoil and Wild Strawberry growing on bare ground. The species can be found along disused railway lines and woodland edges and in certain well-vegetated quarries.

A major project is already underway in South Worcester based on the railway lines near Honeybourne, extending to the old Long Marston MOD site in Warwickshire. Oswestry Uplands is another major area needing records and some historic records in Staffordshire need checking out. Please also search on suitable habitat between Abberley Hills and the Malverns in Worcester.

Wood White – Severe decline in range and abundance.

AFP: mid May to late June, with a possible early August emergence. This delicate beauty lays its eggs on legumes, including Meadow Vetchling, Tufted Vetch and Common Birds Foot Trefoil.

Open woods in South Shropshire and North Herefordshire are its strongholds, supported by large colonies in Haugh Wood and Monkwood. How many woods still support it between the Malverns and Wyre Forest? Is it still in South Hereford woodlands? We would love to receive new site records.

White-letter Hairstreak – Severe decline in range and abundance.

AFP: July to mid August. The caterpillars feed on Elm leaves – find the remaining live Elm trees in your area and you may strike it lucky. I tend to find this species in twos and threes nectaring on Thistle heads. Mid mornings and late afternoons appear to be the best time to locate this butterfly – binoculars are useful to scan across the tops of thistle beds.

For superb advice on how to locate this arboreal species (and its favoured tree), please check out http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/w-album/w-album_index.html. Also see Rob Thorne's article later in this magazine.

Small Copper – Not listed

AFP: May to July and through to September. Adults lay single eggs on Common Sorrel or Sheep's Sorrel.

Is this little gem still present in urban rather than rural settings? – one for all members to ascertain, wherever they live. It might be useful to check the abundance between the various broods. Is it always the third brood that is the biggest? How does it survive in such small numbers?

Common Blue - Not listed

AFP: June through to late September. Caterpillars feed on Bird's foot trefoil, Black Meddick and Common Restharrow.

Another species for all counties. The Atlas again showed an urban spread – on wasteland – is this still the case? How is it faring in the wider countryside? Is it really rare in East Staffordshire and around Hodnet in Shropshire, or is it just a lack of records?

Wall – Severe decline in range and abundance

AFP: May through to September. A variety of grasses are used for egg laying, especially bents and Yorkshire fog.

In the last 20 years this species has virtually disappeared from many inland counties, mainly due to the loss of unimproved grassland. Do you know of a population in your district?

Is it still found in north Staffordshire and is it still abundant in North East Shropshire? There have been unsubstantiated reports in the Black Country; let's try and prove their accuracy.

Grayling – Severe decline in range and abundance

AFP: mid July to mid September. Eggs are laid singly on a variety of grasses growing in open sunny locations.

One for West Shropshire and Malvern Hills walkers – is it holding its own in our region? Does it still occur on exposed slopes south of Clun? Please confirm that Bill Davidson's discoveries still occur on Forest Enterprise land.

Small Heath – Severe decline in abundance

AFP: June through to end September. Eggs are laid on fine grasses, especially Sheep's fescue.

Although this is one of our more widespread species, many colonies have been lost due to intensive agriculture and changing land use. Does it really only occur on high moorlands in our patch, with the exception of the brownfield sites in Telford and the Black Country? Is it really under-recorded in Stoke?

White Admiral – Severe decline in abundance

AFP: July. It seems to be expanding in our patch. How far has it extended its range? Is it in East Staffordshire, spilling over from populations in neighbouring Derbyshire?

An exceptional record was of an individual in our Chairman's Stourbridge garden last summer. Is it in every wood in Worcester or just the eastern ones in Hereford? How widespread is it in south Shropshire? Woods with honeysuckle are its habitat; it nectars on bramble in open glades.

Small Tortoiseshell - Not listed

AFP: May to end of September (hibernating adults can be located at almost any time throughout the winter). Eggs are laid on the undersides of Nettle leaves – if you have nettle beds on your land please don't grub them all out.

Endangered? Well it is throughout mainland Europe and in the last few years southern England. It was uncommon in south Worcester last year. Will it be rare throughout our patch in 2007? It is thought the reason for the decline is a host-specific parasitic fly that has moved north due to global warming.

Small–Pearl bordered Fritillary – Severe decline in range and abundance

AFP: mid June to late July. Eggs are laid on or near violets, usually Common Dog violet or Marsh violet.

The real prize would be to record an undiscovered population of this lovely butterfly – are there any wet flushes harbouring this species in rural Staffordshire, Shropshire or Herefordshire that lie undetected as yet?

Moths

BC is planning a major national moth census in the coming years. Moth-ers around the country have been submitting their records to various Records Centres and BC Recorders for many years, and these records will be used as a platform to develop a distribution atlas of British moths. Such records are almost invariably night-flying. Don't let's forget about our day-flying species.

Please see the photographs and distribution dot maps of the day flying moths listed below. A red dot is a known record. We would welcome your records of any of these species.

Burnet Companion – AFP: May to early July

Rural members will just not believe how abundant this species is on brownfield sites in the Black Country. Five per footstep! Mike Southall thought he had found gold coins in Worcester when he identified two during a season on his farm. Where is it on your patch? Is it really only an urban species?

For help with identification, this page shows the moths.



The central shot is **Small Yellow Underwing**. Around the outside, working clockwise from top left, are:

Burnet Companion, Common Heath, Latticed Heath, Chimney Sweeper and Mother Shipton.

Photo acknowledgements:

- Burnet Companion (© Les Hill)
- Small Yellow Underwing , Common Heath, Latticed Heath and Chimney Sweeper (© Rosemary Winnall)
- Mother Shipton (© Patrick Clement)

Latticed Heath – AFP: two generations, May –June and July-August

Likes open ground and derelict sites. Common in urban brownfield sites and by unfertilised roadsides. The caterpillar feeds on clovers and trefoils - if you see these plants, do check for it. How rare is it in rural locations? A Health and Safety warning now follows! BC is not liable if you get run down by a vehicle whilst surveying roadsides, but don't let this stop you from recording these locations. Is it only the Dudley southern bypass where it is abundant?

Common Heath – AFP: May and June (no map included)

In abundance on our natural high moors and heathlands, but not a singleton recorded in the Black Country brownfields. Is there a location where you can see Latticed Heath and Common Heath together? Foodplant is heather and trefoils, so please check out habitats with these species are present.

Mother Shipton – AFP: May to early July

The caterpillars feed on clovers and trefoil. Likes open grassy places including heathland, flower-rich hay meadows, verges and embankments. Rarely seen in big numbers on a site, but is it as common in urban settings as rural ones? Tell us through your records.

Chimney Sweeper – AFP: June to July

A beautiful little insect. The reference books don't do it justice. Easy to identify given the white tips to its wings. The foodplant is pignut which likes the damper areas in fields or brownfield sites. More common in North England or Scotland so what is its status in the West Midlands? You really need to know the specific habitats in your local patch to spot this species, so this is a challenge to those members who have the discovery ethic in their veins.

Small Yellow Underwing – AFP: Mid May to July

This is a species for keen eyes since it is easily overlooked. Is it only abundant on Stoke's brownfield sites and rarely seen in Telford and the Black Country? Look for it in flower rich grassland, roadside verges and hay meadows. A major effort is needed to record this species throughout our branch; this will appeal to members who like a challenge.

Please return your completed record forms and all moth records to:

Nigel Stone, 8 Grove Lane, Keresley End, Coventry CV7 8PN.

References

The following BC publications were used in compiling this article:

- *The Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* 2001.
- *The State of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* Richard Fox et al.
- *The State of Britain's Butterflies* 2007.

Worcestershire Heathlands

Mike Southall

It has been very exciting to hear about the recent reversal in fortune of the north Worcestershire heathlands. The present area of just over 100 hectares is estimated to be less than 10% of the area that existed 250 years ago. Over half of this area is situated at Hartlebury Common, while the three other main sites are the Lickey Hills, Burlish Top and the Devil's Spittleful/Rifle Range reserve.

The latter two have benefited from what the Wyre Forest Council rangers describe as aggressive management. This has involved some serious tree and scrub bashing to rejuvenate the heathland and revert the natural succession into woodland. It was commented that you could see why Burlish Top was called Top, now that many of the trees have been removed, and the view restored. The Rangers have learnt to handle the urban fringe conflicts that arise with tolerance and good humour, and plenty of reinforced steel barriers.

The Wildlife Trust has recently bought 32 acres of farmland adjacent to the Devil's Spittleful, with an option and money raising appeal to buy a further 14 acres. By all accounts this appeal has been a great success, raising half the money within a fortnight. The intention is to restore this farmland to heath, a process that will not be easy given the nutrient enriched soils. The trust's literature makes the point that the flowers of heather or ling are eaten by 30 species of moth and that eight of these will eat no other plant. It also says a further 20 micro-moths feed on heather.

Going on an organised trapping event at Hartlebury Common back in late August 2005, I was soon running back to my car for the field guide. I remember a **Beautiful Yellow Underwing**, which had quickly arrived in the trap and was a moth that I had not seen before. The adults can be seen rapidly flying on warm sunny days, while the larva eat the end shoots of heather. A total of 88 moth species were recorded that night, including **Heath** and **Hedge Rustics**, **White-line Dart** and the stunning **Archer's Dart** that was present in large numbers. Also, two individuals of the rare micro, **Pempelia palumbella**, were found. (This data is courtesy of Alan Prior & Val Weston.)

I generally try to take a walk on the Common on a sunny afternoon at the end of April or early May. This paid off last year with two sightings of a male **Emperor** moth. **Common Heath** moths were present at the same time. I have also seen **Green Hairstreak** and **Small Copper** butterflies on the Common at this time of year.

There have been some amazing records in the past, including the normally coastal **Portland Moth** recorded from 1908-1913. The **Dotted Border Wave** is a rare heathland resident found here at its only county site. Many micro-moths are also found only at this site in the County.

A Hartlebury Common Local Group has recently been formed reflecting the growing interest and appreciation of this remarkable site. Hopefully this trend will be mirrored both regionally and nationally, to the benefit of lowland heathland.

References:

Worcestershire Wildlife News No.55, 81,87,107

The Moths and Butterflies of Herefordshire and Worcestershire 1,2,3 by Michael Harper and Tony Simpson

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>

May

Saturday 5th Pearl Bordered Fritillary walk, Shropshire

A walk to show MWT & BC members and others these rare and beautiful butterflies on Middletown Hill. Meet at 2.00pm outside the Breidden public house on the A458 in Middletown (SJ301124). Contact Simon Spencer 01691-648339.

This fritillary only flies in sunny weather and they are almost impossible to see in cold, cloudy conditions. The walks will only be cancelled if the weather is bad but you are unlikely to see them if conditions are poor. The flight season can vary considerably from year to year so it is difficult to guarantee seeing them on a particular date. Please phone 01691 648339 beforehand if you are coming. The ground is uneven and steep. Stout walking boots and suitable clothing are essential. Please do not bring dogs. Each event will involve about an hour's walk.

Thursday 10th Dingy Skipper Ecology and Habitat Assessment Training Day Pooley Fields Country Park, Polesworth, near Tamworth

The event will look at the ecology and habitat requirements of the **Dingy Skipper**, and how to manage for it. We will also look at a special technique of habitat monitoring that can be used to help inform ongoing management of a site.

For more details/a booking form contact **Jane Ellis** on 01788 510695.

Saturday 12th Grafton Wood - Bird Song Walk

From Grafton Flyford Church Car Park. Start 6:00am. Booking necessary - cost £3 Adults, £1.50 children, including breakfast afterwards. Ring 01386 792458.

Saturday 12th Pearl Bordered Fritillary walk, Shropshire

All details as for Saturday 5th. Please read the above note.

Saturday 12th Green Hairstreak search

Meet 11.00am at Marquis Drive Visitor Centre (SK003153) but moving on so park on the road. Visitor centre is signed off the Penkridge - Rugeley road.

Bring walking gear and packed lunch. Contact Jim Cresswell 07842 773416

Friday 18th Pearl Bordered Fritillary walk, Shropshire

Y Frochas Common (SJ194083). Meet at 2.00pm outside the Raven public house on the A458 at the western edge of Welshpool and travel to this new CCW reserve between Guilsfield and Cyfronydd near the Dingle Nurseries. Please read the above note. Contact Simon Spencer 01691-648339.

Saturday 19th Dingy Skipper search at Chasewater

Meet 11.00am at Chasewater visitor centre (signed off the A5) at SJ040071. Bring walking gear and packed lunch. Contact Jim Cresswell 07842 773416

Saturday 19th Moth recording at Monkwood, Worcestershire

Meet at 19.30 in the reserve car park, OS map 150 SO 804606. Contact Mike Southall 07970 449353. Warm clothing recommended. A torch would be useful.

Saturday 19th Butterfly Identification Workshop, Herefordshire

10.00am – 4.00pm Woolhope Village Hall/Haugh Woods. BOOKING ESSENTIAL. Contact Bernadette Noake: 01531-635234 or 07960-616320.

Sunday 20th Butterfly Identification Workshop, Herefordshire

10.00am – 4.00pm at Whitchurch Village Hall/Doward Woodlands Details sent with booking. Contact Bernadette Noake as above.

Sunday, 20th Caterpillar Hunt at Grafton Wood, Worcestershire

Looking for Brown Hairstreak and other caterpillars. Meet at Grafton Flyford church at 10.00 am. Contact Mike Williams 07802-274552.

Sunday 20th Llanymynech Rocks guided walk, Shropshire

A joint walk with the Oswestry Branch of Shropshire Wildlife Trust. The target species are **Grizzled Skipper**, **Dingy Skipper**, **Green Hairstreak** and **Wall**. Meet 2pm at the reserve car park. Contact Stephen Lewis on 07900 886809.

Tuesday 22nd Dingy Skipper Ecology and Habitat Assessment Training Day at Chatterley Whitfield, Stoke-on-Trent

This event aims to encourage more volunteers to survey for this species in the Stoke area. It will enable participants to undertake habitat assessment and timed counts under BC's standard methodology. This technique allows effective monitoring of changes in key features of the habitat and how they affect butterfly numbers. For more details/a booking form contact **Jane Ellis** on 01788 510695.

June

Monday 4th – Argent & Sable and other day flying moths training day

Burnt Wood, Staffordshire. Meet at 10am. Leader Dave Grundy. A National Moth Recording Scheme event. Contact Jenny Joy 01952 249325 for more details.

Tuesday 5th – Wood White recording/training day, Bury Ditches, Shropshire

Meet at Bury Ditches car park (SO333839) at 11am. Leader Peter Boardman. A joint BC/Field Studies Council Biodiversity Training Project/Forestry Commission/Shropshire Wildlife Trust event. Contact Jenny Joy 01952-249325.

Saturday 9th The Wrekin Quarries

Meet at nearby car park (SJ 637092) at 11am. Stout shoes needed. Target species **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak**. Leader Joan King 01952-223589.

Wednesday 13th The Wrekin Quarries – as Saturday 9th but meet at 10.30.

Saturday 16th Walk at Titterstone Cleve, Shropshire

Meet Cleeton St. Mary Village Hall car park (SO 617784) at 10.30am, stout footwear needed for the rugged terrain. Target species **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. No food needed but do take water; we will return to Lower Birches (below) for lunch. Leader Richard Southwell 01384 397066.

Saturday 16th Member's Garden Open Day, Shropshire

Lower Birches 15 acre smallholding below Titterstone Cleve, arrive from 13.00 onwards – park in Cleeton St. Mary Village Hall car park (SO 617784) and walk to Lower Birches which is close by. The route will be signposted. Kay and Harry Downes are allowing members access to their fantastic property that has a huge range of natural habitats. **No dogs**. Food is provided so let Kay know beforehand so she knows how many to cater for. Please make donations to match their generosity. All monies will go to the branch. Target species **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, **Green Hairstreak** and **Greater Butterfly Orchid**, plus moths from the previous night's moth trap will be on display. **You must** contact Kay Downes in advance if you are coming 01584 891519.

Saturday 16th Argent & Sable Day, Staffordshire

Come and see Burnt Wood, which holds England's largest known population of this spectacular moth plus a good day out at an interesting venue, bring packed lunch. Meet at 10.30am in the Loggerheads pub car park in the middle of Loggerheads on the A53. Contact John Bryan 01782 518900.

Monday 18th Mark-Release-Recapture (MRR) training at Cannock Chase
(repeated Saturday 23rd June)

A joint BC/ Field Studies Council Biodiversity Training Project event, run by John Dover (Staffordshire University and Staffs. BC) to provide field training in one of the methods regularly used for estimating the size of butterfly populations. MRR is also used to quantify the dispersal distance of butterflies - an important topic when dealing with the conservation of a species in a landscape with fragmented habitat. As this will be a very popular course, booking is essential as numbers will be limited. Please contact Jenny Joy 01952 249325.

Thursday 21st Welsh Clearwing training day at Cannock Chase

Leader David Green. While this day is primarily be aimed at training staff and volunteers from local organisations in identifying the **Welsh Clearwing** and its habitats, a few spaces are available for BC members from other parts of the region. Contact Jenny Joy on 01952 249325 if interested.

Saturday 23rd Cannock Chase Clearwing Day

Target species **Red-tipped, Sallow, Welsh, White-barred** and **Yellow-legged Clearwings**. Other moth species more than likely to be encountered: **Oak Eggar, Clouded Buff** and **Wood Tiger**. Meet at the car park on Milford Village Green (SJ973 211). Please contact John Bryan on 01782 518900 to confirm your place as numbers are restricted due to constraints of consent given from Staffordshire County council for the event.

Sunday 24th Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillary

Meet 10.30am at Marquis Drive visitor centre, but moving on so park on the road. Visitor centre, SJ003153, is signed off the Penkridge-Rugeley road. Bring packed lunch and walking kit (boots, long trousers). Contact Jim Cresswell 07842 773416

Saturday 30th Chance to see Welsh Clearwing

Meet 10.30am at Marquis Drive visitor centre, but moving on so park on the road. Visitor centre (SJ003153) is signed off the Penkridge - Rugeley road. Bring walking kit and packed lunch. Contact Jim Cresswell 07842773416

Saturday 30th Moth Night Fundraiser, Shropshire

8pm at Ryecroft, Linley Brook, near Broseley in Shropshire. Food, live music and lots more! Contact Adrian Miles tel. 01952 882318 or 07721423607 for a ticket.

July

Sunday 1st Moth Identification Workshop, Herefordshire

10.00am – 4.00pm Whichchurch Village Hall. Contact Bernadette Noake: 01531-635234 or 07960-616320.

Sunday 8th Moth Identification Workshop, Herefordshire

10.00am – 4.00pm Queenswood Country Park, Leominster. Contact Bernadette Noake: 01531-635234 or 07960-616320.

Sunday 8th White Admiral recording day at Dudmaston Estate, Shropshire

Meet at 1pm outside the coffee shop in the Dudmaston Estate car park (SO748887). Leader Adrian Miles tel. 01952 882318 or 07721423607.

Saturday 14th Bug Hunting in Monkwood

An expert-led 2-3 hour walk in search of the many bugs, including spiders, to be found at this time of year. Leaders: John Partridge and John Meiklejohn
Meet at the car park, SO 804606, at 10am, Charge: £1 adults; 50p children
Contact: Paddy Harrison 01905 641523

Saturday 14th Barrow Hill Nature Reserve, Dudley

Meet at War Memorial to the west of the Russells Hall Hospital, Dudley (SO 917894) at 10.00. Will **Marbled White** have reached here from nearby Merry Hill Shopping Centre? What will be seen on Gareth Barton's Meadow? Gareth was a

great supporter of wildlife conservation. This is a joint walk with Pensnet Wildlife Group. Leader Brian Marsh 01902 894386.

Saturday 14th West Mids & Warwickshire regional transect recorders day
Grafton Wood, Worcestershire. While primarily aimed at branch members (and other recorders) carrying out butterfly transects, this is a good opportunity for those who have been thinking about transect monitoring to learn. The programme is short talks in the morning and practical sessions on transect walking, habitat assessments and the use of the new version of Transect Walker in the afternoon. Contact Jenny Joy (01952 249325) in the first instance. We hope we will be able to coordinate transport to this event on a county basis.

Sunday 15th Wem Moss Reserve for Large Heath and day flying moths
Meet at 10.30am at the Horse and Jockey in Northwood. Joint event with Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Wear appropriate footwear for a lowland raised bog, and bear in mind that adders are present. Leader: Stephen Lewis: 07900-886809.

Sunday 15th Prees Heath for Silver-studded Blue
Meet at 2.00pm on the access track opposite the Steel Heath turning off the A49. Leader: Stephen Lewis: 07900-886809.

***** Save our Butterflies Week 21st to 29th *****

Saturday 21st Member's Garden Open Day
See details for June 16th but this time it's at 14.00 Target species **Dark Green Fritillary** plus rare dragonflies. Moths from the previous night will be on display. **Essential** to contact Kay Downes in advance on 1584 891519.

Saturday 21st Moth Trapping Croft Castle, Herefordshire
July 9.00pm to midnight, meet at National Trust Car Park SO453656

Sunday 22nd Butterflies Bugs and Botany Day at Grafton
10:30am to 4:00pm from Grafton Flyford Church - experts to show you around and refreshments available. More information from John Tilt 01386-792458.

Thursday 26th Brilliant Butterflies and Marvellous Moths, Herefordshire
1.00pm – 4.00pm Haugh Wood (grid ref SO592365). Contact Bernadette Noake: 01531-635234 or 07960-616320.

Saturday 28th Butterfly Identification Workshop, Herefordshire
July 10.00am – 4.00pm Yarpole Village Hall/Aymestry Woods. Contact Bernadette Noake: 01531-635234 or 07960-616320.

Sunday 29th Butterfly Identification Workshop, Herefordshire
10.00am – 4.00pm Whitchurch Village Hall/Doward Woodlands, Contact Bernadette Noake: 01531-635234 or 07960-616320.

August

Friday and Saturday, 3rd and 4th **Argent & Sable Larvae Search, Haugh Wood**
10.00am – 4.00pm. Meet at grid ref SO 592365. Contact Bernadette Noake:
01531-635234 or 07960-616320.

Sunday 5th Brown Hairstreak Assembly Tree survey at Grafton Wood

Meet at Grafton Flyford church at 9.00 am. Please bring telescope/binoculars.
Contact Mike Williams on 07802-274552.

Saturday 11th National Moth Night

Look for details of other events on the branch website nearer the date.

Saturday 11th National Moth Night at Bishops Wood, Worcestershire

Meet Bishops Wood(SO 835 638} at 7.30 pm. Mervyn Needham 01562 777461.

Saturday 11th National Moth Night at Cannock Chase

Leader Dave Grundy. Starting time 7.30pm at the John O'Leary Centre (next to the Staffordshire County Council Visitor Centre at Marquis Drive, SO003153).

Saturday 18th The Wrekin Quarries

Meet at nearby car park GR SJ 637092 at 11.00. Stout shoes needed. Summer butterflies. Leader Joan King 01952 223589.

September

Sunday 2nd Brown Hairstreak open day at Grafton Wood, Worcestershire

Meet at Three Parishes Hall, Grafton Flyford at 11.00 am. Guided walks to search for adult Brown Hairstreaks. Refreshments in Village Hall afterwards.
Contact Mike Williams on 07802-274552.

Tuesday 11th Wormwood Shark training and Survey day, Walsall

Exact locations to be confirmed, 10am to 4pm.

Training on the ecology and habitat requirements of this LBAP species typical of Brownfield sites. Training will include ecology, habitat requirements throughout life cycle, conservation status, national and local distribution /abundance, threats, suggested conservation of the species survey techniques for the larvae.

For more information and to book a place please contact Jane Ellis on 01788 510695 or email jellis@butterfly-conservation.org

October

Saturday 13th Fungus Foray at Monkwood

Join one of our popular fungus forays with Diana and Tim Bateman.
Meet in the car park, map ref: SO 804606, at 10.30am Charge: £1 adults; 50p children Contact: Paddy Harrison 01905 641523.

Moth Recording at Chaddesley Wood during 2006

Alan Prior

Everyone is again welcome at the recording sessions in 2007. The dates and times are as follows:

- Saturday May 5th 19:30
- Saturday June 2nd 20:30
- Saturday July 7th 20:30
- Saturday August 4th 20:00
- Saturday September 1st 19:30
- Saturday October 6th 18:00
- Saturday November 3rd 16:00

On these dates there will always be someone at the Jubilee Gate (GR: SO914736) to meet you, whatever the weather. We look forward to seeing you.

For more details call either Mervyn Needham 01562-777461 or Alan Prior 0121-7782973.

Wyre Forest Moth trapping sessions

Dave Grundy

For all these meet at Earnwood Copse Car park (Grid Ref SO744784) (This meeting site is reached by taking the Buttonoak and Kinlet road out of Bewdley (B4194) and pass through Buttonoak village with the pub on the left hand side, then after another few hundred yards this Forestry Commission car park is at the top of the hill on the left.)

Dave Grundy: Tel: 0121-446-5446, mobile 0777-898-0924

- April 20th, meet 7pm - to cover the Longdon Crossroads area.
- May 18th, meet 7.30pm - to cover the Hawkbatch area.
- June 15th, meet 8.30pm - to cover the Postens plain area.
- July 20th, meet 8pm - to cover the Hawkbatch area.
- August 17th, meet 7.30pm - to cover the Postens plain area.
- September 21st, meet 7pm - to cover the Longdon Crossroads area.

Winter surveying for the White-letter Hairstreak

Rob Thorne

Winter can be a frustrating time for any naturalist and by the end of January spring and summer cannot come too soon. There are however a few things that can be done, one of which is egg hunting.

With a work-related morning in Ironbridge, Shropshire (a large area of mature woodland), I had the afternoon free to do as I pleased. I had seen on local records of the area, reports of **White-letter Hairstreaks**. So, with some last minute egg revision and some local knowledge of an area of un-surveyed Wych Elm, I set off up one of the many wooded dingles in the area. I arrived amongst the Elms and began my search. Within about an hour of searching I had located six eggs on two different trees.

A few days later, a botanical survey for a proposed sewage works, took me to Worcestershire, the Malvern area. Walking up one hedgerow I noticed a lone flowering Wych Elm clinging on for dear life around a telegraph pole. To satisfy my curiosity I bent a couple of branches down and within a few minutes I had two eggs, followed by a further three on a tree some 200 yards further down the lane. I was both excited and intrigued, deciding then and there that I should investigate further in areas closer to home.

I was brought up in a village called Pulverbatch, situated in the foothills of the Long Mynd. The area is full of wooded dingles, copses and old hedgerows, perfect Elm hunting territory. With any spare time I had, I searched the local area for eggs and, although sceptical of finding any to begin with, all my forays were successful and my search began to spread further a field. To date (March 15th) the 20 trees/areas of Elm I have looked at have all produced eggs. Some of these sites are located around the Pulverbatch area but many were located simply by either driving along the roads of central and southern Shropshire or whilst out walking. As Elm is often associated with hedgerows driving is quite an effective way of locating the trees. Tree spotting from a moving car can be a hazardous process, so remember to keep at least one eye on the road! In addition to hedgerows, look for Elm around old-established settlements, especially churches, and in woodland. Tapping into local botanical knowledge can help to locate Elm sites as can looking at old tithe maps for Elm-related names.

Once the Elm has been located, your search can begin. To start with you will scrutinize every lump and bump but, as with so many things searched for, the egg will become very apparent when you see it.

The egg itself is about the size of a pinhead (see photo, page 22) and is 'flying saucer' shaped in appearance with a hairline, white fringe around its outermost perimeter. In the right light the top of the egg reveals an indentation (the part which the young caterpillar chews out when hatching). The egg is mid tone

grey in colour, darkening towards hatching point to a much blacker colour. The grey egg shows up remarkably well against the black of the Elm buds and with a short amount of practice is easy to spot. Once you begin to see the eggs it will only take a few minutes to find them in future searches.

To speed up your search, look for branches receiving good sunlight. The tree itself will tell you if it's suitable for breeding butterflies; if it's receiving enough sunlight, it will have round black buds (the sign of a flowering tree). The leaf buds of Elm appear obelisk in shape and are located at the tip of the branch and sometimes leading up to and including the terminal bud. The easiest way to locate the eggs is by searching the very base of both the leaf buds and the round flowering buds. The butterfly also lays on the scarring of the previous year's growth. This scarring resembles the skin on a human knuckle. However the eggs are hard to spot due to their colouration resembling that of the bark. Until you 'have your eye in' it's best to stick to examining the buds. The most successful twigs appear to be the short flowering shoots which radiate from the main branch, like the rib bones of a cartoon fish. Limit your searches to the ends of branches (for 2ft from the tip) and you will have greater success. Also, there is no need to twist and examine the underside of the branches as the eggs will almost always be laid facing skywards or slightly to the side, literally "sunny side up".

In areas of more abundant Elm growth the butterfly seems to be more selective of the trees it lays on. It will still lay the odd egg here and there but a much higher density of eggs will be found on these special 'master' trees. Unless planning a thorough search, avoid wind-exposed, shaded trees when locating these 'master' trees. Look at trees receiving good sunlight, preferably on the edge of, or in, a sheltered clearing. Also trees in dips and hollows or at the base of a dingle or valley are likely to produce many eggs. Branches poking out through scrub into sunlight can be excellent, holding greater densities of eggs than other similar branches.

Due to the butterfly's elusive nature and the fact that it was never a 'childhood butterfly' like the **Tortoiseshell** or **Peacock**, we seem to overlook it, choosing Open Days at known sites to catch a glimpse. However, after a small amount of egg hunting you could locate your very own colony, which is something very exciting and will give you the opportunity to watch the adult any time you want during its flight season. One 'master' tree I discovered was only 15 yards from the house I grew up in and I've never seen an adult in my life! This is something I plan to put right come the summer.

There is a good chance of finding a colony close to where you live and locating a 'master' tree will offer you your very own viewing gallery, come summertime. The butterfly appears to be highly mobile and able to support colonies on small areas of Elm, or indeed single trees. The ability of the Wych Elm tree to re-grow after the original tree has apparently died from disease (and English Elm also to sucker) means that colonies can hold on. Most of the trees I've looked at are young, albeit flowering, re-growth from diseased trees. With this in mind

the chances of finding eggs where-ever there is Elm within the butterfly's geographical range (particularly in the West Midlands) on your Sunday walk, drive to work or even your very own back garden, are excellent.

Flowering is clearly of importance, as the newly hatched caterpillars crawl into the opened flowers and take on the same pink and green colouration. The closed leaf buds (which open later) appear to be bypassed although the caterpillar will begin to eat the leaves when it is about half grown.

Finding a colony also allows you to send in a valuable record for a very elusive and under-recorded butterfly. In a time of Dutch Elm disease and hedgerow flailing the butterfly has many threats and many of these unknown colonies, found in hedgerows and woods, are at considerable risk. Your records can also add to a greater understanding of the butterfly's distribution helping, ultimately, to assess any resurgence or decline in the species.

Finally, if like me your car boot has a variety of butterfly related paraphernalia add a walking stick with a crook to your collection. It can be a valuable tool to have, as many of the hedgerow Elms have a habit of growing their branches a couple of millimetres above finger tip height.

Above all, enjoy your searching safe in the knowledge that winter won't be a butterfly-free zone any more.



White-letter Hairstreak egg (below top bud)

© Rob Thorne

Global Warming - Hot Air or Cold Reality?

John Bryan

It seems that whenever you open a newspaper, turn on the television or listen to a politician talking, the phrase 'Global warming' makes an appearance. Much has been said about its effects, some suggest the Earth is in its final throes of mass destruction, whilst others have pooh-poohed the idea as tosh, merely part of a natural occurrence. The fact that, since The Industrial Revolution, human activity has increased the rate of carbon dioxide being released in to the atmosphere (over natural methods decay, volcanoes etc.) eight-fold has probably had a major contribution, but not if you speak to a representative from an oil company!

Needless to say, the effect that global warming is having on our lives is, for all of us, becoming ever-increasingly apparent. As a mark of how it is affecting our ecosystems, butterflies and moths have been singled out as a good environmental indicator, as they adapt at an astonishing rate over other organisms that can often take generations to change. Lepidoptera, it seems, can adapt in a single year.

If we hark back to last year's very cold spring, the result was many species were delayed in their emergence, so much so, that species were being found together that normally wouldn't see each other. The cold meant pupa stayed unhatched for longer and over-wintering caterpillars remained so, well in to the traditional spring period. The long and hot summer that then ensued meant that some moth species got another brood in and some managed three. As an example of adaption The **Smokey Wainscot** has since 1992 been double brooded in the county of Staffordshire; prior to this it was only seen once a year.

Similarly, this year has already given us new records for the warmest winter on record and I'd guess it'll throw Spring Watch's schedule into turmoil. The warm winter months have already started to produce early records. A **Green Hairstreak** was seen on Cannock Chase on March 15 and the first reports of **Dingy** and **Grizzled Skippers** (albeit in Southern England) started to filter through in early April. So by the time you read this, the spring species may well be over.

But what are the likely effects? Because our traditional flight times are becoming longer it could theoretically have a variety of differing outcomes depending on how warm the UK becomes. Total loss of species, multiple broods, year-long breeding cycles, our lepidoptera being replaced by the continental species, who knows? What is evident is that only time will tell and it may well be nearer than we think.

Brownfields Project Update



Jane Ellis

I am happy to report that the Brownfields project is really starting to make a difference. Over the winter habitat management and restoration work has taken place on a number of sites to help some of the key brownfield species and on other sites there is a strong commitment from the landowners to undertake positive work.

In the East Midlands the Forestry Commission has undertaken extensive scrub clearance in three key areas of Poulter Country Park to help the **Dingy Skipper** population to expand and Forest Enterprise has undertaken scrub clearance for **Dingy Skipper** at Shirebrook Country Park.

Natural England has funded £750 of work at Barnstone Cutting SSSI in Nottinghamshire to restore habitat on a disused railway-line for **Four-spotted moth**. A scrape has also been created along the track bed to open up habitat for **Grizzled Skipper** which also occurs on the site. This work followed a site visit and recommendations by Butterfly Conservation.

In the West Midlands, thanks to Richard Southwell and John Tilt excellent progress has been made with St Modwen in agreeing a programme of conservation management works for **Grizzled Skipper** at Long Marston and I have been working with St Modwen on the design of display boards to go on the site to raise awareness of action being taken for **Grizzled Skipper** and also about other butterflies on the site.

Good working links are being established with some other valuable partners. A great coup for BC has been the announcement from Cemex that we are to be their Charity of the Year. This has resulted from BC's involvement with the company over Southam Quarry. This will be a national partnership with BC looking at working with Cemex volunteers to undertake positive management and awareness raising on a small number of their best Lepidoptera sites nationally. It is likely that this will include work at Southam Quarry. Cemex staff attended a recent scrub clearance event at Stockton Cutting.

Meetings have also been arranged with Network Rail over gaining access for survey of **Four-spotted moth** on active rail-lines in Rutland and also with Tarmac's Mancetter Quarry manager to finalise access details for survey and monitoring for the spring season.

The Coal Authority have been pleased to follow-up recommendations in our report on enhancing **Dingy Skipper** habitat at Littleton Colliery (Huntington Gravel Pit) near Cannock and BC have since visited another of their sites at Calverton in Nottinghamshire, where a local volunteers will be undertaking survey work for **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak** this spring

May I take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who have been involved in the project so far, without whom such progress would not have been possible. Special thanks go to Barry Prater (East Midlands Branch chairman, Richard Southwell, Mike Slater, Keith Warmington, John Bryan and Pete Johnson.

I would welcome volunteer help on surveying for key species or their habitats in any of the following areas this spring: Stoke-on-Trent, Southam, Cannock, North Warwickshire. Anyone interested please contact Jane Ellis on 01788 510695 or email jellis@butterfly-conservation.org.

Two training events on **Dingy Skipper Ecology and Habitat Assessment** are being held at Chatterley Whitfield on Thursday 22nd May and Pooley Fields Country Park near Tamworth on 10th May and a **Wormwood Shark** Workshop at Wolverhampton on September 11th (the events page has details).

Brownfields Newsletter

A new brownfields newsletter is now available. The colourful eight page newsletter provides information on key brownfield species, lots of good practice advice on management, monitoring and protection of Brownfield habitat and a number of relevant case studies. It is aimed at planners, developers, landowners and managers, partner organisations and volunteers involved with brownfield species monitoring and conservation. Copies are available from Jane Ellis.

The Countdown Project: Focus on Shropshire



Jenny Joy

As the last issue had a fairly detailed account of Butterfly Conservation's ongoing Countdown 2010 project in the West Midlands region, only a brief update of my current activities is included here.

The Shropshire Butterfly Group

Since the formation of the Shropshire Butterfly Group in November 2006 there has been no looking back! The circulation list for the e-mail newsletter is now over 40 and I am sure numbers will continue to grow as it gets more widely known. The next e-mail newsletter will be sent out at the end of April so please let Jenny know if you either wish to receive it or have a contribution to make (jjoy@butterfly-conservation.org).

On 3rd February the first ever Shropshire Group work day took place at Shelve Forestry in the Stiperstones area of Shropshire. This is a little gem of a site well protected by the surrounding trees and very easy to miss (which is why not many people have been there before!). The aim of the work day was to clear the scrub and trees which are starting to shade the areas of Grayling

habitat present. After an initial slow start due to a very heavy frost and a fire which refused to burn, the sun got up and a huge amount was achieved! In fact the only time people started to flag was at the very end when the uphill walk to collect the brash for the fire started to get much longer and the brash seemed so much heavier! Many thanks to Alan Reid (Forestry Commission) for organising and leading the day as well as providing the chain-saw which meant so much more could be achieved.

Telford Area Group

On 30th March a Telford area meeting was arranged at the Green Wood Centre in Coalbrookdale. The aim of the meeting was to encourage a pooling of knowledge in the area so we can start to build up a local dossier of the important sites (for a number of species) which can then be used to start to prioritise future recording effort. All those present were keen to input into the site dossier (as they could all contribute up to date records from particular sites or had knowledge of local sites which should perhaps be surveyed) and were also prepared to sign up to record priority sites identified for 2007 (those sites which are particularly threatened by development or could be designated as County Wildlife Sites if more information was available). If you think you could contribute to the Telford area sites dossier or would be happy to survey specific sites in this area (which extends down to Much Wenlock in the south and Newport in the north), please let me know. The Telford group plan to meet again in the autumn to discuss their survey results from 2007 (or possibly before that at the local Moth Fundraiser – see the events section!). Thanks very much to all of you who attended this meeting and I look forward to seeing your results later this year.

Wood White Research Project 2007

Nationally monitored populations of the **Wood White** butterfly have undergone a >50% reduction in range in the last 25 years and therefore it is currently a UK BAP Priority Species Candidate. The area of south Shropshire and north Herefordshire is a nationally important area for the Wood White butterfly as this is one of the few areas of the country where it is actually increasing its range and colonising new sites with suitable habitat. We therefore want to find out more about the habitats this butterfly is using on sites in this area and use this information to inform further site management. There are currently at least four Forestry Commission sites being specifically managed for **Wood White** in this part of the region and ideally we would like there to be more. So again if you think you can help with this project please let us know – we ideally would like to have people looking for **Wood White** adults and eggs as well as assessing the vegetation. Our current knowledge of the Wood White in south Shropshire is largely a result of the recording efforts by Bill Davidson – Bill was a great person who will be sadly missed (see Richard's obituary of Bill) and I hope the continued presence of **Wood White** in south Shropshire will be a testimony to him!

The Dutch Elm Disease Resistant Trees Project, the first year

Jenny Joy

In 2006, a Nurturing Nature grant from the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership enabled Butterfly Conservation to buy 30 Dutch Elm Disease resistant elm trees to plant for **White-letter Hairstreak** (WLH) on various sites in the West Midlands region. This table summarises the current information we have for each site:

Site (and reporter)	Number planted	Tree height (m)	Number of WLH eggs (E) and/or larvae (L) or adults (A) found on tree	Number of WLH adults seen on the site during the year
Norton Covert (Martin Dukes)	3	0.95 -1.16m	0	2
Baggeridge Country Park (David Jackson)	3 (1 accidentally destroyed)	0.7-1.0m	0	0
Ryton Wood (Mike Slater)	2	0.6m	0	>30 casual and transect records
Ufton Fields (Mike Slater)	2	0.6m	0	At least 2
Elliot's Field (Phil Parr)	2	0.77-1.07m	0	2
Draycote Water (Phil Parr)	2 (1 suffered from drought)	0.8-0.9m	0	0
Nethercote Cutting (Phil Parr)	2	1.03-1.05m	0	0
Severn Valley Country Park (Edward Andrews)	5 (3 died due to drought)	0.81-0.97m	0	0
Severn Gorge Countryside Trust Woodlands	4	*	*	*

* information not yet available

As the table shows, the majority of trees have survived the first year (despite the extreme drought conditions in some areas). It is really important that we continue to monitor these trees in the long term to see if a) they are utilised by **White-letter Hairstreak** and b) to see if these trees remain to be Dutch Elm Disease resistant in the long term. The White-letter Hairstreak butterfly is currently a UK BAP Priority Species candidate which has undergone a >50% decline in its numbers and range in the UK over the past 25 years. Anything we can do to try to improve the abundance of healthy elm on sites where this butterfly is still known to exist is therefore important. Nevertheless, the White-letter Hairstreak may still be an under-recorded butterfly in many parts of the West Midlands region and that is where you can help to maybe change its current status (see Rob Thorne's separate article). Many thanks to Edward Andrews, Martin Dukes, David Jackson, Phil Parr, Mike Slater, Keith Warmington and Mike Williams for their part in the first year of this elm tree project and to all the partnership organisations who allowed their trees to be planted on their land. We are also very grateful to the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership whose funding allowed this project to get underway.

Update from the Herefordshire Woodlands Project

Bernadette Noake

The project aims to celebrate and conserve some of the most threatened Butterflies and Moths of Herefordshire's Ancient Woodlands by promoting management of ancient woodlands within the Herefordshire LEADER+ areas and targeting a number of declining species. Anna Jordan the Herefordshire Woodlands Project Officer organised a number of training workshops and events throughout 2006 which were all very successful and well attended. Anna is now on maternity leave, and I have been in post for two weeks, previously working for the Malvern Hills Conservators.

In 2007 the Herefordshire Woodlands Project is holding a number of training workshops and events, and is attending shows. If you would like to help out on a moth night, help promote Butterfly Conservation at an event or open day, or come along on a guided walk as a back up, I would be very pleased to hear from you. There are also a number of surveys we would like people to get involved in, including searches for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Wood White, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Argent and Sable, Drab Looper and Common Fan Foot. Over the coming months we will also be setting up an email newsletter, if anyone would like to help or receive the newsletter please get in contact with me (see below).

Bernadette Noake
Herefordshire Woodlands Project Officer (maternity cover)
Email: hwp@butterfly-conservation.org
Tel: 01531 635234 or or 07960-616320 (mobile)

Obituary – Bill Davidson

Richard Southwell

Mega is the only word that comes to mind when thinking of Bill. A larger than life character who came to live in the Clun area halfway through the Millennium Atlas recording period. He had moved from Ayrshire and his job was as an accountant to local landowners and farmers. Rumours have it he recorded every day and did the book-keeping in the evening. Although the South Shropshire district was getting good recording coverage from a number of local members Bill's mega efforts frankly put the area on the map. If you ever want to know the boundaries of this district council just look at the distribution map for **Purple Hairstreak**.

Quirky is certainly a word that fits Bill since I am certain he never put a foot outside the council boundary even if there was a reported **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** colony not a hundred yards the wrong side of the line! You might also recollect Jenny Joy's article on **Wood White** about two years ago in the national magazine; it was based on Bill's records.

[Bill also wrote a piece in The Comma issue 61 - ed.]

Bill didn't just record, he also used the data to conserve. He was fortunate enough to find a small colony of **Grizzled Skipper** on some private land and by the end of the year not only did the owner know of this discovery but was already implementing measures to stop the area from scrubbing over. This to me is the essence of what membership of the society is all about. He also courted publicity, which was just as well on one occasion. Bill always had his large binoculars with him and was using them to identify a butterfly in someone's private garden. He was spotted and within minutes was arrested by the police for snooping! Lucky he had the recent article on him that appeared in *Shropshire News* naming him, along with a picture, as the county's 'butterfly man'.

Bill was always willing to do things for the society and the branch as both Jenny and I can personally testify. May I suggest we all think of his efforts when you read Dave Jackson's article on the mega recording initiative we are urging you to participate in this year as encouragement to 'dip your toe in the water'. Knowing Bill as I do I can't think of a better testament to his memory.

The photo of a **Wood White** on the back cover is by Bill.

Committee members

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

Chairman	Richard Southwell Sandilands@yesit.co.uk	01384-397066 (after 4pm)
Conservation Officer	David Jackson Jacksongrus@btinternet.com	01902-344716
Treasurer	Andy Littley andylittley@supanet.com	01562-887117
Webmaster pro-tem	Nigel Stone Njstone@hotmail.com	02476-335189
Branch Recorder		
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Wood White



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Centre-barred Sallow



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