

The Comma

No. 70, Spring 2008



Wood Whites at Postens Plain Photo: © Dave Grundy

This issue includes:

- Hedgerows and farming
- Summer event listings
- To fly or not to fly?
- White-letter Hairstreak eggs
- Literature – I.R.P. Heslop
- 2007 Transect results

NEWSLETTER OF WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Butterfly Conservation is a charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)



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Butterfly Conservation

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Editorial

Thanks to photographers Dave Grundy and Tony Moore for the cover photos and also to our letter writers. John Tilt reports on last year's transect results and Tony Moore talks about searching for **White-letter Hairstreak** eggs. Peter Bransford's article shows the near-madness that collecting butterflies used to induce in the first half of the last century.

John Tilt has found us a new printer so *The Comma* is costing us less – I hope you can't see any change in quality!

Finally, a huge thanks to Mervyn and Rosabelle Needham, who are stuffing *The Comma* into envelopes for the third time. They do it a lot quicker than I can, I can tell you.

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

The deadline for contributions to the next issue is 1st October 2008. 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 they must be free of copyright restrictions.

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Chairman's Notes

David Jackson

So far the year has been a bit hit and miss weather wise, with no two day's temperatures the same. As would be expected by the middle of April, a few lucky observers had already seen their first butterflies straying from hibernating quarters on the occasional warmer days.

These have included a few **Peacocks**, **Red Admirals** and **Small Tortoiseshells** and the occasional **Brimstone**. By mid April I am informed the odd **Holly Blue** has also been seen, but I have yet to see my first butterfly this year, although I have recorded around 20 moth species. I sincerely hope we have a much kinder season in prospect than the last.

As you will no doubt have read in the Reserves column of the last National Magazine, thanks to a very generous gift by two very kind members, we are currently planning the opening and a management plan for Caeder Meadow, Herefordshire's first BC reserve. The reserve comprises 13 acres of flower rich meadow which adjoins Ewyas Harold Common.

I am very pleased to welcome Joy Stevens, a member from Stourbridge who has volunteered to be our Branch Secretary. If anyone else wishes to volunteer to serve on Branch Committee please call me for a chat.

I apologise to any members who may have been interested in coming along to the last Committee meeting but were thwarted by receiving the last issue of *The Comma* after the publicised date. This was due to the postage costs being met from another BC source, at a significant cost saving to Branch. Thanks to all involved, especially in envelope 'stuffing'.

I am pleased to report that the funding for Dr Jenny Joy, our Regional Officer, has been identified to keep Jenny in post for a further 12 months, and funding for Jane Ellis is at least assured for a further six months. Their continued work is vital to our conservation aims and objectives.

Following an Appeal made to all Branches from Head Office, via Dudley Cheesman our national Chairman, at the last meeting in February, our Committee voted to contribute £1000 towards the Morecambe Bay Limestone Hills project. The monies raised will assist towards management and habitat conservation of the **High Brown Fritillary** at this major national location.

Branch Committee also voted to contribute £250 towards the AGM administration and running costs of Dave Grundy's Garden Moth Recording Scheme, which the Branch fully supports. If you want to know more about the scheme and how to join, e-mail Dave at: dgcountryside@btinternet.com

It's not only great fun inspecting your garden trap each Friday night/Saturday morning, especially if you have enthusiastic family, but will provide an important indicator on how our garden moth populations are faring over the years to come.

I dropped a clanger in the last issue, when I stated that Dr. John Dover, also served on national Reserves Committee, when I should have stated Conservation Committee. Apologies John.

Are we currently witnessing on a nationwide scale the almost total depreciation of wildlife value in some of our most important habitat – hedgerows? The severity of hedge flailing hit the Branch hard during the early part of this year, when it came as quite a shock to find most if not all the hedgerows around the Grafton Wood reserve and other hedges for miles around, excessively flailed!

Some of the hedges are managed through Stewardship schemes, on a three year rotation, but most were devastated by what appear to be new style blades. It is very evident that many **Brown Hairstreak** eggs were lost, leaving the band of committed **Brown Hairstreak** conservationists saddened, angry and frustrated!

Branch are now planning to work with Natural England and local farmers to ensure a much better strategy is put in place for the future, but we really do need the closer co-operation of the farmers and their contractors to ensure this important population of butterflies is not affected like this again in the future.

Deriving from The Environment Act 1995, The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 make certain provision for protecting important hedgerows in Britain; however County Wildlife Trusts and Conservation bodies are still pressing the government to halt the loss of species rich hedges through neglect or removal. I think we now need to add to these considerations the effects on wildlife through excessive flailing?

DEFRA and the RSPB have published hedgerow management best practice guidance (*Farming Hedgerows*) which can be found on the net. But if it hasn't already been carried out before, I would like to suggest a project for college or university students to carry out say over a three year period, a study on how flailing affects biodiversity in a hedgerow and what the minimum height and shape of a hedgerow should be in order to maintain an environment suitable for insects, birds and small mammals. It doesn't take a lot to realise that if this state of affairs continues unabated year on year, our scalped hedgerows could or will become as barren as some of the fields they bound.

I fully appreciate not all farmers flail or cut to excess and that 'proper' management is called for and is also a necessary requirement when hedges abut highways.

If anyone wants to trial flailed hedgerows versus other methods of wildlife friendly cutting, I am sure that any work done in this respect would be welcomed by Natural England, DEFRA and certainly by this Branch. Who

knows, any new results and best practice guidelines may even have national implications and inform future policy decisions!

Spring Members' Meeting

Members are cordially invited to attend our 'late' spring meeting which will be held on Saturday 7th June 2008 at the Visitors Centre, Parkhall Country Park, Parkhall Road, Weston Coyney near Stoke-on-Trent, commencing at 11.00 a.m. on 10.30am start. For sat-nav users Park Hall's post code is ST3 5BH; be warned it will get you 'thereabouts' Parkhall is signposted off Parkhall Road

There will be a butterfly walk, weather permitting and slide presentation on the Butterflies of Staffordshire and light refreshments.

Please come along and join one or more of our National 40th Anniversary Birthday outings.

Hubcaps and Brickbats

Richard Southwell

The concept of looking for **Brown Hairstreak** eggs on the banks of the M5 motorway appealed as it did to Becky Lashley, Peter Seal, and Mike Williams. We all met up on a sunny Saturday morning in February at the Amey Mouchel site just north of Worcester along with their environmental team, Andrew Brett and Alex Baldwin, who would escort us during the day. Frankly, this was one of the few times when I was happy the concept of 'health & safety' existed.

We thoroughly surveyed the east side of the motorway between Droitwich and Worcester North junctions – and how many **Brown Hairstreak** eggs did we find – none. We did though find a lot of vehicle hubcaps of various species!

Why? Well this area might be on the known western edge of its range and the weather might have caused difficulties for the butterfly last year. However, the trouble Amey Mouchel had gone to create the conditions conducive for egg laying really impressed. We were told they had spent about £10,000 in 2007 to improve habitat. It was therefore with regret and some annoyance to us that we told them the reason no eggs were found was probably due to a massive failure of the farming stewardship scheme which was supposed to alter hedgerow management practices. It hasn't. This winter hedges have been decimated and the butterfly has found it hard to reach the M5. Taxpayers' money spent by Natural England, on behalf of DEFRA, has been wasted.

In this situation excuses abound. Some farmers blame the onerous paperwork that has dissuaded some from joining the scheme. Others blame their sub-contractors who actually cut the hedges. Natural England blames a lack of monitoring, which is in turn caused by a lack of funding. Bullshit! If the human species wants to do something it will. The task for conservationists, volunteers and staff alike is to change the mindsets of farmers and contractors away from a predisposition to 'tidy up' every square inch of hedgerow on an annual basis.

Establishing schemes from head offices, which are then managed by a 'grey suit' mentality does not work. Glossy pamphlets look nice but do they have a track record of changing habits? I believe they create interest but that is not action. No, the one sure way is to walk up the farmers drive, knock on his door and have a face-to-face conversation. Even better, catch him in a field that has blackthorn in its hedges. You can then demonstrate your words and show that by saving the Brown Hairstreak he will also save money. Any losers?

We are having a far greater effect in the business world whether it is Amey Mouchel, St Modwen Properties PLC, Barclays Bank, Tarmac or Cemex. I fear they will lose patience with our cause if we can't get the basics right.

Footnote – Hedgerows and Farming

Mike Williams, Brown Hairstreak Species Champion

As Richard has hinted at in his article, this winter has proved a particularly frustrating one for those of us working to conserve the **Brown Hairstreak** in east Worcestershire. Hedgerow flailing, always a problem for the **Brown Hairstreak**, seems to have been particularly widespread this winter and once again we have experienced some of our key hedgerows particularly around Grafton Wood being cut with the loss of many hundreds of eggs. Our wider concern, however, relates to the operation of the new Environmental Stewardship scheme which was introduced to address landscape scale environmental problems and provides payments to farmers to protect and enhance important environmental features. The scheme works on a points basis with points being earned where hedges are maintained at a height of at least 1.5 metres and where cutting is no more than once in two years. The hope was that this would lead to changes in the way that hedgerows are being managed and to bring benefits to wildlife including the **Brown Hairstreak**.

Take-up of the scheme has been very good (around 50% agricultural land is now in the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) scheme rising to as high as 70% if Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) and the old Countryside Stewardship are included) yet a superficial glance across the Worcestershire countryside demonstrates very clearly that most hedges still appear to be cut annually. Back in February, we held a meeting with local Natural England staff to try to ascertain what appears to be going wrong. The answer is a complex one.

The ELS has been designed in a way that puts the onus on farmers to determine what are the important environmental features on their farm and they are given a free choice from a menu of options as to which to include. There is no advisory role played by Natural England so unless the farmer accesses help and advice from elsewhere there are no assurances that what is included in the agreement in any way overcomes the landscape scale environmental problems the scheme was intended to address. As far as hedgerows are concerned, the hedgerow option has proved popular but, because of the way the points system works, only a small proportion of farm

hedges need to be entered in the scheme in order to reach the required target for payment and it is farmers that select which hedgerows to include/exclude.

Another problem is that the hands-off approach of Natural England also applies to compliance. There is no proper system of monitoring in place to ensure that the various prescriptions in the agreement are being followed. Evidence suggests that there may be confusion in the minds of some landowners regarding what is meant by rotational cutting and that this has led to an “on year off year” approach to flailing with all the hedges being cut the same year rather than some of the hedges being cut in rotation every year. The scheme has been devised in a way that requires “low technical input” to use the jargon and this has been exacerbated by cuts in Natural England’s budget which have seriously limited the number of “care and maintenance” visits that have been possible. It is only where things appear to have gone seriously wrong, such as was the case with hedgerows adjacent to Grafton Wood, that actual visits by Natural England staff have taken place.

In order to try to obtain more of an overview, as a consequence of our meeting, Natural England provided us with a map showing which farms had taken up the hedgerow option within ELS. Branch volunteers, supported by some of our **Brown Hairstreak** local champions, have now visited most of the farms within the current distribution of the butterfly which has proved highly illuminating. Although without copies of the farm agreements it is impossible to say whether the particular cutting regimes were compliant or not, what was abundantly clear was how little impact the scheme was having on the scale of annual hedge trimming. As far as we could see, and we kept our observations to public roads and footpaths, on most farms visited in excess of 75% hedgerows had been flailed this winter and on many farms this figure was well over 90% (a full report will be shortly available). Indeed, in the majority of cases, it was impossible to distinguish any difference between the hedgerow management practices of a farm within ELS and an adjacent farm outside the scheme. This seems a pretty powerful indictment of a scheme designed to address landscape-scale environmental problems and costing annually thousands of pounds of taxpayer’s money.

So what is the way forward? Firstly, the points system within ELS needs to be revised so that payment requires a greater proportion of hedgerows to come into rotational hedgerow management and ideally hedges to be cut on a three year rotation rather than two. Secondly, the role of Natural England needs to be extended so that advisors are more involved in the process of drawing up of farm agreements and that automatic annual visits are made to every farm in the scheme. Thirdly, more resources should be made available by Government for the HLS which requires the completion of a detailed Farm Environment Plan and allows for site-specific tailored prescriptions. Locally, available resources should be directed towards the Forest of Feckenham which should be viewed as a priority area for HLS agreements. Finally, and this is where Richard’s article strikes the right note, we need to do more to win

over hearts and minds. Culture and tradition regarding annual hedge flailing is strongly ingrained amongst farmers to such an extent that neatly trimmed hedges are often seen as an outward sign of good husbandry of the land. One positive to come out of our meeting with Natural England, providing they can find some money to support it, is a farm visit planned for the autumn which would be open to farmers and their contractors to attend. This would provide the opportunity to discuss hedge cutting regimes at first hand and hopefully offer follow up visits.

With butterflies and moths continuing to decline, it is really important that agri-environment schemes deliver the wildlife benefits for which they were intended. Our experience in Worcs this year in particular, which is mirrored in other parts of the country, shows just how far we have still to go.

Butterflies in Literature 2, Notes and views of the Purple Emperor

Peter Branson

I had intended to write about something else but a recent publication, *British and Irish Butterflies* by Adrian Riley, referred to *Notes and Views of the Purple Emperor* by I.R.P. Heslop, G.E. Hyde and R.E. Stockley (1964). So I ordered a copy from the British library through Shropshire County Library.

I had expected a slim volume but received instead over 250 pages, 22 plates and an index, we are told, of over 1775 items. The book comprises 33 papers, mainly by Ian Heslop, written between 1949 and 1961, some previously published in *The Entomologist*, the *Entomologist's Gazette* and the *Entomological Record*. A black and white photograph shows Heslop, a middle aged man, grey hair, neatly trimmed hair, smartly dressed.

The book has it all: entomology, biology, taxonomy, ecology and social history; not to mention sexual jealousy, precocious children and mystery.

At times Heslop is vain and pompous but he is always meticulous. Writing in 1953, the former colonial official announces that "the **Purple Emperor** butterfly is the big game of the butterfly world" and "by a coincidence I have caught exactly as many **Purple Emperors** as I have shot elephants, viz. four in each case". In subsequent years he goes on to "bag" many more Purple Emperors. His enthusiasm for the butterfly knows no bounds.

Paper 2 is an anthology of previous writing on *Apatura iris*. Early collectors could barely contain themselves; the insect was often referred to as "His Imperial majesty", described as wearing "a royal velvet cloak". A favoured tree on which the butterfly might perch was "the Emperor's throne". There was much debate on the best way to catch it. Nets on long poles, up to 40 feet in length, were used, perhaps not always successfully. The merits of various baits or lures, such as carrion or excrement, in attracting males to the ground, were discussed.

Butterfly collecting developed rapidly during the second half of the 19th century with the advent of rail travel and cycling and walking tours. The Purple Emperor seems to have been part of the popular consciousness, as evidenced by this quotation from *Three Men on the Bummel* by Jerome K. Jerome. Describing an unseemly early morning dash to Ealing station by “stout City gentlemen”, Jerome has one onlooker shout “even money on the Purple Emperor!”. It was a nickname given to retired military man “liable to colour under exercise”.

Heslop, again writing in 1953, is also concerned with conservation. He deplores clear felling and replanting with non-native species. This led to his involvement with Bentley Woods in Wiltshire and the Society For the Promotion of Nature Reserves.

In 1954 Heslop achieved the cherished ambition of breeding an *Apatura iris*. By 1952 he had developed a stock of pot grown Broad-leaved willow, the foodplant. After 14 hours' beating in Hampshire and Sussex woods, in May 1854, in the company of baron de Worms (one could n't make this up!), “I beat a half-grown **Purple Emperor** caterpillar off a bush of Broad-leaved willow”.

The insect was reared on the potted bushes in a specially constructed cage in Heslop's garage. A detailed diary was kept. A state of high anxiety was reached at one stage – would the noise and vibration of Heslop's car engine alarm the caterpillar? The car was banished from the garage for a period. We are told “the imago, a normal male, emerged on 10th July. Few events have ever occasioned me greater satisfaction.”

Variations and aberrations excited Heslop enormously. There is a great deal of discussion about the forms *iole*, *lugenda* and *iolata* (*semi-iole*). He was not shy in naming three aberrations after himself; *Apatura maximinus Heslop*, *Apatura sari Heslop* and *Apatura sorbioduni Heslop*.

Sexual jealousy? “One huge male threw himself repeatedly at my wife's face, flapping his wings with an audible click.” This was *maximinus Heslop*; the incident is referred to twice. Heslop is so intent on “taking” females (and males), as he delightfully puts it, that he is unaware a male Purple Emperor has designs on the unsuspecting Mrs. Heslop.

And the precocious children? “It was off a window that my elder daughter Margaret, at the age of 10 years and 10 months, caught her first Purple Emperor, a large and perfect male in Wiltshire in 1956. Also “in the collection of my son John Heslop, being a male taken wild by him in when he was nine.” Also “The magnificent example (by Jane Heslop) was her first specimen of this species, taken (at rest on a board leaning against a shed) by her unaided in 1955 when she was aged only five years and four months”. Mr. and Mrs. Heslop, Margaret, John and Jane all maintained distinct collections. I shall refrain from comment.

And finally to mystery. The book ends with a "List of First Subscribers", 135 names and addresses. They're mainly individuals, but it includes three public libraries – Birmingham, Doncaster and Oldham. The list begins with Dr. R.G. Ainley of Chorlton-cum-Hardy and ends with N.G. Wykes of Carter House, Eton College. There is an Air Marshall, a Rear Admiral, other military ranks, doctors, professors and ministers of religion. There is an address in South Africa and one in France. There is the Baron de Worms and Colonel Montgomery of the Anti-Slavery Society. The list is exclusively male.

I can find no explanation in the text for this list. Did these institutions/ individuals help fund publication? Or can it be that we have the membership of some semi-clandestine "order of the Purple Emperor"? But Birmingham Reference Library?

An intriguing book, especially for those long winter evenings, with a puzzling denouement.

References

Notes and Views of the Purple Emperor (1964), Southern Publishing, Brighton.

Three men in a Boat and *Three Men on the Bummel* are Penguin Classics.

British and Irish Butterflies by A.Riley (2001) Brambleby Books, Luton

Letters

Dear Sir,

I write to add my support to Catherine Humphreys letter in the last issue. In my view she is totally right and I write as one of the group who flew to Glasgow. The trip was wonderful and the people lovely, but next time I shall go by train. As conversationists and environmentalists we should practise what we preach and put our money where our mouth is, otherwise we are hypocrites. The Earth, our only home, needs saving now – not next year. We should stop thinking about our personal convenience and seriously consider the big picture.

Yours sincerely,

Alma Faulkner (Coventry)

Dear Sir,

I read with interest Catherine Humphreys comments in the last Comma about air travel. She is quite right to point to the environmental consequences of flying and it is true that people should be encouraged to consider carefully the consequences of their travel choices. However, if we are to seriously look to reduce CO2 gases in the atmosphere we need to consider changes in all aspects of the way we live. For most people, flying by plane is something that they do once or twice a year. Often it is to visit places or meet friends and relatives that they would otherwise not be able to reach without air travel. At the same time, however, many other people drive to work or the shops daily when there are public transport alternatives, leave lights on, never turn off appliances

at the socket, use non-recycled plastic bags every time they go to the supermarket, over-heat their homes and offices, hardly ever walk or cycle anywhere and throw away items that could be reused or recycled.

One of the problems with environmental debates is that there is always a tendency to look for someone else to blame. Governments do this all the time but it is also something which goes on at an individual level. By focussing attention on flying, it conveniently distracts us from the many other ways in which we personally contribute to global warming in our everyday lives.

We all have a personal responsibility to the world we live in and need to look at our lifestyles as a whole not just small aspects of it. If people want to fly then it is their personal choice to do so but by all means encourage people to consider how they might reduce their carbon footprint in other ways. Through Butterfly Conservation, I am sure we can do more to promote public transport or car sharing to field trips or arrange minibuses linked to air or rail travel, as was the case with the Scotland trip to which your correspondent refers, and this is something which most of us, I am sure, would support. For those who feel guilty about flying, there are a number of carbon offset schemes that people can contribute to or better still they could make a donation to support the work of West Midlands Butterfly Conservation. I strongly suspect that the majority of our members are already very aware of environmental issues and are probably doing more than most for the planet in a variety of ways. By all means let's encourage people and promote greater levels of awareness but, at the same time, I think it is important to resist the temptation to lecture or try to label people as ignorant or destructive on the basis of a single action.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Williams

Dear Sir,

One afternoon in March 1948 I was in the Great Hall of Dulwich College at a dress rehearsal for Richard III when a **Hummingbird hawk moth** hovered in front of me for a few seconds. He was attracted by my gaudy floral headwear and helped by my part, which required me to stand still and say nothing.

The moth went on to receive a rave review in the Times' Nature Notes, though my part went unnoticed, even in the school magazine. I wonder if readers have met this moth in winter?

Yours sincerely,

John Lewis (Stratford upon Avon)

White-letter Hairstreak eggs

Tony Moore

I was motivated by Rob Thorne's excellent article in last spring's 'Comma' to try and find some **White-letter Hairstreak** eggs in my home area of Stafford. For anyone who could not attend one of his field trips, I offer the following comments on my efforts (as a complete beginner) in the hope that they may prove useful.

Unfortunately, when I started looking, it was only October and the elms were still in full leaf. That was my first mistake! Searches at this time of year should only be undertaken by those of a masochistic bent; you just can't see the twigs for the leaves! After several fruitless afternoons, I decided to wait until December. The intervening time was used to locate elms in the area. There were plenty, but, as I had walked this area regularly for fifteen years and never seen a **White-letter Hairstreak**, I was not hopeful. That was the second mistake! You have to believe. I spent several afternoons looking (usually in exactly the wrong sort of place), and was considering giving up when I hooked down a slim branch of a small flowering Wych elm and suddenly – Bingo! There it was – a tiny, gunmetal grey, perfect 'flying saucer'. I took a photograph and hurried home to compare with Rob's picture in the article.

Sadly, this was not conclusive – my picture did not really look like his. Somewhat dismayed, I checked the photograph in the excellent *A complete Guide to British Butterflies* by Margaret Brooks. Her picture was identical – Phew! Liz Goodyear kindly confirmed the I.D. Finding the first egg is absolutely the biggest hurdle; thereafter you know precisely what you are looking for. I next searched a flowering, smooth-leaved elm, again not expecting success, as I had read that the butterfly usually chooses Wych elm. It was very awkward to search, as the twigs are small and close together, it is also difficult to remember where you have already looked. But, after half an hour, a second egg. Just wonderful! The euphoria engendered by finding such a tiny object has to be experienced to be believed. As I had not really been expecting to find anything, this search had been conducted in a somewhat desultory manner. As an experiment, I carefully worked back over the branches that I had already searched. Would you believe, two more eggs had been miraculously laid in the 30 minutes since my initial scrutiny! You gotta believe!

It now seemed certain that there was a flourishing colony in the area, and so it proved. Just about every suitable elm in an area of about 2 sq. km., produced eggs. But you must look in the right places. Every egg I found was on flowering, south facing, healthy elm (of various species) with no trace of lichen or algae, and on twigs of no more than 3mm in diameter. Aspect seems paramount. There is one nice bit of elm growing along the side of a small wood. It faces fractionally north of west, but still gets plenty of sun and is covered in flower buds. I searched it very diligently on two occasions, without

success. I then noticed a thin branch protruding out of the southern end and clearing the associated blackthorn hedge. I hooked it down and immediately found an egg. Within as many minutes I had two more! Although, as Rob says, most eggs will be found 'sunny side up', it is worth twisting each twig slightly between the thumb and finger, as it is quite easy to overlook an egg laid on the side of a twig.

For anyone thinking of having a go at finding eggs, do be advised that this pursuit should come with a Government Health Warning – it is very addictive. These days, when I go for a walk in the countryside with my wife, she is in constant fear of my spotting any elm. She knows that she is then likely to continue the walk on her own, and that I will come home, eventually, with my hair and clothes covered in bits and a silly grin on my face. Good hunting!

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. Check <http://www.westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.org.uk>

April

Saturday 26th April 10.30am Green Hairstreak

Meet at Marquis Drive Visitor Centre (SJ003153) but moving on so park on the road. Visitor centre is signed off the Penkridge - Rugeley road. Walking kit and packed lunch. Jim Cresswell 07842 773416.

Sunday 27th Moors and Emperors, Staffordshire

Meet 11.00am at The Winking Man pub (Upper Hulme) on the A53 Leek-Buxton road. This is a very weather dependent trip so please phone on the Saturday to check that it's still on. John Bryan 01782-518900.

May

Sunday, 4th 10am-5pm Tiddesley Wood Open Day

Wildlife Trust guided walks, bug hunts, craft marquee, homemade refreshments, wildlife stalls and displays including ours. Come and find out about the special events planned to mark BC's 40th anniversary. Admission: Adults £3, Children £1. Car Park at north end of wood along the Pershore-Besford road. Grid Ref. SO929462.

Sunday 4th 2pm Butterfly & Moth walk at Hartlebury Common

Joint event with the Hartlebury Common Local Group. Meet at Goal post car park on Stourport-Crossway Green road. Grid Ref. SO 822703. Target species: Emperor moth, Green Hairstreak. Mike Southall (01299 251467).

Sat. 10th 6 am Dawn Chorus Walk at Grafton Wood NR

Followed by breakfast in the Three Parishes Hall. Meet at Grafton Flyford church just off Worcester-Alcester road. Grid Ref. SO 962557. Leaders: John Tilt and Dave Jackson (tel. 01386 792458).

Saturday 10th 10.30am Dingy Skipper

Meet at Chasewater visitor centre, SJ040071. Chasewater is signed off the A5. Walking kit and packed lunch. Contact Jim Cresswell 07842 773416.

Saturday 10th 19:15 Queenswood Dymock Moth trapping

In conjunction with Ledbury Naturalists. Meet at the FC entrance to Dymock Wood SO683284 situated on the minor road South of Kempley at 19.15hrs. **NB This is not Queen's Wood, Dinmore!** Robin Hemming (01568-797351)

Monday 12th 11.00am Dingy Skipper

Telford Butterfly Group Meeting at Rough Park. Meet at 11am at SJ674044 (at the end of Newcomen Way which is off Woodside Avenue). If it is a good day it would be a good opportunity for some survey work (especially for **Green Hairstreak**) so please bring a packed lunch, plenty to drink and stout shoes etc. I will as usual have my mobile with me on the day (Jenny 07968-549580).

Saturday 17th Wood White meeting at Wigmore Rolls, Herefordshire

email jjoy@butterfly-conservation.org for a booking form. Meet at Wigmore Rolls FC site entrance (SO397688) in north Herefordshire at 11am. As car parking is very restricted at the site entrance Jenny Joy is happy to provide a shuttle service from Wigmore village in her car. Jenny will be at the car park in Wigmore (signposted in the village) from 10.30am.

Sat. 24th 11 am Grizzled Skipper Safari

Joint event with the Vale Landscape Trust. A special visit to two recently discovered and unusual sites for this BAP species. Meet entrance road to Throckmorton landfill site near Wyre Piddle on the Worcester-Evesham road. Grid Ref. SO 970480. Leader: Trevor Bucknall (tel. 01905 755757).

Sat, 24th 8.30 pm Moth Night at Hartlebury Common

Joint event with Hartlebury Common Local Group. Meeting arrangements as 4th May. Leader: Mike Southall (tel. 01299 251467).

Monday 26th 10.30 am Butterflies by Bike in Wyre Forest

Bank Holiday. Meet by old railway bridge in Dry Mill Lane, Bewdley for gentle ride through the forest. Suitable for families. Car parking available at starting point. Target Species: **Pearl-bordered** and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. Leader: Mike (the bike) Williams (01299 824860).

Saturday 31st Moth trapping, Shropshire

Meet at Ford Hall (organic) Farm, Market Drayton, at 20.30pm. The farm is on the A53 Newcastle-under-Lyme to Shrewsbury road very close to the Muller factory. Booking essential (20 places) ring John Bryan 01782-518900.

June

June 7th spring meeting - See page 4 for details.

Sat, 7th National Moth Night (and day) in Wyre Forest

Meet at Lodge Hill Farm, Natural England offices from 11am to 5pm for daytime event and 8pm onwards for night time event. People can book for either or both events. Meet by old railway bridge in Dry Mill Lane, Bewdley Grid Ref. SO773764.

Sat, 7th 9.00 pm National Moth Night at Prees Heath Common Reserve

Meet at Prees Heath Common Reserve. Stephen Lewis (07900-886809).

Saturday 7th 9.00pm National Moth Night in a Herefordshire orchard

Which orchard is not confirmed yet - contact Robin Hemming (01568-797351).

Sat, 7th 9.00 pm National Moth Night at Bishops Wood

Mike Southall will be running his trap – phone 01299-251467 to join him.

Sat 14th 8.00am Silver-studded Blue emergence at Prees Heath.

Led by Jenny Joy and Stephen Lewis (07900-886809).

Saturday 14th 10.30am Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillary

Meet at Marquis Drive visitor centre SJ003153, but moving on so park on the road. Visitor centre is signed off the Penkridge - Rugeley road. Walking kit and packed lunch. Contact Jim Cresswell 07842 773416.

Sunday 15 Argent & Sable at Burnt Wood

Meet 10.30am on the car park of The Loggerheads Pub SJ739 359 in the centre of Loggerheads on the A53 from Newcastle-u-Lyme-Shrewsbury Road. Other sites may be visited. Very weather dependent so phone John Bryan the night before 01782 518900.

Saturday 21 Welsh Clearwing at Cannock Chase

Meet in the car park of visitor centre on Marquis Drive. For those using sat-nav post code is WS12 4PW. The visitor centre is sign-posted from most directions in to the park. Other target species **Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Wood Tiger** and **Clouded Buff**. **Booking essential** as a maximum of 30 is our limit for this guided walk. This is always over-subscribed so get in early!

There will be a **moth trapping** event in the evening at The Punchbowl. Those not coming to the daytime event please phone for directions. All additional equipment welcome as we can spread out as far as we want! All info/booking of places Tel John Bryan 01782 518 900.

Sat, 21st 7.30 pm Moths Count Event at Wyre Forest

Callow Hill Visitor Centre (signposted from Bewdley-Cleobury Mortimer road). Grid Ref. SO 750740 targeting **Common Fan-foot, Orange Moth, Great Oak Beauty** etc. Meet in Car Park at 7.30pm for slide show followed by trapping for these species meeting at the Car Park at 9.30pm. Dave Grundy 0121-4465446

Sun 29th 2.00pm Silver-studded Blue and other insects.

A family walk on Prees Heath Common led by Stephen Lewis. (07900-886809)

July

Sat 5th 2.00pm Silver-studded Blue and Heathland Restoration walk

Led by Stephen Lewis (07900-886809)

Sun, 6th 2.00 pm 40th Anniversary Walk followed by picnic/afternoon tea

Target Species: Silver-washed Fritillary. Full details nearer the time from the branch website or Mike Williams (tel. 01299-824860).

Sat, 12th/Sun. 13th Moth trapping/course at Lower Smite Farm, Worcs.

Moth trapping on Sat. night at 8:30 then a training course the following day. Contact Dave Grundy to attend both/either (0121-4465446)

Sat, 12th 8:30pm Lord's Wood The Doward

Meet at The FC Car Park by the Camp Site at SO548166. Contact Robin Hemming (01568 797351).

Sun 13th 2.00pm Silver-studded Blue and Heathland Restoration walk.

Led by Stephen Lewis (07900-886809).

Sat, 19th 10am-4pm Butterflies, Bugs & Botany Day at Grafton Wood

Guided walks, displays, woodland crafts, home-made refreshments in Three Parishes Hall. Target species: **White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary**. Directions as 10th May. Further details from John Tilt (01386-792458).

Sat, 19th/Sun 20th Sutton Park moth-trapping and course

Moth-trapping in Long Moor Valley for a course the following day, 8pm onwards, contact Dave Grundy for details on 0121-4465446. The Sunday course on moth ID is at the Donkey Sanctuary, 10.30am to 4.30pm.

Sat, 26th 10 am Monkwood Discovery Day - Guided walk

Part of Save our Butterflies Week. Meet at reserve car park on minor road between Sinton Green-Monkwood Green. SO 804606. Target Species: White Admiral, Purple Hairstreak. Leader: Paddy Harrison (01905-641523)

August

Sat, 9th 8pm Moth trapping in Herefordshire

Venue to be confirmed, contact Robin Hemming on 01568 797351.

Sun, 10th 10 am Brown Hairstreak Action Day

Annual Blackthorn Bash for Brown Hairstreak. Morning conservation task followed by refreshments (more Blackthorn!) and a walk around wood with owner in search of **Brown Hairstreaks**. Meet Grafton Flyford Church (see 10th May for directions) but please be on time as we will be driving on to another location. Leader: Bob Steele (ring Mike Williams for details).

Sun, 31st 11 am Brown Hairstreak Day

Morning walk in search of Brown Hairstreaks, followed by homemade refreshments at Three Parishes Village Hall. Meet Grafton Flyford Church (see 10th May for directions). Leader: Mike Williams.

September

Sun 7th 2.00pm The history and heritage of Prees Heath Common

Led by Eleanor Cooke and Stephen Lewis (to be confirmed).

Sat., 13th/Sun 14th Sutton Park moth-trapping and course

Moth-trapping at Little Bracebridge Pool for a course the following day, 7pm onwards, contact Dave Grundy for details on 0121-4465446. The Sunday course on moth ID is at the Donkey Sanctuary, 10.30am to 4.30pm.

Saturday 13th 7:40pm Moth Night , Herefords.

Venue to be confirmed, contact Dean Fenton on 01568-611575.

Saturday 20th 7pm Moth Night at Monkwood

Meet at reserve car park on minor road between Sinton Green-Monkwood Green. Grid Ref. SO 804606. Leader: Mike Southall (01299 251467).

October

Sat, 11th 6.20 pm Moth Night at Haugh wood, Herefordshire

Meet at 18:20 at FC car park. Robin Hemming (01568 797351)

Sun 12th 2.00pm Fungi Foray at Prees Heath

Led by John Hughes and Stephen Lewis (07900-886809).

Sat, 18th 10.30 am Fungus Foray at Monkwood

Meet at reserve car park on minor road between Sinton Green-Monkwood Green. Grid Ref. SO 804606. Ring Paddy Harrison on 01905-641523.

More Dave Grundy mothing events

Wyre Forest Outdoor Field Meetings – meet at Wyre Forest Visitor Centre Car Park: May 2nd at 7pm, June 6th at 8pm, July 4th at 8:30pm, August 1st at 8pm and Sept. 5th at 7pm.

Dave is also trapping and looking for day flying moths at Cannock Chase, Hednesford Hills and Wyre Forest on other dates and will welcome other people. Contact him directly on 0121-4465446 or 07778-980924.

Moth recording at Chaddesley Wood

Alan Prior

As always, a big thank you to all who attended the recording sessions. Hopefully, we'll see you all again in 2008. The dates for this year are:

- Saturday 3rd May 19:00
- Saturday 5th July 20:30
- Saturday 6th September 19:30
- Saturday 1st November 16:00
- Saturday 21st June 21:00
- Saturday 2nd August 20:00
- Saturday 4th October 18:00

Meet as usual at the Jubilee Gate (GR: SO 914736). On **National Moth Night**, Saturday 7th June, we've decided to visit **Pepper Wood**, five minutes from Chaddesley Wood - all are welcome. Meet in the car park at SO 938745. For details contact Mervyn Needham (01562-777461) or myself (0121-7782973).

The Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary needs you!

Cannock Chase has a **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** colony in Sherbrook valley which is monitored each year by SCC rangers and volunteers. This monitoring is vital to ensure the right habitat is maintained and restoration work is undertaken. The monitoring comprises weekly visits from the last week of May to the first week of July. Teams of three or four people are needed to walk the length of the valley from Gospel Place to the Punchbowl. The terrain is quite difficult in places as it is the very central part of the valley either side of the stream - uneven boggy ground, grass tussocks, scrub and brambles.

The walks need to be done in sunny weather and so may need to be organised at short notice if the weather is changeable. If you live locally and are available in the week please call Jim Cresswell on 07842 773416.

West Midland Butterfly Transects 2007

John Tilt

I have now collated the 2007 transect results and sent them off to Head Office to be included in the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. A group of experts will then do some analysis to give population trends. I have included some of 2006 results to show some national trends.

So how did we do in the West Midlands? Well 28 Transects were walked – most of these over 26 weeks from 1st April to 30th September. I estimate something over 1000 person hours of work. The results are keyed into the Transect Walker Software and sent to head office.

A big thank you to all those who took part. 31 species of butterfly were observed on the transects and over 2000 butterflies counted.

Table 1 shows how 2007 compares with 2006. To compile this table I:

1. Selected the transects which were done in both years.
2. Adjusted the counts to allow for missed weeks (holidays etc)
3. Calculated the % loss and gains from 2006.

It will be of no surprise to anyone who observes butterflies that 2007 was not a good year largely due to the strange weather patterns. A mild winter – warm and sunny spring – followed by an extremely wet summer.

Some of the over-wintering butterflies such as **Peacock** and **Small Tortoiseshell** showed good results but **Brimstone** and **Comma** did not. It has to be borne in mind that 2006 was the warmest year on record. But generally it can be seen that butterflies were down by 23% in the West Midland Transects. It will be interesting to see if the national results compare.

One of the most important purposes of Transect recording is to monitor the best sites for BAP species (Biodiversity Action Plan). **Table 2** shows how many sites were monitored for BAP species over the last five years.

It would be useful to monitor far more sites in the West Midlands. If anyone would like to take part in this scheme please contact John Tilt on 01386 792458 or john.tilt2@btopenworld.com.

Table 1 Paired Counts 2006 to 2007

Sum of Adjusted Total	2006	2007	% +/-
Meadow Brown	6571	5409	-17.68
Ringlet	4897	3747	-23.48
Gatekeeper	4895	2207	-54.90
Peacock	879	2014	129.13

Sum of Adjusted Total	2006	2007	% +/-
Green-veined White	1028	1370	33.20
Speckled Wood	1709	1160	-32.10
Wood White	875	949	8.49
Small White	1625	938	-42.31
Marbled White	960	653	-32.05
Large White	835	593	-29.01
Brimstone	555	499	-10.17
Small Tortoiseshell	430	474	10.22
Small/Essex Skipper	453	457	0.99
Large Skipper	484	432	-10.61
Silver-washed Fritillary	381	409	7.51
Orange-tip	429	409	-4.83
Red Admiral	471	407	-13.58
Small Skipper	427	360	-15.71
Comma	573	303	-47.08
Common Blue	797	184	-76.89
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	109	128	17.38
Small Copper	319	124	-61.22
Large Heath	190	122	-35.79
Holly Blue	52	116	123.67
White Admiral	228	106	-53.51
Small Heath	165	59	-64.02
Painted Lady	392	51	-87.09
Green Hairstreak	32	33	3.16
Small Pearl-bordered Frit	17	23	35.94
Brown Argus	48	22	-53.27
Purple Hairstreak	109	19	-82.66
Grizzled Skipper	16	17	7.09
Essex Skipper	22	12	-43.57
Dingy Skipper	6	10	58.70
White-letter Hairstreak	13	9	-36.46
Dark Green Fritillary	18	7	-57.73
Brown Hairstreak	10	2	-83.38
Clouded Yellow	34	1	-96.78
Wall	124	1	-99.15
Grayling	1		-100.00
Grand Total	31178	23838	-23.54

Table 2

Species	Data	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Grand Total
Brown Argus	Sum of total	7	4	16	42	14	83
	Count of site	3	4	4	4	3	18
Brown Hairstreak	Sum of total	2	5	7	9	1	24
	Count of site	1	1	1	1	1	5
Dark Green Fritillary	Sum of total		2		17	7	26
	Count of site		2		2	3	7
Dingy Skipper	Sum of total	1	15	10	5	10	41
	Count of site	1	2	2	2	3	10
Grayling	Sum of total				1	6	7
	Count of site				1	1	2
Green Hairstreak	Sum of total	5	6	12	26	24	73
	Count of site	3	3	2	4	6	18
Grizzled Skipper	Sum of total	11	16	17	14	17	75
	Count of site	2	3	2	2	2	11
Large Heath	Sum of total				190	122	312
	Count of site				1	1	2
Pearl-b Fritillary	Sum of total	104	106	174	87	106	577
	Count of site	4	4	5	5	5	23
Silver-wash Fritillary	Sum of total	152	228	227	350	307	1264
	Count of site	6	6	8	11	10	41
Small Heath	Sum of total	84	117	120	156	59	536
	Count of site	9	6	8	7	8	38
Small Pearl-b Frit	Sum of total	27	14	27	17	17	102
	Count of site	3	2	3	2	3	13
Wall	Sum of total	3	84	3	61	1	152
	Count of site	2	2	3	5	1	13
White Admiral	Sum of total	90	134	179	222	93	718
	Count of site	3	5	7	8	8	31
Wh-letter Hairstreak	Sum of total	3		1	10	7	21
	Count of site	1		1	4	2	8
Wood White	Sum of total	431	691	742	581	763	3208
	Count of site	3	4	3	3	5	18
Total Sum of total		920	1422	1535	1788	1554	7219
Total Count of site		41	44	49	62	62	258

Committee members

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

Chairman	David Jackson Jacksongrus@btinternet.com	01902-344716
Conservation Officer	Mike Southall michael_southall58@hotmail.co.uk	01299-251467
Treasurer	Andy Littley andylittley@supanet.com	01562-887117
Webmaster pro-tem	Nigel Stone Njstone@hotmail.com	02476-335189
Branch Recorder		
Mapmate database	Jim Cresswell jim.cresswell@talk21.com	07842 773416
Co-ordinator/South Staffs Advisor		
Transects	John Tilt John.tilt2@btopenworld.com	01386-792458
Research Officer	John Dover jdover@nymph.demon.co.uk	01925 752905
Brown Hairstreak Champion	Mike Williams mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk	01299-824860
Regional Development Officers	Dr. Jenny Joy jjoy@butterfly-conservation.org	01952-245684
	Jane Ellis jellis@butterfly-conservation.org	01788-510695
Reserve managers:		
Grafton Wood	John Tilt John.tilt2@btopenworld.com	01386-792458
Monkwood	Paddy Harrison paddyharrison@ukonline.co.uk	01905-641523
Prees Heath	Stephen Lewis	07900-886809
Conservation officers: (for Shropshire see Jenny Joy, above)		
Worcs.	Trevor Bucknall trevor.bucknall@virgin.net	01905-755757
Herefords.	Ian Hart yellowrattle4@aol.com	01981 510259
Moth officers:		
Worcestershire	Mike Southall (see above)	01299-251467
County leaders:		
Staffordshire	John Bryan johnpbryan15@aol.com	01782-518900
Herefordshire	Dean Fenton fenton@littleburyfarm.co.uk	01568-611575

Speckled Wood and Dark Green Fritillaries



Photo: © Tony Moore



Photo: © Tony Moore