

The Comma



No. 63, Winter 2005/2006



Grizzled Skipper Photo: © Jane Ellis

This issue includes:

- The Grizzled Skipper
- Garden plants for lepidoptera
- The Garden Moth Scheme
- The Ringlet in Staffordshire
- History - Weaver's Fritillary
- Chaddesley Wood review
- Spring event listings
- Regional Officers' reports

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

Registered charity ... No. 254937



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Editorial (1)

There's another editorial on page 26, with more news.

The deadline for contributions to the next issue is 14 March 2006. Contributions of articles or photos, in all formats, will be welcome. This will list all events planned for the summer, right through to October.

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

The address for contributions is:

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

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

Chairman's Notes

Richard Southwell

Another year starts and it should be a milestone one for the branch.

Hopefully our current Regional Officers will be gainfully employed from a different funding stream and so will be more project oriented. Jenny is likely to be majoring on some of our priority species whilst Jane will be breaking new ground as one in a team across England protecting habitats on brownfield sites. In this role it will be interesting to see how we work with our colleagues in Warwickshire and East Midlands branches. In addition we welcome Anna Jordan who was appointed as Hereford Woodlands Officer before Christmas. I am expecting interesting developments from her over the next three years and given our first few chats I doubt it will just be woodlands that will be the beneficiaries of Anna's presence. Best of luck to you all.

At the time of writing I am told contracts should be exchanged on Prees Heath at the end of January. Can we dare hope that someone like Sir David Attenborough or Alan Titchmarsh can be there at the official opening? The opening will probably be during the World Cup, when the **Silver-studded Blue** has its peak emergence, so I have insisted it happens when England are not playing to gain the best chance for maximum publicity. Rest assured I am politicking like mad at head office to ensure the biggest grant the society has ever received is treated in an appropriate manner even if we are north of the Watford Gap! Don't lets forget there is also a five year full-time post that comes with this project so I also expect the earth to move in Shropshire.

Even though our branch is currently tight financially I hope we will be able to continue with the Local Funding Initiative. In 2005 the money went to Mervyn and Rosabelle Needham to set up a village moth group in Worcestershire. It was so successful they got the attention of BBC Midlands Today. The Norton Covert project in Stourbridge, all about local residents not accepting the status quo and prepared to do something about it, is going from strength to strength. 48 different people turned up to help over a weekend! Here the money is being used to fund a butterfly friendly hedge. Further funds have gone to servicing chainsaws for our volunteer 'axemen'. You really should try and get to one of our winter work parties; it's amazing what happens. Trevor Bucknall is also looking for support for his admirable initiative BUTT (Butterflies Under Threat Team). It is a roving group that will assist where help is urgently needed at short notice. Do call him. In Staffordshire the priority has become giving accurate grid references in large woodland complexes for priority species such as **Argent & Sable** so the money is being spent on a GPS monitor. It is self evident from these quite disparate requests that this scheme is capable of adapting to local needs.

All this activity alongside new officers joining us will undoubtedly cause some indigestion, and I daresay frustrations, as we will be presented with a plethora

of opportunities. I will announce changes to the branch committee in the next newsletter. The Branch also needs to bolster its finances from local fundraising to pay for these activities and support this newsletter. Apologies for repetition but please volunteer to help us either on a local or branchwide basis, we need as many hands as possible to make light work this year.

A Brief Review of Moth Recording at Chaddesley Wood in 2005

Alan Prior

It came as quite a surprise to learn that no great effort had previously been made to record the moths of such a special site as Chaddesley Wood. I found this out during a conversation with the warden, Mervyn Needham, in 2003. It took a little time but we finally got ourselves together and organised a monthly programme of recording sessions for 2005. These were deliberately made "open session" so that anyone and everyone could come along and join in the fun.

The response was tremendous and it encouraged a wide range of people to spend an enjoyable evening looking at moths. From local Chaddesley area residents to the County Recorder for moths Tony Simpson, they came from far and wide. Mervyn and I were both surprised and thrilled with the turnout.

The first of 16 visits throughout the year was made in February and the last in November. During that period over 360 species were found. It proved what a good site for moths this is. We found our share of both Nationally and Locally scarce species.

In February we found the wood contained a healthy population of **Small Brindled Beauty**. The following month the spectacular **Red Sword-Grass** was discovered in one of the traps. Evidence for the further spread northwards of the **Dotted Chestnut** was found in April, together with a first county record of the Tortrix *Pammene Giganteana*. Another scarce Tortrix, *Pammene argyrana*, was seen in May, as was local speciality **Silver Cloud**. The continued spread of the returning **Orange Footman** lasted into June.

The biggest species return (114) was recorded in July as we ventured into the Black Meadow area of the woods. The micro moth *Monochroa lutulentella* was found, which pleased Tony. The only previous record for Chaddesley Wood was of one floating in a cattle water trough! Other good moths for July were **Lackey**, **Suspected** and **Waved Black**. August did not let us down either, with **Devon Carpet**, **Golden-rod Pug** and **Angle-striped Sallow** seen.

September produced **Pale Eggar** and **Feathered Gothic**, while in October the superb **Merveille du Jour** was seen in all its glory. Later in October the increasingly scarce **Figure of Eight** was found. The same night produced a new bird record for the wood as a Water Rail was seen turning over dead leaves in a ditch. With striking moths like **Sprawler** and **December Moth** on the wing in November, a highly successful year was drawing to a close.

My thanks for contributing to the success go to everyone who came to join us, with or without traps; you were all very welcome. Special thanks must go to Patrick Clement, who had the stressful job of collating all the records.

Finally, the monthly sessions will continue in 2006 and, as before, all are very welcome to come along. The dates and times are as follows:

- Saturday March 4th 17:00
- Saturday April 1st 18:30
- Saturday May 6th 19:30
- Saturday June 3rd 20:30
- Saturday July 1st 20:30
- Saturday August 5th 20:00
- Saturday September 2nd 19:30
- Saturday September 30th 18:30
- Saturday November 4th 16:00

On these dates there will always be someone at the Jubilee Gate (GR: SO914736) to meet you, whatever the weather. Additional recording sessions will take place, but will depend on the weather and time available. If interested, call either Mervyn Needham (01562-777461) or Alan Prior (0121-7782973).

Getting to Grips with the Grizzled Skipper

Jane Ellis

2005 was a good spring for this swift little butterfly, with it occurring in record numbers on some sites and being recorded throughout its usual haunts.

It is a species that can be easily overlooked by newcomers to the butterfly world, due to its fast buzzing flight which makes it difficult to follow and its passing resemblance to a moth. However, once it stops to perch, as it does regularly, on a prominent twig or to feed on flowers such as Common Bird's-foot trefoil or Bugle it can be quite easily identified by its distinctive black and white checkerboard wings. (Photos of both the **Grizzled Skipper** and the similar **Dingy Skipper** follow this article.)

Life cycle

The adults emerge in around late April and can fly until mid June. Eggs are laid singly on foodplants growing in warm positions either on bare ground or in short vegetation. The species overwinters as a pupa.

Habitat

The species favours wildflower rich short vegetation, usually with bare ground and with abundant caterpillar foodplants and nectar sources. The caterpillar foodplants for this species are plants from the *Rosaceae* family, commonly in

this region they are Creeping Cinquefoil, Wild or Barren Strawberry and Tormentil. The best position for these plants is with the leaves overhanging bare ground in a sunny sheltered position, although leaves over short vegetation can also be suitable. The additional warmth this gives enables the caterpillar to develop fast, reducing their chance of predation. South facing banks are ideal. Bare ground can be maintained naturally by rabbit burrowing and natural slippage of soil on embankments. The species is therefore found in many active and disused quarries, disused railway lines and other post industrial habitats. Light cattle grazing can also help to maintain bare ground. As the caterpillars grow bigger they move to slightly taller vegetation and bigger leaves; Bramble leaves are an ideal foodplant at this stage. The caterpillar will wrap the leaf around itself for cover and just nibble along the outside edge of the leaf. The adult requires abundant nectar sources which include a range of species including Bugle, Ground Ivy and buttercup species. The adult also requires taller dead vegetation (40-60 cm high), for example seed heads of St John's Wort and Plantain on which to roost.

Grizzled Skipper can also be found in woodland glades and clearings. Occasionally it breeds on heathland, damp grassland and dunes.

Where to see Grizzled Skipper in the West Midlands

The **Grizzled Skipper** is one of the most localised species within the region. During the last two decades it has continued to decline in the region as a whole and in each of the counties in which it is recorded, except for Warwickshire where it has increased by 18% (Joy, 2005). The following sites are all open access:

- **Wyre Forest** – the colony is located on the pipeline corridor at SO 743777, half a mile walk from the Forestry Commission car park at Earnwood Copse on the B4194 at Button Oak.
- **Llanymynech Rocks** (SJ 267218) – dramatic old limestone quarry. From the A483 in Pant, pull into Underhill Lane and use the car park.
- **Llyncllys Common** (SJ 273237) – limestone grassland with over 300 plant species. 5km south of Oswestry. Park in lay-by just west of Llyncllys crossroads on A495 and walk up Turners Lane.
- **Baggeridge Country Park** (SO 895925) – former coal mining site.

A leaflet giving more details about the **Grizzled Skipper** and its habitat requirements and land management needs is available from Jane Ellis on request. Tel: 01788 511052 or email jellis@butterfly-conservation.org

Grizzled Skipper (see pages 4-5)



Photo: © Patrick Clement

Dingy Skipper



Photo: Jane Ellis ©

The Strange Case of Weaver's Fritillary at Sutton Park

Dave Jackson

The following tale could easily have been spun as a mystery for Sherlock Holmes to unravel but, as the case has not been solved to this day, I think the intrigue surrounding the records of the claimed occurrences of **Weaver's Fritillary** in England will probably never be satisfactorily concluded – especially when the first specimens recorded were reputedly collected in the West Midlands!

Richard Weaver (1790 – 1860) was a renowned entomologist of his day, who scoured the British Isles from the late 1820s to around 1850, adding butterfly species to his vast collection, which he displayed in the Institution Rooms at Temple Row, Birmingham.

Weaver's Fritillary *Clossiana dia*, was named in his honour after the first two British specimens were identified whilst displayed in his famed collection as being taken by him in Sutton Park, Sutton Coldfield near Birmingham. (Sutton Park is in Vice-County 38, Warwickshire, for biological recording purposes.)

The two specimens were brought to light by the Revd W.T. Bree of Allesley Rectory when, following a visit to the Institution Room exhibits, he wrote and illustrated a description in Loudon's Magazine of Natural History in 1832, in a 'Notice of some singular Varieties of Papilionidae in Mr Weaver's Museum, Birmingham'. They were later sent to London to confirm their identity, as it had been initially thought they were just a strongly marked variety of **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** *Boloria selene*.

Throughout the remainder of his life, and despite quite assiduous questioning and challenges by his fellow peers, Richard Weaver maintained that his Fritillaries had been collected in Sutton Park. What is even more intriguing is that each specimen was stated to have been captured at either end of a six year intervening period.

The reason for all the controversy was that up until then there had been no records of **Weaver's Fritillary** in Britain.

Although we would be horrified at anyone collecting butterflies even on a small scale nowadays, Richard Weaver and his contemporaries passionately collected for themselves and, in some instances, for the advancement of knowledge, as borne out by his Museum of Natural History which held around 5,000 specimens at its peak and hosted visitors from distant parts of the United Kingdom and was said to have attracted noblemen and foreigners.

A fellow entomologist stated the displays were '*in extent and splendour with any provincial collection in the world.*'

Richard also added stuffed birds, fossils, minerals and shells, which were said to be 'beautifully arranged in a fifty foot long gallery and lit by five lights on each side'.

The butterflies, native and foreign, were displayed in glass cases down the middle – which may have given rise to the possibility that the fritillaries which bear his name were mistakenly added but, from 1842, Richard Weaver always denied any possibility that his eponymous specimens had been wrongly mixed with foreign species, even if perhaps placed there by someone else – we will never know, but surely we can acquit him of deliberate falsehood.

He wrote to *The Zoologist* in his defence: "*Yet I really think that there is little justice or good feeling in accusing, or even suspecting, an entomologist of such unpardonable negligence, without something more than surmise of the fact. It has been well observed by an eminent entomologist with whom I have the honour of occasionally corresponding, "that if we disbelieve the existence of all which we do not see alive, our list (of British insects) will be small indeed.*

Now I can confidently state that, until long after the time when the two specimens of M.dia fell into my hands, I had never bought, nor exchanged, any insects; and that I possessed not one single foreign specimen: so that I could not possibly have confounded those of my capture with others... I must have taken them within ten miles of Birmingham: that being the utmost extent to which I had then travelled in search of insects".

"*Must have taken them*" made it clear that he could not remember the actual details of where and when he had taken them, but earlier in the same letter he had written "*I have the pleasure of positively stating that I had the good fortune to capture two specimens of that new insect in one of my early entomological excursions, more than twenty years ago*".

In the 1820s, data labels were rarely attached to the cabinet specimens so that the provenance would inevitably depend on the collector's memory or an entry in his notebooks. The result of Richard Weaver's imperfect memory, according to Allan, was disbelief, and "*he allowed a storm of discredit, abuse even, to break upon his head*". Sadly, after his death Richard's collection disappeared and to this day no light can be shed on its fate.

The **Weaver's Fritillary** is not known to be a migrant within its current range, its nearest colonies being no closer than France and Belgium.

It is stated that a certain element of society in Richard Weaver's day and beyond purposely introduced European butterflies into the wild in Britain and, having brought them to the attention of the sometimes obsessively avid collectors, would reap financial benefits for obtaining such specimens. Specimens collected abroad were often sold for a few shillings or more to unsuspecting collectors who were told that the species had been collected in Britain. Who would have thought it - Butterfly fraud!!

Footnote:

However improbable it may be that this continental species has ever been indigenous and taken in the wild either in Sutton Park or when 'captured' on several further occasions by others elsewhere in the UK, to his eternal credit Richard Weaver's contributions to entomology were great. On his travels around Britain, he discovered British insects such as the **Cousin German** and **Northern Arches** moths and the **Northern Emerald Dragonfly** *Somatochlora arctica*. In 1827 he was the first to capture female specimens of the **Small Mountain Ringlet** in its English localities of Cumberland and Westmorland.

Acknowledgements and References:

Special thanks to Dr. Michael A. Salmon author of *The Aurelian Legacy – British Butterflies and Their Collectors*, for granting me permission to extract and adapt this article from his wonderful book and likewise to Annette Harley of Harley Books, the publishers; harley@harleybooks.co.uk

A special thanks to Shropshire Wildlife Trust Volunteers

Jenny Joy

For the past three years the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation have been running a joint project to try to increase the level of butterfly monitoring on Trust reserves. The monitoring has been targeted at regionally important species such as **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and **Dingy Skipper** but has also encouraged the recording of commoner species such as **Speckled Wood** and **Common Blue**. In 2005, butterflies were recorded during an impressive 30 site visits to 10 important reserves. These reserves included Llynclys Common, Llanymynech Rocks, Granville Country Park, The Ercall, Earl's Hill and Brook Vessons. Highlights of 2005 included **Dingy Skipper** at three sites, **Grizzled Skipper** at four sites and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** at two sites. The most stunning result had to be the amazing 85 **Grayling** recorded at Earl's Hill – thanks to David Wilson for this timed count which really was no mean feat as the **Graylings** occur on the rocky scree slopes – not the simplest site for butterfly monitoring!

Special thanks to all the recorders: Peter Boardman, Brian Herring, Maureen Leavey, Stephen Lewis, Jeff Marais, Simon McLaughlin, John Powell, Kit Welchman and David Wilson, and to Stephen Lewis for his enthusiasm in both organising the project and recording the butterflies. Butterfly Conservation really does value your records as they really do show what is happening out there. Nevertheless, we could still do with more recorders on more of the reserves so if any other Shropshire BC members want to join in with this monitoring, please contact Stephen Lewis via the Shropshire Wildlife Trust (01743 284280) or on his email (stephenlewis@shropshirewt.cix.co.uk).

Two Years of the Garden Moth Scheme

Annie and Mike West

For the last three years, the RSPB Nature Reserve at Sandwell Valley in the West Midlands has held a 'Bat and Moth' evening as part of its annual program of events open to the general public. This activity has attracted a good audience each year, so much so that next year the RSPB at Sandwell will host two such evenings which have already received much interest.

As volunteers at this reserve, Annie and I were involved in the first event where we acted as "front of house", welcoming visitors to the reserve. Whilst birds were our primary interest, we shared an enquiring nature into most things relating to natural history and the environment generally. Dave Grundy, well known in the Midlands for his work in conducting wildlife surveys, both as part of his environmental business and personal interests, was the lead at this event, duly arriving with a generator, four Mercury Vapour (MV) moth traps and all the additional paraphernalia required to run a successful moth trapping/identification event. Annie and I were initially kept busy welcoming visitors but managed to spend some time watching events unfold.

The evening really got started with most people going off in a group to locate the bats which frequent the reserve. We then found ourselves able to spend time with Dave and his fellow enthusiasts walking around the moth traps, removing the moths that had already been attracted to the lights. A **Poplar Hawk Moth** was found, having landed high on a wall close to a lamp. This was a great find so early on, as it certainly set the tone for the rest of the evening. Moths turned up in hundreds, all sorts and all sizes, mostly common species but with a few less common ones thrown in. A goodly selection was collected into specimen pots, identified and displayed for all to see, before being released at the end of the evening.

Where did those four hours go ? Annie and I were hooked.

Dave gave us information so that we might start moth trapping in our garden at home and invited us to attend a meeting of the Wyre Forest Moth Group and a small group of enthusiasts nearer home. He suggested a plan to involve local moth'ers in a Garden Moth Survey (GMS) recording scheme within the West Midlands and we gladly joined 'Moths in the Middle' (MIM)

Having now made a trap based on the Skinner design, initially with an actinic lamp (so as not to annoy our neighbours), we made a start. Soon we were catching a few moths with a fresh **Oak Beauty** bringing great joy. Identification initially proved a bit of a problem, but ignoring the micros and some Pugs, we soon improved and always had Dave and others to fall back on. Progressing on, we made another trap, this time with an MV lamp, and catches improved. By this time we were trapping three or four times each week, including the regular GMS Fridays, and having a great time. We were attending most local

trapping evenings and group meetings and having fun with others at tutorials, run by the Wyre Forest Group and at our own MIM events.

We completed our first GMS survey (2004) and immediately agreed to continue through 2005. This year's GMS is now complete, with our records sent to our Group Recorder using the 'Mapmate' software.

These colder winter evenings, our traps stay in the garage but the social side of our new interest continues including a Christmas 'shindig' at a local pub.

Annie and I have really enjoyed attracting moths to our trap and the challenges presented when identifying the many species we had been fortunate enough to catch. Apart from the occasional disagreement over identification, this is an interest that we both enjoy and we will continue to support the GMS through the coming years.

You don't need to live in a rural idyll: we live in a busy town, though we have Walsall Arboretum within 300 yards of our house and also have a canal bordering our property. We have a broad spread of species to attract to our lamp and so far we have trapped 217 species of moth in our garden.

We have made many new friends over these last two years and wish everyone A Very Happy New Year with good numbers of moths to the traps and with the odd real rarity.

A Vision for Worcestershire Butterflies

Becky Lashley

Nine parishes within Worcestershire were chosen last year to take part in a Heritage Lottery funded project co-ordinated by the Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership. The parishes fall within part of Worcestershire recognised as being particularly important for biodiversity in the West Midlands and designated as a Biodiversity Enhancement Area by English Nature due to the wide range of habitats and species found there.

Named the Vision Mapping project, the aim is to encourage local people to explore, celebrate and help protect the natural environment on their doorstep and ultimately to contribute to the effort to record local wildlife and increase the stock of biological data held by the Records Centre.

One of the most exciting developments of the project so far has been the positive links made with the four schools within the project area, and the enthusiasm each has shown in getting involved. In a fantastic example of partnership working between the Vision Mapping Project, Butterfly Conservation and local communities, teachers at Himbleton First School have signed up to become the county's first Brown Hairstreak Local Champion School. With the help of local volunteers John and Miriam Tilt, the children have already been busy planting a blackthorn hedge in their school grounds and later this month they will be carrying out an egg hunt with the Vision

Mapping Project's Community Wildlife Officer, Becky Lashley, to monitor butterfly populations near the school.

In the next newsletter I hope some of the children from Himbleton School will be able to contribute their own reports of what they have been up to. In the meantime if you would like any more information about the Vision Mapping Project please contact Becky Lashley on 01905 759759 or email becky@wbrc.org.uk (or look at www.worcestershire.gov.uk/biodiversity).

Conserving Lepidoptera in the Ancient Herefordshire Woodlands

Anna Jordan

Hello everyone. My name is Anna Jordan and I'm lucky enough to have been appointed as the Herefordshire Woodlands Project Officer. I started my life over the border in Gloucestershire and then moved up North for 15 years. In the last year I have made my way down to Herefordshire from Rochdale via New Zealand and Australia.

I have a background in conservation, training, working with volunteers and project work. I have worked for Groundwork, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, The Mersey Basin Campaign (now Waters North West) and, most recently, as a Countryside Ranger at Hollingworth Lake Country Park near Rochdale.

Jane Ellis gave an outline of the project in the Summer 2005 edition of *The Comma* (no. 61) To recap briefly, the project aims to increase volunteer activity in recording and management for key species (**Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Wood White, Silver Washed Fritillary, Waved Carpet, Argent and Sable, Little Thorn, Drab Looper and Common Fan-foot.**) in Herefordshire's ancient woodlands.

Initially I am familiarising myself with the project and the proposed woodland sites, and hoping to meet up with volunteers, landowners and staff. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or suggestions regarding the project. I work three days a week, normally Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, with some weekend and evening working. I am based at the Vincent Wildlife Trust headquarters at:

*3&4 Bronsil Courtyard
Eastnor
Ledbury
Herefordshire HR8 1EP*

Tel 01531 635234, Mobile 07960 616320

I hope to meet at least some of you soon and looking forward to working with you on this exciting project.

Lepidoptera training

Dave Grundy

The Friends of Sutton Park (contact Harvey Skelcher - 0121-605-9823) have managed to secure funding to run a series of training courses on lepidoptera in 2006. They will all be free and aimed at people living near to Sutton Park; all the training will happen in Sutton Park (an excellent site for lepidoptera). But, if you live further away in the West Midlands and are very enthusiastic, then there should still be a place for you.

The dates for the course are spread between February and September, usually over one weekend each month. The first date is Thursday, February 23rd 7.30pm, an introduction to lepidoptera via a slide show and introduction to the course at a venue near the park.

There will hopefully be other lepidoptera training courses run in our area in 2006, but these will usually be just one day courses. The advantage of the course in Sutton Park is that if you attend most of the days / nights then your skills will improve much faster than on just a one day or one night course. So, if you have never looked at butterflies and moths before, or are a beginner, or intermediate level (or even an expert?) then this is the course for you. Some time will be spent looking at the dayflying butterflies and moths of Sutton Park, but most time will be spent looking at nocturnal macro-moths of the area (plus there will be some time looking at micro-moths for those people interested).

The courses are run by local expert Dave Brown (author of the new Moth Atlas for Warwickshire, due out in May 2006), supported by Nigel Stone and myself on moths and Harvey Skelcher on butterflies.

So what are you waiting for? This is the course for you to come on in 2006 and improve your skills, it won't be compulsory to come on every date, but the more you come on, the more your skills will improve. Exact meeting sites and times are still being confirmed, so we do need people to book to get full details and this is via Harvey Skelcher. If that is difficult for you then contact me and I will get your details to Harvey.

Picos de Europa Trip

The following trip was organised by Gloucestershire branch, but some spaces are left and open to all comers. Contact Chris Tracey at the number below:

"Picos de Europa. Teresa Farino, leading local naturalist, invites you to join her for a relaxing, guided tour of the Picos de Europa in a small friendly group for one week from 25th June 2006. Scenic strolls in the best butterfly areas will be followed by optional moth trapping at Teresa's house. Accommodation in a comfortable family-run hotel in Pesaguero, travel in Spain, food and wine are all included in the price of £670. Flights or ferry from UK to Santander are extra but bookings can be arranged. For further details please contact Chris Tracey on 01453 752051 or e-mail chris@tracey94.fsnet.co.uk."

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.
- Enjoy yourself.
- Site-specific hazards will be outlined by the leader at the start.

Regional Conservation Day

This year's Regional Conservation Day will again be a joint event between the West and East Midlands Regions. The event will be held on Saturday 11th February from 10.30 - 4.00pm at the Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI).

The BMI is in easy walking distance from Birmingham New Street Rail Station.

Subjects include progress with Grizzled and Dingy Skipper in the East Midlands, news from Head Office and also Grafton Wood. I hope that as many members of the three Branches as possible will be able to attend – Jane Ellis on 01788 510695.

Dates for your Diary

General Events

Saturday 11th - Regional Conservation Day (see previous page)

Contact Jane Ellis - a free light lunch will be provided.

Butterfly Events

For all these contact John Bryan on 01782 518900.

April

Saturday 29th Gib Tor/Swallow Moss, Staffordshire

Target species: **Emperor/Fox Moth** plus moorland birds a plenty. Meet 10.30am in The Winking Man car park on A53 Leek/Buxton Road. Walking boots essential, some strenuous and steep climbing; bring packed lunch.

May

Saturday 13th Gib Tor and surrounds Green Hairstreak survey

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

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

Saturday 20th Chatterley Whitfield for the Dingy Skipper

Come and explore the globe's newest World Heritage Site, a history lesson in Europe's only disused mine still standing and knee deep in Dingy and other species. Meet 10.30am in allotment car park opposite fish'n chip shop in Fegg Hayes Rd. SJ878529.

Saturday 27th Wyre Forest

Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Grizzled Skipper and much more. Come and explore one of the region's finest forests in all of its glory. Meet at visitor centre 10.30. GR SO750740 . Walk led by our Chairman Richard Southwell, who will take a question and answer session in the afternoon on his role.

Moth Events

Shropshire Moth Group Meeting at the Shropshire Wildlife Trust (193 Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6AH) on Monday 20th March starting at 10am. We will also be asking any other Shropshire BC members to join us to see if we can get a butterfly group going. The meeting will include the following: a review of Shropshire Moths in 2005, opportunities for meetings and butterfly and moth survey work in 2005 and the use of Mapmate.

Chaddesley Wood moth events (see earlier article for details)

Meet at Jubilee Gate (GR: SO914736) Contact Mervyn Needham (01562-777461) or Alan Prior (0121-7782973)

- Saturday March 4th 17:00
- Saturday April 1st 18:30
- Saturday May 6th 19:30

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

A **Butterflies Under Threat Team (BUTT)** has been established as a roving group of volunteers available to work on sites for key butterfly species where habitat management is urgently required. If you know of a butterfly or a site in trouble, call the BUTT team (contact Trevor Bucknall on 01905-755757). They may be able to help.

Regular monthly days (same Sunday every month)

First Sunday - Monkwood Nature Reserve, Worcs.

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

Second Sunday - Grafton Wood, Worcs.

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

Third Sunday - Chaddesley Woods NNR

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

Fourth Sunday - Trench Wood NR.

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

February

Sat. 18th. 10.00 am at Haugh Wood, Herefordshire.

10.00 am at forestry car park (SO593365). Contact Jeff Andrews on 01432-870301.

Sun. 19th Bringsty Common, Herefordshire. Bracken raking for Fritillaries.

Meet at 10.00 am at Bringsty Post Office (SO705552) Contact Jenny Joy.

March

Sat. 18th. at Wigmore Rolls, Herefordshire.

Meet at 10.00 am at roadside pull-in (SO397688). Contact Jeff Andrews on 01432-870301.

Regional Officers' Reports – January 2006

Jenny Joy (JJ) and Jane Ellis (JE)

Since the New Year we have both been working hard on a grant application to English Nature for a project to be considered for funding under their new Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund. If successful this application could help to fund us both for the next two years so watch this space! This application has meant that we are both behind on some of our other priority work areas so if these involve you, we are sorry for any delays you may have experienced in us getting back to you.

We would very much like to welcome **Anna Jordan** the new Herefordshire Woodlands Officer and hope she will be instrumental in increasing activity levels in many parts of Herefordshire. Obviously it will take Anna a while to settle in and find her feet so we hope she makes the most of any spare time before those e-mails start flooding in!

Implementing the Regional Action Plan (JJ and JE)

This has been a key work area for both of us over the past few months with lots of actions progressed on various species including the following:

- **Grizzled Skipper** – Jenny has recently commented on a management plan for the Whitchurch Waterways Country Park in Shropshire written by the North Shropshire Countryside Service (NSCS).
- **Dingy Skipper** – Jane met with Chris Johnson at Mancetter Quarry, Nuneaton to discuss the restoration and management works being under-taken and future survey work on the site. Jane has written a proposal to Stoke City Council for works that need to be undertaken prior to development of a huge former colliery site at Chatterley Whitfield, to conserve a large **Dingy Skipper** colony, initial feedback has been positive. Jenny has provided a detailed response to the Telford & Wrekin Development plan 2006-2011 which will affect a number of the **Dingy Skipper** colonies in the area. Jane gave a presentation regarding action for Brownfield sites in the West Midlands at a BC Dingy Skipper and Brownfield Sites Conference in Durham on 14th October.
- **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. Jenny met with EN at Lodge Hill Wyre Forest on 28th November to discuss the management of various sites for this species. A proposal to re-introduce the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** to the Forest of Feckenham area of Worcestershire has been drawn up and presented to the Wyre Forest Liaison Group (2nd November) and the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (11th Nov) for their approval.

- **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** – Jenny has managed to obtain funding for an extra fence to be put up at the Stiperstones Monastery with a special project grant from Defra and a Nurturing Nature grant from the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership.
- **Silver-studded Blue** – Jenny has just written up a report on the annual monitoring of this species at Prees Heath for EN. Butterfly Conservation Report No. SO5-49.
- **Small Blue** – Jane and Mike Slater of Warwickshire Branch visited two former sites for the species at Stockton Cutting and Nelson's Quarry (20th October) to discuss plans for a project to determine the best methods and locations of establishing the food plant (Kidney Vetch) as part of a wider landscape scale project. Jane also attended a site visit with Mike to a privately owned SSSI on the edge of Nelson's Quarry where the landowner is keen to have some help with restoring the site for **Small Blue** and other key species such as **Grizzled Skipper**. Jane has been discussing opportunities with EN for funding some trail habitat restoration for the species.

Jane helped to organize a BC work party on 5th November with Barclays Bank volunteers to plant 700 Kidney Vetch plants on Southam by-pass cutting, close to an existing large **Small Blue** Colony.

- **Common Fan-foot** - Jenny attended a meeting in the Park House area of the Wyre Forest on 2nd November to discuss how a proposal to create a corridor to link the railway line with other parts of the forest might impact on the Common Fan-foot moth.
- **Argent & Sable** - Jenny has helped with the production and distribution of two reports on the **Argent & Sable** moth (by Peter Boardman on survey work in 2005 in Shropshire and by Dave Grundy on survey work in Staffordshire, Butterfly Conservation Report No SO5-47). Jenny organised a meeting with FC, the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Dave Grundy and other local volunteers at Burnt Wood on 1st December to discuss future management for the **Argent & Sable** in this area. This meeting will hopefully be the first of many here as this area of Staffordshire is now of national importance for this moth. As a result of this meeting, FC have agreed to open up a trial area of woodland immediately to try to encourage the growth of young birch.

Jane has been in liaison with David Brown (Warwickshire Moth Officer) over action for **Chalk Carpet** and **Argent and Sable** for a progress report to the Warwickshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Jane has also been involved with developing details of the a new project to provide a series of moth and butterfly training event at Sutton Park, which at the same time will lead to some useful

data for key moths on the site. A list of events for 2006 is now available; see page 13.

Jenny helped with the production of the **Warwickshire Conservation Updates on Priority Butterflies** (by Mike Slater, Butterfly Conservation Report No. SO5-24). Jane helped to organize a workshop event for Branch members to produce specific actions for species in key landscape areas in Warwickshire.

Jenny has provided a detailed response to the proposal to build a **gas pipeline across Herefordshire**.

Recent liaison meetings held with key partners: including EN, DEFRA, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, and MOD have included:

- **Llanymynech area meeting** (re. landscape level project on **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** currently ongoing in the Oswestry area).
- **Princethorpe Woodlands** complex meeting on the **Wood White**.
- Meeting with English Nature over a conservation plan for the **High Brown Fritillary**.
- Meeting of the **Wyre Forest Liaison Group**.

Herefordshire Community Commons Project (JJ) – BC's contractors for this project (Susan Clarke and David Green) have recently produced a report of their findings from butterfly and moth survey of twelve sites during 2005 and its implications for site management. The completed report has now been sent to the Herefordshire Nature Trust so that the management recommendations for the 12 sites can now be incorporated into draft management plans (Clarke & Green, Butterfly Conservation Report No SO5-45). If anybody is interested in seeing a copy of this report please let Jenny know. We hope to be able to continue to work with the Herefordshire Community Commons Project officers again in 2006 and 2007 to try to ensure our recommendations are implemented.

Brownfield Sites Dossier (JE) - A preliminary draft report has been completed and circulated to Branches and volunteers for comments. Jane is currently working on the final report with the aim being to launch it at a public event before the end of March. Ideas for the launch have been circulated to Branch Committee members for comment. Tarmac has been approached as a potential host.

We have also been successful in two grant applications submitted to the **Nurturing Nature Fund** of the **West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership**. One of these was to enable a new fence to be put in at the Stiperstones Monastery to give greater flexibility on grazing regimes, and the second grant was to obtain a stock of 30 disease resistant elm trees to plant around the region particularly on sites where trees have only recently been lost. A number

of sites have already been put forward to receive these elm trees (and as we write this they are already starting to be dug in!). So if you know of a site which has **White-letter Hairstreak** and where the elms are looking unhealthy please let Jenny know and they can be considered for phase 2 of the project.

Finally, dare we mention the RAP update? The current plan is to print and circulate this long awaited update by the end of March (when the current funding runs out). Again if you are interested in receiving and using a copy (which will contain updates on all West Midlands priority butterflies and moths) please let Jenny know.

Gardening for Butterflies and Moths

Gerald Dawe (GeraldDawe@aol.com)

Some Issues

I have been researching butterfly and moth preferences for flowers, and have ended up largely in a land of Chinese whispers, where recommendations for particular plants change hands between butterfly gardening books with a frequency which would be much admired by 'Mr Voles' and charged for accordingly. In other words, there is no evidence, whatever, of them actually being attractive to butterflies.

I will supply an example of the problem. Brazilian Verbena *Verbena bonariensis* is widely recommended for butterflies. In the summer of this year, I visited stands of this plant in various places, including Glasnevin Botanic Garden in Dublin, all without seeing a butterfly on any of them. Instead the butterflies stubbornly favoured Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and other wildflowers growing in taxonomic order beds nearby. Yet *V. bonariensis* is now mentioned by all the lead authors as the butterfly plant par excellence. Along with the nonsense of decking, it has filled the gardening world with its virtues, post-2000.

Another key butterfly plant, especially good for end of season stragglers, of which we have a satisfactorily large clump in our garden, is Ice-Plant *Sedum spectabile*. I have reluctantly concluded that our plant is variety 'Autumn Joy' which is well-known to be an absolute disaster as far as butterflies are concerned: It secretes no nectar. Apparently 'Ruby Glow' and also '*Mediovariegatum*' have also been bred by horticulturalists to exclude butterflies. For butterflies, you apparently need to use 'Stardust', 'Brilliant', 'Brilliant' or 'Pink Fairy'. The allied *S. spurium*, *S. maximum* and *S. giganteum* are also good, the latter at least in west coastal Florida.

The Buddleias are a more complex group. At Glasnevin this year we saw amazing stands of different varieties and species, but sadly, with very few butterflies present. It seems to have been a poor year for them. While *Buddleia davidii* is well-known to attract butterflies, plant varietal information is difficult to come by. 'Black Knight' and 'Nanho Blue' seem highly regarded.

Dwarf varieties are variable in their quality. *B. davidii* is almost the only garden plant species which day-flying moths have been noted on, these being the **Hummingbird Hawk Moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum* and the **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma*. Information on moth visits to flowers is sparse. The Bee Buddleia, *B. globosa*, with its ball-shaped groups of flowers, is mainly suited only to bees, though none the less valuable for that. But, I have no experience of the nine metre tall shrub *B. alternifolia*.

B. fallowiana is less hardy than *B. davidii* and therefore probably hardly worth growing. *B. colvillei* is another less hardy species. *B. crispa* is a half-hardy deciduous shrub. *B. davidii* 'Lochinch' is apparently a hybrid between *B. davidii* and *B. fallowiana* (or *B. globosa*). It has intermediate flowers and is and has a straggling habit, though it is still attractive to butterflies. *B. lindleyana* is largely ignored in favour of other Buddleia plants, due to its long flower tubes preventing nectar extraction by butterflies.

Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* is a definite favourite of brown butterflies in our garden, especially the **Gatekeeper**. This is of course, a well-known phenomenon, doubtless originating in the browns' origins on dry Mediterranean hillsides, and their nostalgic love for relationships built up many years ago.

Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* has attracted nine species of butterfly in one UK study. Red Valerian or Jupiter's Beard *Centranthus ruber* seems reliable too.

Of the daisy flowers, Michaelmas Daisy *Aster novi-belgii* is of great value, but what of New England Aster *Aster novae-angliae*. Both of the plants are highly rated in the USA. I recently visited the National Collection of Asters at Colwall, near Malvern, entered the mystical gates to its wonderful collection, meditated on a lovely milky pink colour for half-an-hour, and then left, none the wiser. (It was too late in the season to see any butterflies.)

However, the honeybees were loving cultivar 'Photograph', a difficult to grow hybrid. The native Hemp Agrimony or, in the US, Joe-Pye Weed *Eupatorium cannabinum* seems a reliable attractant, also, just possibly, Sweet Joe-Pye Weed *E. purpurea*, Spotted Joe-Pye Weed *E. maculatum*, *E. fistulosum* and *E. ligustrinum*. The native Lesser Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* is good, but it would be interesting to know how it compares with Greater Knapweed (*C. scabiosa*) or the non-native Spotted Knapweed *C. maculosa*, a useful butterfly nectar-flower in New York State.

Shasta Daisy and the native Ox-eye Daisies, (*Chrysanthemum maximum* and *C. leucanthemum*) are good, but are apparently bettered by the mysterious Korean Chrysanthemum.

Canadian Golden Rod *Solidago canadensis* seems generally reliable whilst Stiff Golden Rod *S. rigida* and Showy Goldenrod *S. speciosa* are both highly rated in parts of the USA. Grey Goldenrod *S. nemoralis* may also work.

Oh dear. A final slip: I should just mention that I have just turned up a note saying that *V. bonariensis* has attracted many butterflies in Gloucestershire, so I must retract my earlier note on it, maybe my observations were wrong, in some way ...

The Problem

... And this, it seems, is just the problem. Butterflies and moths are quixotic creatures. Their interactions when faced with a complex mixture of garden flowers are equally complex. They will not conform, in some convenient and technocratic way, to settling on flowers in patterns which will suit the person writing the butterfly gardening book. Thank goodness for that: what delightful creatures. There is some evidence that they will travel towards flowers planted in substantial clumps, and that they like sun. There is a certain amount of evidence that some moths prefer pale flowers like *Nicotiniana*, but of the majority of moths, and indeed butterflies, nothing whatever is known, even now, of their nectaring requirements.

Moths apparently prefer comparatively deep corollas or 'petal tubes' more than 20-24 mm long though Honeysuckle, one of their favourites, has a relatively massive corolla length of 40-50 mm. Butterflies are supposed to prefer much shorter, but still tubular florets. But beyond that we know, I think, very little.

Help!

Please send me your own personal observations and comments on any of the above. I would really welcome your direct observations. In around a year's time I will write an update for *The Comma*, shedding a little bit more light on what flowers butterflies and moths really prefer in our gardens. In the meantime you may like to look at Linda Walls' excellent web-site (www.butterflygarden.co.uk) and the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) site which supplies information on US butterfly preferences (www.naba.org), though they will not necessarily be applicable here. Further details of the Aster National Collection are at www.autumnasters.co.uk.

Gerald Dawe, 60 Park Street, Hereford, HR1 2RD. Tel. 01432 343262. E-mail: GeraldDawe@aol.com

The Silver Moth-er

Thelma Irving

No, not the name of a new moth, but what I have become since taking part in Dave Grundy's Garden Moth Scheme (GMS) in 2005.

I've lived in the North of Shrewsbury since 1962. My then newly built house, backs onto farmland and the old river bed of the Severn, which is now a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. Since then the area, like many other suburbs, has become increasingly built up and I've gradually noticed the decline in numbers of birds and insects, both in my garden and the nearby farmland and river bed areas.

I have been a keen photographer nearly all my life, developing and printing my own films and taking a particular interest in close-ups of flowers, insects, butterflies and some day-flying moths. I became a member of Butterfly Conservation some years ago, but only recently started to take more interest in moths, as I knew very little about them.

Since my retirement, I have spent a lot of time learning how to use a computer. I also bought a digital camera and discovered how much easier it is to use and carry around, compared with the heavy and cumbersome equipment I used in the past. When I read the article about the GMS in *The Comma*, I knew that I wanted to participate.

I bought a Skinner trap and was given a copy of Waring and Townsend as a present. I already had the camera and computer and I was "raring" to go... though secretly, I was convinced that there would not be many moths "out there". I couldn't have been more mistaken. Although the cold, dark month of March produced no results, there were on average 14 moths per trapping night in April but only six per trapping night in May. I put this down to the night temperatures being higher in April than in May. However, the catch for both months included **Early Grey**, **Lead-coloured Drab**, **Mullein**, **Waved Umber** and **Flame Shoulder** to name a few. Things were looking up!

From June until August I had an average of 50 moths per trapping night. The majority I had not seen before, so each new arrival had to be "potted up" and photographed, so that I could identify it from the book. Saturday was dedicated to this task and my dining room table became covered with pots of moths. The clearly marked species were easy to identify. However, the "little brown jobs" were much harder to find, and I had to email the photos to Dave, to identify/confirm them for me. I extend my thanks to him for his patience, expertise and enthusiasm and for supplying the answers so promptly.

As the months passed, I was amazed to discover **Shuttle-shaped Dart**, with its unmistakable shuttle mark on the wings. Carpets, Emeralds, **Blood-Veins**, Darts, **Golden Plusia**, **Mother of Pearl**, Prominents, Sallows, **Small Phoenix**,

a **Spectacle, Snouts, Wainscots, Willow Beauties** and Waves, all of them new to me.

In late July a **Poplar Hawkmoth** selected me as a suitable foster mother (moth-er) and flew away leaving me her clutch of eggs. I placed them in a Pyrex dish with some Buddleia leaves and kept them in a cool place and successfully hatched them 8-9 days later. I was now responsible for 40 hungry baby caterpillars and raised them for two weeks, feeding them on willow leaves. However I found that in very hot weather, it was too hard to keep up the supply of fresh leaves and I decided that my charges would have a better chance in a more natural environment. I took them to the old river bed, where supplies of their food plant were more plentiful. Perhaps some will come and visit me next year when they emerge as adults.

The first trapping night in September produced masses of crane flies, a very disorientated wasp, and 31 moths. I noticed a small shiny object tucked away in the corner of the trap, I brushed it aside and discovered it to be a spectacular **Burnished Brass** moth. Caught in the sunlight, the shiny metallic, brassy greenish-yellow pattern, gave it a surreal appearance. I couldn't believe my eyes and was really excited about it.

Another night in September coincided with a full moon and I only caught one moth, the aptly named **Lunar Underwing**. My close-up photographs accentuated the intricate features of the moths. For example, the faded and worn outstretched wings of the **Swallow-tailed moth**, made it look as if it was wearing a shroud and gave it a ghostly appearance. The feathered antennae, the enormous eyes and the furry body, belonged to the speckled orange brown coloured **September Thorn**. The **Buff Arches** with its unmistakable white and orange- brown "arches" looked as if it was made of porcelain.

The following two photographs are just two of the many photographs I took. My winter will be spent cataloguing these ready for next year. Now I know there are 93 species of moths out there and I am eagerly looking forward to see how many revisit me in 2006 and how many new species I discover.

Poplar Hawkmoth eggs, Shrewsbury, 2005



Photo: © Thelma Irving

Burnished Brass, Shrewsbury, 2005



Photo: © Thelma Irving

Editorial (2)

Dean Fenton

It's good to see more contributions from first time authors in this issue. For the first time, I haven't had to call on Mike Williams to fill any space for me!

I'm sure readers have already noticed, but I have placed the two events pages in the centre fold to make it easy to remove these pages and pin them up on a notice board for reference. As an alternative, photocopy them and keep a copy handy.

As always, feedback is welcome. For example, do you feel there is too much on moths and not enough on butterflies? Let me know and I'll see if I can tailor future issues to match. I'm sure somebody will want to respond to Gerald Dawe's gardening article; what's your experience?

Would anyone in the Leominster/Bromyard area like to help me by labelling, stamping and stuffing envelopes? Even doing this for one issue a year would be very useful. If you can help, give me a ring on 01568-611575.

One last thing – apologies to the Sturmans for corrupting their article in No. 62. I invented a new species, Portland Riband Wave, in place of the correct **Portland Ribbon Wave**.

Butterfly Record Forms – 2006

Jim Chance (Branch Recorder)

You will find a Levana form, as usual for recording your butterfly records for 2006. Do please use this form for recording and sending your butterfly records. **Non-standard records are difficult or impossible to put into the national database.**

I am sure that almost everyone is aware of the Millennium Atlas. You may not be aware that the recording on the national database has continued since 1999. Richard Fox (national BC recorder) has just completed the next five years' records (2000-2004). They are shortly to be published. Do please keep the records coming in on the standard Levana forms (enclosed).

2005 was a very bad year for us as far as butterflies are concerned. Let us hope for better things in 2006.

Best wishes to everybody – Jim

Fund raising – printer cartridges and phones

John Bryan (Tel. 01782 518900)

When it comes to fund raising, Butterfly Conservation, has been a bit behind the times. However, funds are the fuel that runs any charity's engine, without which, we would simply grind to a halt on the hard shoulder.

Funding for the branch, within a national network, comes from many sources, but we are always on the lookout to source additional monies to guarantee our survival and increase our involvement in projects at a local level.

One such form of fund raising any member can help with is the recycling of toner cartridges and mobile phones. This is nowadays a big money spinner for many charities. The Branch is now registered with one recycling company and we are asking members to collect old cartridges and phones.

Wherever you work, and it doesn't matter where, there must be an office that has a printer/photocopier, etc. Empty cartridges can be refilled, as well as filling our coffers with a well-needed source of additional income. Anyone can collect and hopefully we can organise local networks whereby one person acts as a collection point.

If there are those who wish to help in fund raising in this manner (and believe me it requires no effort but the benefits are massive) I have a complete backup system available, with posters, stickers, collection boxes, etc.

Please get in touch and help the cause.

The Rise of The Ringlet

John Bryan

North Staffordshire and **The Ringlet** have never been the best of friends and for many years now, haven't seen anything of each other. Theories abound for why they have chosen not to inhabit said region; records suggest that this has always been the case, plenty of food plant, but no **Ringlets**. One such theory is that they are very sensitive to air quality; any fall of such and they either move on or perish, who knows? It may just be a coincidence that.... since North Staffordshire's industrial legacy has all but disappeared and the air has a greater transparency to it nowadays, it seems **The Ringlet** is on the move.

It was first brought to our attention last year from the records of Butterfly Conservation member Gavin Woodman, who recorded **The Ringlet** in nine new localities in and around the Eccleshall area. Further recording in the area this year has confirmed that this species is coming out of Shropshire (thanks) and moving up the western side of Staffordshire and has reached (it's been recorded for two successive years) the grounds of Keele University, just west of Newcastle-under-Lyme. So if you live anywhere east of this line, get out in to the grassland in July and you could be in for a surprise!

AGM Treasurer's Report

The AGM was held on October 15th. In the treasurer's absence the Chair gave a brief outline of the most important parts of the accounts, summarised below:

In 2005 £14,000 accrued, £4,500 of which was ringfenced to Grafton.

Main items out of Account since 1st April 2005:

- Subs- £3000
- Newsletter- £2000
- Other- £1000

£125 was received from Forest Vision towards newsletter production.

Expenditure

3 payments were made for Grafton Wood. £1925 can be claimed back from English Nature.

Balance

- Current- £500 + £1925 EN.
- Deposit- £2500
- Prees- £32,000 + £18,000 (Through fundraising)

The Chair was informed by John Davis that with regards to Prees Heath there was enough money to see the project through the first five years and any additional costs i.e legal. Added to this will also be money from Cheshire and Shropshire Wildlife Trusts. A total of £4000 had been raised over the amount required for match funding.

Mike Williams raised the issue of funding after the initial five years and would the National Branch expect the West Midlands Branch to fund this?

Grafton Finances

A 5 year Management Plan is being prepared for Grafton Wood.

John Tilt stated that in future Grafton could fund itself with the monies raised from coppice products, timber sales etc. Measures had been put in place to learn from the Wildlife Trust experience.

Fundraising/sponsorship

It was planned to approach both national and local firms. One aim is helping to offset the cost of producing the newsletter, approx. £2500 per year.

Conservation Corner – Save Our Butterflies Week 2006

Dave Jackson (see Committee list)

I have received an Urgent Plea from Carmel Mallinson, our National Publicity Officer. A major publicity event is being held in the final week of July 2006 – *Save our Butterflies Week*. At Lulworth Head Office Staff will be concentrating on trying to achieve national publicity. The plea to all Branch members is: *can you help by 'promoting' Butterfly Conservation to non- members in your home patch?*

If each Branch member could attract five new members in the course of 2006 by organising an event or providing a story to your local media, we could reap greater conservation benefits and further publicity for our cause.

If anyone is willing to help by suggesting themes for the district, especially fun events to attract families, please contact me, as I am more than willing to help with ideas and support.

Branch members please have a go by organising events and submitting articles to your local press and if possible arranging broadcasts on local radio during the same week.

I propose to lead a butterfly and bug hunt at Baggeridge Country Park, Wolverhampton on Sunday 30th July at 10.00 a.m – who knows I might even come dressed as the Very Hungry Caterpillar!

Communicate to Accumulate – please pass on the message below to your local media:

I/we are holding (an event for Butterfly Conservation) all welcome, at/on;

British Butterflies are in decline – some facing extinction;

Butterfly Conservation can help stop or even reverse this decline.

We Need Your Help.

Visit our website www.butterfly-conservation where you can become a member on line or write to us for more information to:

Carmel Mallinson, Publicity Officer, at Butterfly Conservation Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP

Please contact me with your ideas and I will assist where possible.

A further article on planned events will appear in the Spring newsletter – please feel free to contact me before then, so that we can publicise your event. I know you can do it – let's get out there and raise awareness of our butterflies' plight!

Committee members

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

Chairman	Richard Southwell Sandilands@yesit.co.uk Sandilands, 48 Whitehall Rd, Stourbridge DY8 2JT	01384-397066 (after 4pm)
Vice-chairman	David Jackson DavidJJackson@centro.org.uk 11 Hyperion Drive, Penn, Wolverhampton WV4 5QW	01902-344716
Secretary	Vacant	
Treasurer	Tony Hatton 24 Loxley Drive, Mansfield, Notts. NG18 4FB	01623-659998
Regional Development Officers	Dr. Jenny Joy joy.croft@btinternet.com The Croft, off Haygate Rd, Wellington, Telford TF1 2BW	01952-245684
	Jane Ellis jellis@butterfly-conservation.org 15 Morrison Park Road, West Haddon, Northants NN6 7BJ	01788 510695
Education	Richard Lamb , Stratford-on-Avon Butterfly Farm, Tramway Walk, Swan's Nest Lane, Stratford-on-Avon, CV37 7LS	01789-299288
Webmaster	Nigel Stone Njstone@hotmail.com 8 Grove Lane, Keresley End, Coventry CV7 8PN	02476-335189
Recorder	Jim Chance Harbornejim@aol.com 65 Wentworth Rd, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9SS	0121-4271706
Transects	John Tilt (see below)	
	Mike Williams mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk 2 Dewberry Close, Stourport, Worcs DY13 8TB	01299-824860

Reserve managers:

Grafton Wood	John Tilt John.tilt2@btopenworld.com 9 Meadow Close, Flyford Flavell, WR7 4DE	01386-792458
Monkwood	Paddy Harrison Moorcroft Barn, Sinton Green, Hallow WR2 6NW	01905-641523
Trench Wood	Neil McLean 10 Hammond Close, Droitwich WR9 7SZ	01905-795381

Conservation officers: (for Shropshire see Jenny Joy, above; for N. Staffs. See James Hill)

Worcs.	Trevor Bucknall t.bucknall@ntlworld.com 26 Vine Street, Northwick, Worcester WR3 7DY	01905-755757
Herefords.	Ian Hart yellowrattle@compuserve.com Laurel Cottage, Newton St. Margarets, Hereford HR2 0QN	01981 510259

Moth officers:

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Bordered White moth trapped at Brokenstones, Shropshire



Photo: © H Davies

Pearl-bordered Fritillaries in Wyre Forest



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