

the **Comma**

No. 113 Autumn 2022

Regional Magazine of West Midlands
Butterfly Conservation



Celebrating achievements:

The power of the volunteer

Our reserves:

Wood White at Monkwood

Bringing *butterflies and moths* back to Britain • westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com



Chairman's Address



Michael Southall

As I write this in early September, the rain is pelling down outside during a thunderstorm and there is time to reflect on a remarkable summer. One of the hottest and driest on record, it must have surely had an impact on our Lepidoptera. When the weather was 'not fit for man nor beast', I suspect many species hid away. I recall a dozen or so **Peacocks** that had been

feeding on my buddleia disappeared from one weekend to the next, hopefully into hibernation – I recently discovered one tucked away in my shed.

It will be interesting to see what the butterfly transects data results reveal. We know that the hot dry summer of 1976 had a detrimental effect on many species, as their food plants withered (described by **Martin Warren** in his book *Butterflies*). While discussing the weather during the hot spell, I asked a mothing colleague about his memories of the 1976 heatwave – he replied that he was born in 1978. I had not realised he was so relatively young, and it reminded me of the scientists referring to the shifting baselines between different generations as their experiences of butterflies and moths change. I had started at agricultural college in 1976 and I recall how our farm's potato crop was the same size as the seed which had been planted in the spring due to the lack of water.

A full programme once again

The Branch was able to run a host of varied events around the West Midlands, as listed in the last *Comma*. Thanks are due to everyone involved in organising and running the events, too many to mention here, and of course the people who attended. I am sure everyone doubly appreciated getting out and about after the recent lockdowns.

I managed to see my first adult **Purple Emperor** during the Grafton Wood 25th Anniversary Open Day (see panel). I had already walked past the tree where the butterfly was feeding on a sap run when luckily somebody spotted it, yet again demonstrating the benefit of having many pairs of eyes at a group event.

Cover story

Dewick's Plusia (*Macdunnoughia confusa*) by **Michael Southall** (see page 3)

Contributions

Please send articles and images to the Editor. Photographs should be as high-resolution as possible and sent as separate files (not embedded in a document).

Our copy deadlines are
Spring - 28 February
Autumn - 31 August
Winter - 30 November
(early submissions are welcome).
Contact the Editor for information.
Editor: Marian Newell,
comma.editor@newellporter.co.uk

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Butterfly Conservation West Midlands Branch. The opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Branch or of Butterfly Conservation.

 BC West Midlands Butterflies and Moths

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A small party of us travelled to Scotland to look at **Kentish Glory** habitat in late spring, with a reintroduction in mind, and then I joined another West Midland group that headed to Southern Spain in early June, another fascinating trip which I'll write more about in the next *Comma*.

The moth traps have been busy this summer, in what looks like being the best migrant moth year since 2006. A good range of migrants have already been recorded, including some that have never been seen in the West Midlands before.

Work parties have already begun on some reserves, so check out the forthcoming dates in the event calendar and please help if you can. The committee met face-to-face again in early October and there is always room for new blood. If you would like to get more involved, please get in touch (contact details on page 27).

Michael Southall Branch Chair



Purple Emperor (Michael Southall)

Purple Emperors on the move

As reported in *Comma* 110, the **Purple Emperor** butterfly is becoming increasingly established in our region. There were several sightings again this summer at Grafton and Tiddesley Woods, with a number of new reports including two seen on the Clent Hills. There was also an unconfirmed report from our Trench Wood reserve. Our organised hunt in Tiddesley Wood was very successful, with everyone able to view an Emperor visiting a sap run high on a tree and the added bonus of several **White-letter Hairstreaks**. An even better view was afforded the following week for visitors to the Grafton Wood Open Day, again at sap.

Article by **Mike Williams**

An exciting find

The stunning **Dewick's Plusia** on the cover of this issue came to my light trap at Norchard, Worcestershire, for the first time on 20 July this year. Once a scarce migrant, this species now appears to be colonising the country and is moving into our area after being first recorded at Hall Green in south-east Birmingham in 2019 (A Prior). It will come to light but it is also being seen by users of the new NI pheromone lure, which is intended for the **Ni moth** (*Trichoplusia ni*), also known as the **Cabbage Looper**. Its larval food-plants include common nettle and other herbaceous plants.

Dewick's *Plusia* was first described by **James Francis Stephens** in 1850 and is found across Europe through Asia and on to Japan. What's behind the name? **A J Dewick** recorded the first British specimen from Bradford-On-Sea, Essex in 1951. *Plusia* is from the Greek word *plousios*, meaning 'rich', from the gold or silver markings on the forewing of moths in this family. The scientific name, *Macdunnoughia confusa*, comes from **J H McDunnough** (1877–1962), the Canadian entomologist who revised the subfamily. The *confusa* element is thought to reflect this species' similarity to the **Essex Y**.

Article by **Michael Southall**



Pearl-bordered Fritillaries (Mike Williams)

Not all bad news for Britain's butterflies

Red Lists were developed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and cover many groups of species including butterflies. They estimate the extinction risk for individual species and are therefore helpful in working out conservation priorities.

The Red List for butterflies was revised earlier this year (the first time since 2010) and makes pretty depressing reading. The headline story is that nearly half of Britain's butterflies are now Near Threatened or worse, but what of the West Midlands? Species here now come into four of the risk categories: Endangered, Vulnerable, Near Threatened and Least Concern.

Endangered

Four of our species are classed as Endangered: **Grayling, Large Heath, Wall and Wood White.**

Of the four, Grayling is of most concern. On the brink of extinction in the Malvern Hills, it also appears to be losing ground in Shropshire. Our Shropshire Upland Commons project is gathering more information on its status and this will hopefully lead to conservation action. Large Heath is only found in a small area of north Shropshire but populations there appear stable. Both these species were previously classed as Vulnerable.

The classification of the Wall as Endangered will surprise many people, as it was once common and widespread, and the reasons for its dramatic decline are uncertain. It still occurs in the west and north of our region but is not subject to any specific conservation measures.

In contrast, the Wood White has benefited from considerable conservation effort over the last 10 years. We've worked with the Forestry Commission to improve habitats in several of its woods and, more recently, have successfully reintroduced the species to Worcestershire. We can draw some comfort that it's

For more details, see butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/half-of-british-butterfly-species-on-new-red-list



Wall (John Bryan)

doing well here and that our region remains its national stronghold.

Vulnerable

West Midlands species classed as Vulnerable are **Brown Hairstreak** (only found in east Worcestershire), **Grizzled Skipper** (few remaining sites), **Silver-studded Blue** (doing well at Prees Heath, its only site), **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (mainly in the west of our region and another target species of the Shropshire Upland Commons project), **White Admiral** (evidence of range expansion and now present in our three Worcestershire reserves), **White-letter Hairstreak** (almost certainly under-recorded) and **Small Heath** (promoted from Near Threatened and possibly impacted by climate change).

Good news?

Dark Green Fritillary and **Small Blue** are classed as Near Threatened, while our other species are viewed as of Least Concern.

More contentious is the reclassification of two Fritillaries, **High Brown** (Critically Endangered to Endangered) and **Pearl-bordered** (Endangered to Vulnerable), on the basis that conservation measures have improved their status. This sounds a little like wishful thinking and is not borne out by experience in our region or knowledge of what's happening elsewhere. High Brown is long extinct here, while Pearl-bordered is struggling. The latter remains a high-priority species: considerable effort is being made in the Wyre Forest, working with our partners, and our Lost Fritillaries project is restoring the species to the Malverns.

Article by Mike Williams

Outstanding Volunteer Award

Simon Primrose, our Brown Hairstreak Champion since 2014, will receive an Outstanding Volunteer Award at this year's National AGM in November. As part of his role, he organises searches for eggs on Thursdays through the winter, as well as some Saturday searches at Grafton Wood.

Simon wrote an article for *Comma 100* describing how egg hunting has revealed the range expansion of this, one of our rarest species which was only rediscovered in Worcestershire in 1969–70 after an absence of 79 years. He acknowledged the tireless work of his determined group of volunteers, known affectionately as 'The Streakers'.



Simon Primrose on the hunt for eggs (Mike Williams)

The Outstanding Volunteer Award is presented annually to someone who has made an exceptional contribution to Lepidoptera conservation. Nominees are proposed by branches and winners are then selected by the national organisation. Past winners from the West Midlands include **Frank Lancaster**, **John Tilt** and **Mike Williams**.

Congratulations to Simon on his award and our thanks for all his efforts on behalf of the Brown Hairstreak, which is now found in 269 1km map squares.

Female laying eggs in May



The Lost Fritillary project

The Pearl-bordered Fritillary returns to the Malverns for the first time this century



Caterpillars in diapause in July

Two years ago, we started to plan the reintroduction of the first **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria euphrosyne*) to the Malvern Hills, following its local extinction at the end of the last century. During April and May this year, the dream became a reality and we

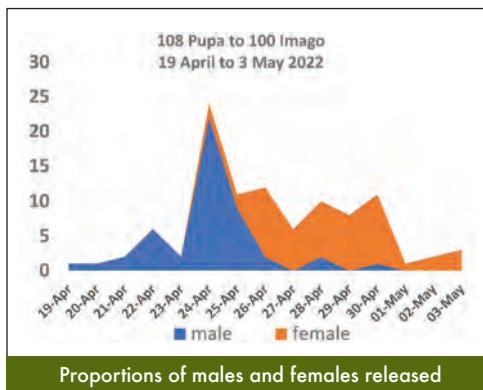
introduced 98 specimens to two sites in favourable conditions – cool but dry and sunny.

Prior to release, we provided our captive-bred adults with different nectar sources including bugle; their preferred choice was the wallflower *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve'. In captivity, they were reluctant feeders and, despite continual inspection, were not seen to mate. When released on sunny days, males soon warmed up to feed and females were mated by previously released males within 5–20 minutes. We observed mating lasting 35–135 minutes, depending on the weather – the sunnier, the quicker. It was reassuring to see both males and egg-laying females remaining on the release

sites for three to four weeks.

The graph shows why we did not initially see any mating: all but five of our releases in the first week were male. All but five in the second week were female – a mirror image.

The habitat soon began to change, from low-lying dead bracken around violets in spring to a canopy of bracken over shade-tolerant violets by July. The fourth instar caterpillars should now be hibernating under bracken litter or dead leaves until early next spring, when they'll continue to feed, moult to form the fifth instar and then pupate before emerging as adults in April and May.



Meanwhile, we have started the next captive breeding cycle. We collected six gravid females from the Bathurst Estate in Gloucestershire in early May, and then two more gravid females from Ewyas Harold in Herefordshire in late May. All began to lay eggs within two days. Their average lifespan in the wild is 6–7 days (Warren M, 2021, *Butterflies*, Bloomsbury Wildlife, p79) but one of our females lived for 35 days in captivity and laid at least 459 eggs – remarkable!

The resulting caterpillars ate 49 large pots (35cm) of Dog violets (*Viola riviniana*), and over 1900 survived to form the fourth instar. By mid-July, most were in diapause under microwaved oak leaves. So, next spring could be a bumper year for reintroductions to local sites – but best not to count your butterflies before they pupate!

July's extremely hot weather could have been a disaster – the Pearl Hotel was over 35°C in the shade, while exposed pots of fresh food plant were ten degrees hotter. How to protect our hibernating caterpillars from overheating and desiccation? Our bathroom stayed around 25°C, so one of the UK's most at-risk butterfly species had to share the facilities for a few days.

Many thanks to the volunteers who are now growing lots more violets to feed our fourth and fifth instar caterpillars next spring – we expect to need another 200 large pots!

Article and photographs by **Mel Mason**

Butterflies and Moths
Calendar 2023



2023 Branch Calendar

One of our rarest Fritillaries features on the cover of next year's calendar. Chris Stamp's beautiful image shows all the life stages of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on its food plant.

We're holding the price at just £8, including postage (£15 for two). To order, send a cheque made out to Butterfly Conservation (West Midlands Branch), with your name and address, to BCWM, Annesbrook, 2 Dewberry Close, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 8TB or, if you'd like to pay by bank transfer, contact Mike Williams at wmbutterflies@gmail.com



The Pearl Hotel at over 35°C



Our bathroom at around 25°C

Marbled White at Clun



On 2 July this year, the Clun and Bishop's Castle Branch of Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) organised a preliminary 'Bioblitz'. The aims were to assemble, for a specific site, current lists of all wildlife species (animal and vegetable) known to be present there and to survey that site to spot any others not so far recorded. The chosen site was the grounds of Clun Castle, which is managed by English Heritage with

free public access.

For those who don't know the site, it's bordered by a loop of the river Clun and by the adjacent Clun village. The sizeable ruins of the 13th century castle are located on the top of a large mound, together with two former baileys; the smaller bailey is now a bowling green, while the larger is a flat grassy meadow. Below the mound, there is a large meadow on the south side that is

Clun Castle (English Heritage)

used for recreational purposes and, on the other sides, a smaller grassy meadow and a lot of uneven ground. The entire site (except for the bowling green) used to be grazed by sheep but that hasn't been the case for several years. The meadow on the top of the mound and the lower level recreational area are cut once a year; everything else is uncut.

In preparation for Bioblitz day, SWT members had been regularly visiting the site to record species seen. One recorder, Brian Angell, spotted a **Marbled White**. This excited me as I've lived in the area for over 30 years without seeing a



Look out for Marbled Whites in your area. This species is expanding its range and appearing in places where it has not been seen before. If you spot it, submit your sighting via www.brc.ac.uk/irecord



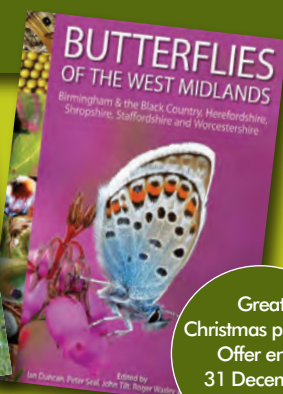
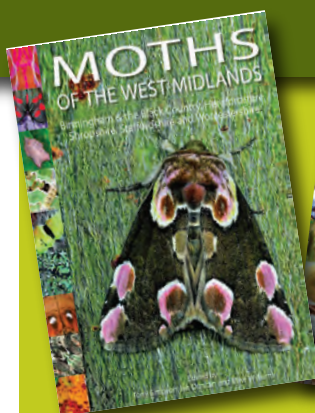
single Marbled White, albeit without ever looking for butterflies at the Castle. I made a thorough search there a few days later and counted about 20.

There is a great variety of grasses in the uncut areas, so the Castle site is not only a good example of uncut and ungrazed grassland (a rare habitat in the area) but also, as far as I know, boasts the only local colony of Marbled Whites.

Incidentally, the current species total for the site (previous records plus the day's additions) is 459, including 20 butterflies and 134 other insects. The intention is to extend the Bioblitz to include nocturnal species.

Article by **Dennis Twist**

Special offer: Branch books



Great
Christmas present!
Offer ends
31 December
2022

Buy *Butterflies of the West Midlands* and the *Moths of the West Midlands*, the two landmark publications by the Branch, for £30 + £4 p&p, saving over £16.

These books feature all the butterflies of the area (44 species), all the macro moths (609 species) and selected micro moths (200 species). Both are lavishly illustrated and include up-to-date distribution maps, habitat information, flight periods and larval food plants. In addition, they give details on the best spots to look for butterflies and moths in the West Midlands.

To place your order, visit www.naturebureau.co.uk/special-offers and add the 'West Midlands Bundle' to your basket (rather than adding the two titles individually). Alternatively, send a cheque for £34.00, along with the delivery details, to: NatureBureau, Unit 2C, The Votec Centre, Hambridge Lane, Newbury, RG14 5TN. Offer ends 31 December 2022.



Walking with Butterflies: our guide to 40 of the best sites to see butterflies and moths in the West Midlands is available for £7.45 (including postage). To order, send a cheque made out to Butterfly Conservation (West Midlands Branch), with your name and address, to BCWM, Annesbrook, 2 Dewberry Close, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 8TB or, if you'd like to pay by bank transfer, contact Mike Williams at wmbutterflies@gmail.com

Books published by other Butterfly Conservation branches may interest those planning to visit their areas. New out are *Kent & SE London*, *Cornwall* and *Scotland*. Priced at £29.95, all are available from www.naturebureau.co.uk





A tribute to



Painting of White Admiral (Adrian Miles)



Adrian Miles (Louise Miles)

Adrian has been part of my life in Shropshire since the early 1990s. We met on the Dudmaston Estate when I was surveying for **White Admirals** and he invited me back to his cottage for a much-needed cup of tea. It was the beginning of a long friendship that continued until he died in 2021.

He grew up in Broseley in Shropshire in the 1950s and spent his childhood in the surrounding fields picking blackberries, making dens and developing a passion for wildlife – especially

butterflies and moths, as these fields were full of **Common Blues**, **Small Coppers** and **Dingy Skippers**.

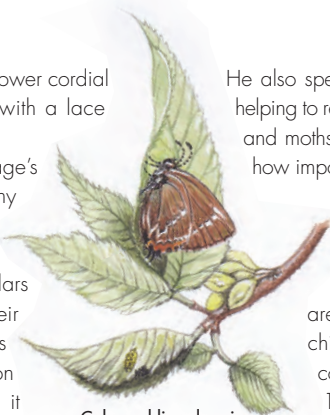
Comer Woods, Dudmaston Estate

Adrian restored Heath Cottage in Comer Woods from 1983 and then lived there, occasionally with other family members. He first discovered White Admiral on a privet bush in the garden and then recorded it in many other locations nearby. We undertook a research project on this species together and spent many happy hours searching for eggs and the distinctive caterpillars, largely found on honeysuckle growing along the ride edges – unlike their normal habitat elsewhere. In 2004, Adrian started to organise annual White Admiral circular walks; these were invariably very successful and ended up with a

homemade afternoon tea of elderflower cordial and lavender biscuits, complete with a lace tablecloth and china plates.

A large Elm tree in the cottage's garden was home to a large colony of **White-letter Hairstreak**. On quiet summer evenings, Adrian could even hear the caterpillars chomping on the leaves and their frass falling to the ground. It was this tree that he wanted to show me on our first acquaintance. Sadly, it eventually succumbed to Dutch elm disease and the colony went with it.

Adrian was a regular moth trapper throughout his life and Comer Woods were the focus of much of his moth recording. His enthusiasm for moths was infectious, so we often worked alongside each other on moth as well as butterfly expeditions across the county.



Coloured line drawing
of White-letter Hairstreak
(Adrian Miles)

He also spent many years working as a volunteer helping to restore some of the collections of butterflies and moths at the Ludlow Museum, as he realised how important these could be in the future.

The Haycop, Broseley

In 2007, Adrian approached the owner of The Haycop in Broseley, an area in which he regularly played as a child, with a view to being allowed to conserve the site and restore it to its 1950s glory. Since then, The Haycop Conservation Group has been set up as a charity and the site has been transformed into a nine-acre diverse nature reserve with areas of meadow, woodland, heathland and open water. Common Blue, Small Copper and Dingy Skipper have all returned here, along with so much more.

This reserve is now well supported by Broseley residents, businesses, organisations and numerous local volunteers whose involvement in frequent work parties help to keep it in good condition. These comments on a social media post after Adrian died sum up his contribution very well: 'the work he did here was immeasurable – a lasting tribute to a talented man' and 'his legacy lives on in the promotion of nature and the team of volunteers'.

Adrian's art and legacy

Adrian was an accomplished artist, as well as a sign-writer by trade, and some of his illustrations have been used on an information board put up by the National Trust on the White Admiral walk in Comer Woods to recognise his contribution there. The Haycop Group still sells cards printed from his original drawings. Please contact the Group via their website if you are interested in purchasing any: thehaycop.org/contact

As Lepidoptera featured so much in Adrian's life, he very kindly left a legacy to West Midlands Butterfly Conservation, the only stipulation being that it should be spent in Shropshire. Thank you, Adrian – we will ensure your legacy is well spent and we continue to miss you.

White Admiral walk information board



Find out more about the White Admiral walk
at [nationaltrust.org.uk/dudmaston/trails/
white-admiral-walk-comer-woods](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/dudmaston/trails/white-admiral-walk-comer-woods)

Article by Jenny Joy

Adrian wrote about the Haycop on pages 16–17 of the Spring 2010 *Comma*:
wmbutterflybook.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/comma-76-spring-2010.pdf



Ray in his study with his logbook

Great

nephew). By his teens, Ray was off by himself (and a couple of pints of milk from a local farmer), watching **Adonis Blue** on Box Hill.

Ray stressed that he was always interested in both butterflies and moths, and was soon hanging around streetlights at night looking at moths – the police once thought he was on lookout duty for burglars! He went on to breed over 100 species, including a **Blue Underwing** female that he cycled 70 miles to collect. With over 250 eggs, he gave 150 to other

entomologists and then reared two dustbins full of caterpillars. He always released either at the collection site or into suitable habitat elsewhere.

He continued to record throughout his life in the South-East and then began his remarkable series of Herefordshire records on retirement: 891 species within Dorstone, most in his garden. Problems with his eyesight now prevent official recording but he still sets his traps each week and keeps his own records for species he can identify confidently. He shared the previous night's finds during our visit, including a lively **Brimstone** moth.

His biggest surprise was an **Oleander Hawk-moth** in 1991; it was on the side of his trap when he opened the drive gates for his wife. A **Great Brocade** was the first in Herefordshire. He sees **Red Sword-grass** every few years (they breed in the Black Mountains) and recorded **Kent Black Arches** last year (they breed in Worcestershire and have now reached Herefordshire).

Over his exceptionally long life, Ray has seen many changes in the relationship between humans and

100 years on: 100,000+ records

It all began in early July with an email from **Peter Hall**, County Moth Recorder (Herefordshire). He told me that **Ray Birchough** was about to celebrate his 100th birthday and that he'd logged over 100,000 moth records since retiring to the Golden Valley in 1987. A few weeks later, my partner and I had lunch with Ray and his wife **Toni** at their beautiful home in Dorstone, giving us a chance to talk about his remarkable life with Lepidoptera.

Ray's love of nature began with his grandfather, who taught him about wildflowers and built a pond in the garden. When he was about seven, Ray collected caterpillars from a *Euonymus* hedge, reared them and released them as adult **Magpie** moths – he was hooked! A maths teacher later noticed Ray reading a natural history book and passed on his butterfly-catching equipment (since passed to Ray's



Brimstone moth

achievements

Lepidoptera. He remembers the days when butterflies were seen in clouds but also pinned on boards; he showed me his own collection but reflected that he never liked the killing and switched to photography when equipment became available in the 1960s. Now his approach to trapping is cautious, using only single lights and no pheromones (he's recorded two clearwing species in his garden, all by inspecting food plants). He releases moths by 7am so they aren't in the trap too long and, until recently, released them a quarter of a mile away so they didn't return to it.

Meeting Ray was a privilege. I'm in awe of the dedication needed to maintain detailed records for 84 years as he has.

25 years on: 17 species in a day

As publicised in *Comma* 112, there was an Open Day at the Grafton Wood reserve on 23 July. This gave visitors an opportunity to see the work that **Natalie Norton** described in her accompanying article and to search for the many butterfly species that thrive on the site.

Behind this success story are the efforts of many volunteers, not least of these being reserve warden **John Tilt**. Recipient of Butterfly Conservation's Outstanding Volunteer Award in 2014, John's had many roles in the service of this Branch but seeing his quiet enthusiasm for Grafton Wood at the Open Day makes me think it must be his real love. As well as his work there, he maintains woodland at his home of 57 years nearby.

John launched the event with a presentation of key facts about the reserve. Purchased with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust in 1997, it has been the subject of regular work parties ever since. Wednesday work parties throughout the winter clear the rides for 20 paces either side of the centre line and coppice 12 hectares on rotation. The soil chemistry helps: being slightly chalky, it doesn't suit bracken. All



The reserve can only be accessed on foot across farmland; while inconvenient, this affords seclusion and some protection against human pressures. (Mike Williams)

this creates ideal environments for butterflies:

- **White Admiral**, **Brown Argus** and **Brown Hairstreak** have always been present.
- **Silver-washed Fritillary** and **Purple Emperor** found their own way in.
- **White-letter Hairstreak** appears every three or four years.
- **Wood White** and **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** were introduced, the former with great success but latter gone after five years.

John went on to describe the many birds and animals recorded in the wood.

Perhaps most interesting was Bechstein's bat, one of the UK's rarest bat species. Grafton is probably its most northerly location and was thought to be too densely wooded until a team found first a lactating female and then a roost of around 70. Bat boxes have since attracted other species as well.

After lunch, we headed off to look for the butterflies we'd heard about. With so many experienced guides, novices like my partner and me saw far more than we would by ourselves. In the end, our personal tally was 16 species – somehow we missed one!

Hats off to John for being the driving force behind Grafton Wood, and our thanks to everyone on his team for their commitment.



Brown Argus - a first for my partner and me



Purple Emperor - a thrilling find for all (Craig Jones)

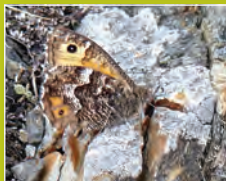
Article by **Marian Newell**

Photographs (except where credited otherwise) by **Per Porter**

1 July – ID Workshop – a group learned how to identify and record butterflies and day-flying moths of the Long Mynd



26 July – Grayling was discovered at a new site on the Stiperstones



Golden-rod Brindle



13 August – a Moth Morning on the Stiperstones yielded a Golden-rod Brindle, an uncommon moth of moorland and possibly the first recorded on the Stiperstones for 50 years

Butterfly & Moth Festival 2022

Running throughout the summer, this series of events recorded and celebrated the butterflies and moths of upland commons in the Shropshire Hills.



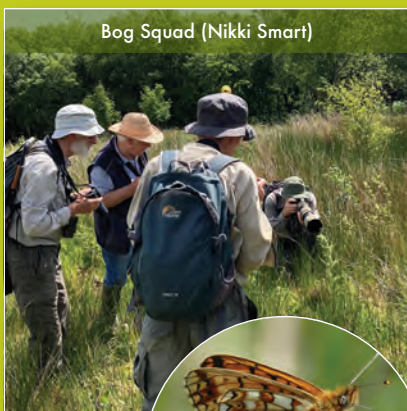
18 May – a survey found Green Hairstreak on the Stiperstones



Green Hairstreak



Bog Squad (Nikki Smart)



Garden Tiger

16 July – a Moth Morning in Church Stretton delivered a spectacular Garden Tiger



17 June – the Bog Squad found Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on the Stiperstones



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (Jen Palmer)

Article and photographs (except where credited otherwise) by Mike Williams

National Members' Day and AGM 2022

Saturday 12 November 2022

Butterfly Conservation's national Members' Day and AGM will be held on Saturday 12 November 2022 at Cedar Court Hotel Huddersfield, Lindley Moor Road, Ainley Top, Huddersfield, HD3 3RH. Members are welcome to attend either in person or online, and non-members are also welcome to join online to watch the Members' Day talks. More information at butterfly-conservation.org/agm2022



Birmingham and Black Country

Scarlet Tiger Project Work Parties, Stourbridge

Every 3rd Fri: 21 Oct, 18 Nov, 16 Dec, 20 Jan, 17 Feb, 17 Mar

Contact Joy Stevens: 01384 372397, joystevens@blueyonder.co.uk

Meeting points and tasks to be determined



Scarlet Tiger caterpillar (Adam Gor)

Herefordshire

Ewyas Harold Meadow Work Parties

Tue: 1 Nov, 6 Dec, 10 Jan, 7 Feb.

11am at the northern Cwm Hill end of Ewyas Harold Common, adjacent to the top cattle grid (SO382302). Approach from Abbey Dore off the B4347 (SO384306). Bring gloves, hand tools, lunch and a drink.

Contact Natalie Norton: nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org, 07485 372199

Ewyas Harold Reserve and Common Work Parties

Sat: 15 Oct, 19 Nov, 17 Dec.

10am at the northern Cwm Hill end of Ewyas Harold Common, adjacent to the top cattle grid (SO382302). Approach from Abbey Dore off the B4347 (SO384306). Bring gloves, hand tools, lunch and a drink.

Contact Dean Fenton

(fenton@littleburyfarm.co.uk), Ian Hart (yellowrattle4@aol.com) or Natalie Norton (nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org)

Haugh Wood Work Parties

Sat: 5 Nov, 3 Dec, 7 Jan, 4 Feb, 4 Mar.

9.30am in the Forestry Commission car park on minor road from Mordiford to Woolhope (SO592365)

Contact Robin Hemming (07501 020605, robinhemming@btinternet.com) or Kate Wollen (07786 526280, kate.wollen@forestryengland.uk)

Worcestershire

Ankerdine Common

Sun: 15 Jan – in partnership with
Worcestershire County Council
10am in a small lay-by on A44 close to the turn
off to Martley (SO736557) off the B4193
Stourport-Hartlebury road.

Contact Mike Williams (07802 274552 ,
wmbutterflies@gmail.com) or Trevor Bucknall
(01905 755757, trevor.bucknall@outlook.com)



Silver-washed-Fritillary at Grafton Wood
Open Day (Per Porter)

Grafton Wood Work Parties

Every Wed to the end of March 2023, ride
management and coppicing
10am at Grafton Flyford Church; tools
provided; bring heavy gardening gloves, wear
appropriate clothing
Contact John Tilt: 01386 792458,
john.tilt2@btoopenworld.com



Brown Hairstreak egg (Gillian Thompson)

Grafton Wood Brown Hairstreak Egg Searches

Sat: 26 Nov, 31 Dec (mince pie and mulled
wine special), 28 Jan.

10am at Grafton Flyford Church

Contact Simon Primrose: 07952 260153,
simonprimrose@aol.com

Simon says: 'We'll also be resuming our
regular weekly **Brown Hairstreak** egg searches
on Thursdays, probably starting in mid-October.
It'd be great to have more people involved,
so if you'd like to join us – for an hour, a day
or the whole season – contact me for more
information.

Monkwood Work Parties

Sun: 6 Nov, 4 Dec, 8 Jan

Thu: 20 Oct, 17 Nov, 15 Dec

10am in the reserve car park (SO803603), usually
finished by 3pm

Contact Phil Adams: 01905 610830,
pdadamsrainbow@gmail.com

Staffordshire

Cannock Chase Work Parties – Dingy Skipper

In partnership with Staffordshire
County Council

Work parties are due to be held in the
Fives Valley - dates to be confirmed
Contact Rob Taylor, Countryside Ranger:
07817 122760,
robert.taylor@staffordshire.gov.uk



Dingy Skipper pair (Edmund Kennerley)

IMPORTANT: Always contact the organiser before attending an event.

Penny Hill Landfill Site Work Parties

Sun: 16 Oct, 20 Nov, 19 Feb, 26 Feb
10am at the site entrance off Pudford Lane,
Hillside, Martley (SO752613)

Contact Mike Williams (07802 274552 ,
wmbutterflies@gmail.com) or Trevor Bucknall
(01905 755757, trevor.bucknall@outlook.com)

Trench Wood Work Parties

Sun 23 Oct, 27 Nov, 22 Jan, 26 Feb,
26 Mar

10am in the reserve car park (SO930588)

Contact Matthew Bridger: 07801 568334,
bridge1805@btinternet.com

Expenses: mileage allowance

In response to the rising cost of living, the Branch committee has agreed to pay a mileage allowance to people attending work parties and committee meetings. Forms are available from the Treasurer (see page 27) and from work party leaders.

If anything else prevents you from coming to work parties, please contact **Mike Williams** (see page 27) to discuss how we could help. There's a great need for more practical help, especially from the Branch's younger and fitter members!



Wood White pupa (Peter Eeles)



Pearl-bordered Fritillary pupa (Peter Eeles)

Wyre Forest Work Parties

Sun: 11 Dec, 22 Jan

Wed: 12 Oct, 9 Nov, 14 Dec (with Christmas
BBQ), 11 Jan, 8 Feb, 8 Mar

Wednesdays are joint events with Natural
England. 10am in Earnwood Copse car park on
the B4194 Bewdley to Kinlet road (SO744784)

Bring your own gloves and refreshments – tools
and hand sanitiser will be provided

Work is mainly removing ride-side coppice to
benefit **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and sometimes
Wood White.

Contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552,
wmbutterflies@gmail.com

Don't forget to check Butterfly Conservation's websites and groups for other events:

- westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com/events-and-work-parties
- www.facebook.com/groups/westmidlandsbutterflyconservation
- www.facebook.com/groups/250738579030862 (Malvern Butterfly Group)
- butterfly-conservation.org/events

Shropshire

Prees Heath Common Work Parties

Wed: 19 Oct, 16 Nov, 14 Dec

10.30am on the access track opposite the Steel Heath turning off the A49 (SJ557363)

Contact Natalie Norton: nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org, 07485 372199

Telford Millennium Nature Reserve Work Parties

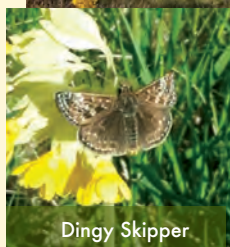
Volunteer work parties are due to be held over the autumn and winter.

Please contact Peter Mcnee for details if you would like to help: 07730688924 or Peter.Mcnee@groundwork.org.uk

The Telford Millennium Nature Reserve



Telford Millennium Village



Dingy Skipper

I first visited this site in the late 1990s, before the area was developed into the Telford Millennium Village. When I arranged to go back in August 2022, I thought that I

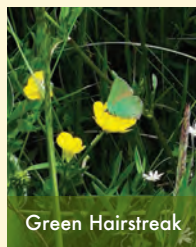
was just visiting a small remnant of heathland. I could not have been more wrong!

I met **Peter Mcnee** from Groundwork West Midlands who, along with a small but loyal and determined group of volunteers, has been quietly managing the site and restoring a variety of habitats over the past four years. It really is one of Telford's hidden gems: a 44-acre nature reserve that is home to a variety of habitats including woodland, heathland, meadow and grassland, along with a brook and a

number of substantial ponds. It is situated in a former mining area and therefore supports the characteristic butterflies of Telford, the **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak** among many others.

I am keen to do some butterfly and moth recording work there next summer, at least on a monthly basis, to identify key areas of habitat with the aim of producing some management recommendations to help focus and develop the management plan following the first stage of restoration.

Article by **Jenny Joy**
Photographs supplied by
Groundwork West Midlands



Green Hairstreak

If you are interested in helping me with recording, please let me know (jenny.joy17@outlook.com).
The reserve is located in East Ketley, approximately 2km north of Telford.

IMPORTANT: Always contact the organiser before attending an event.

Trapping Tips

I was recently contacted by a reader concerned about the growing use of moth-traps and pheromone lures, and their potential effects on moths. As I've wondered about this since becoming Editor of *The Comma*, I decided to look into it. I've spoken to mothers in the Branch and read notes published by Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies.

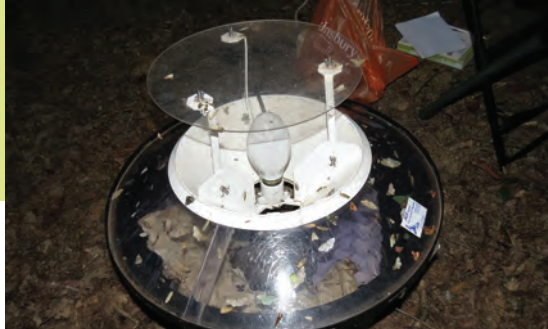
Firstly, most moths are released alive and well after trapping. Some are found dead in traps, of course, as they are in our houses and gardens at other times. Some species are difficult to identify and may occasionally be dissected for confirmation – this should be done only for species specified by the county moth recorder (see page 27). A good photograph is usually enough, with reference to westmidlandsmoths.co.uk or the Branch Facebook group (see page 2).

Starting with the positive

- As yet, there's no evidence that trapping is adversely affecting moth populations overall, although repeated trapping in the same place could interrupt mating.
- It's a relatively benign way for people to become more engaged with moths – even urban gardens should exceed 300 species in a year, peaking in July–August.
- Once into trapping, people often enhance their gardens to attract more species; this benefits other pollinators.
- Pheromone lures have revealed the under-recording of clearwings and the presence of non-target species (see page 26).

Practical guidance

- Don't trap in the same place every night; returning no more than every other night gives moths freedom to feed and mate.
- Check traps early in the morning, to minimise confinement and prevent bird predation of moths outside the trap.
- If you cannot empty a trap in the morning, keep it in a cool, shaded place and put in a damp cloth to prevent dehydration.
- Release moths on the day of capture; unidentified moths can be stored in a pot for later study but must be kept cool (in a refrigerator, if necessary).
- Release moths away from the trapping location, where



The excitement builds... (Michael Southall)

there are hiding places for them during the day.

- Release moths in small numbers and in different places, to avoid attracting predators to a plentiful food source.
- Consider whether it is better to release moths after dark, rather than in daylight when predation may be more likely.
- Avoid trapping near hornet's nests; hornets can quickly kill large numbers of moths – stop trapping for a while if this happens.
- Obtain the landowner's permission before trapping outside your own property and remember to submit all your records.

Pheromone lures

As these lures replicate the pheromones released by females to attract males, they have the potential to disrupt mating. This should not happen when they are used responsibly (for advice, see the guidance note on angleps.com/pheromone-lures).

Restricting the use of lures to part of the flight period can reduce their impact. Most should not be used for more than 30 minutes; they must be carefully sited to avoid leading moths to predators. After attracting a target species, the same lure should not be used in the same place (unless as part of a scientific study). Lures for night-flying species should not be left overnight; lures for day-flying species must be checked often to avoid any captured moths becoming over-heated.

In summary

The benefits from moth-trapping seem to outweigh any adverse effects. However, all members who use traps and lures should keep abreast of current best practice and consider how their activities affect both the moths and their fellow enthusiasts. Finally, be sure to record all trapped moths – without this, trapping has little value.

Article by **Marian Newell**



Wood White

Our reserves: Monkwood

North of Worcester, this reserve is jointly owned and managed by Butterfly Conservation and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. In 2016, it became part of the Making a Stand for the Wood White project.

down a ride to get a glimpse of a patrolling male or watching the mesmerising courtship display, we are incredibly privileged to be able to encounter this butterfly in woodlands in the Midlands.

The Wood White is an emblem of the significant success that can be achieved for a butterfly experiencing long-term declines by investing time, resources and funding into sympathetic ride management, targeted monitoring and, if appropriate and as a last resort, reintroductions.

Progress to date

Undertaking egg search and habitat condition assessment surveys at reserves including Monkwood in the unprecedented scorching heat of last summer increased a sense of the fragility of Wood

White colonies facing climate change. Of particular concern is the availability of nectar and larval food plants, which seemed to set seed rapidly under drought conditions.

Volunteers have done a tremendous job, undertaking ride management by clearing scrub and creating scallops to provide sheltered sunny positions for Wood White to nectar and breed. They've also controlled the extent of Common Melilot (*Melilotus officinalis*) by

Monkwood was the very first site nationally to be purchased by Butterfly Conservation back in 1986. Since then, it has been carefully managed by volunteers from both organisations and now boasts a rich variety of butterflies and moths including **White Admiral** and **Silver-washed Fritillary**, plus of course the **Wood White**. It is regularly trapped for its moths and has an impressive list. Outside of the Wyre Forest and the Malverns, it is one of the few sites in Worcestershire for **Drab Looper**, a high priority species nationally. Today, the wood is best known for its population of Wood White, which has been reintroduced into the wood with considerable success.

Delicate, dainty, soot-smudged wood ghosts are some wonderful descriptions I have seen used to describe the Wood White. Whether walking up and

Delicate, dainty, soot-smudged wood ghosts are some wonderful descriptions I have seen used to describe the Wood White



Work party on the reserve



Northern end of the transect

uprooting plants before they set seed to reduce spread on the verges. While working, we witnessed many courtship displays and females laying eggs on Common and Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil.

Two butterfly transects are walked weekly by volunteers and both show very encouraging numbers of Wood Whites which have spread throughout the wood. It's also been really encouraging to hear that Wood White has colonised the landscape around Monkwood, including sites near Grimley, and that private landowners have been receptive to managing their land to benefit the species. It really shows the importance of well-managed nature reserves as a seed bed by which butterflies can be enabled to expand their range.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust is currently raising funds to buy land at Green Farm, adjacent to Monkwood. Access to Green Farm is restricted to public rights of way but a butterfly transect has been established this year with support from the Branch. This is walked weekly by volunteers **Mark** and **Linda** to gather baseline records for butterfly and day-flying

moth species, and Wood White has already been recorded there. Find out more about the Green Farm appeal at worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/appeals/green-farm

Looking forward

The challenge now is how we sustain and strengthen Wood White colonies in the Midlands, while improving our understanding of the complex drivers of fluctuating populations at site and landscape levels. As always, we are reliant on robust data to answer pertinent questions. To some we have no answers at present due to a limited evidence base: for instance, how does climate affect the rate of vegetation growth and how this will influence the effectiveness of future habitat management work? Similarly, how will life cycles respond to seasonal change? Owning our own reserves like Monkwood puts us in a really strong position to produce answers to these crucial questions.

We need your help to gather more data. If you have not already done so, please submit any Wood White records to iRecord so that we can develop our understanding of its distribution.

Article by **Natalie Norton**

Photographs by **Mike Williams**

Transect walker Jane Arnold takes a break (Rob Davies)



Gatekeeper (Claire Cooper)



Small Skipper
(Claire Cooper)

The People Behind a Butterfly Transect

The scientific basis of butterfly transects, with their repeatable methodology, knowledgeable volunteers and long-term nature, is a key part of butterfly conservation and data analysis. But what about the human side of taking part in transects? What causes people to want to donate their time to the cause of butterfly science? What do they gain from it? This is a question I put to a group of volunteers who have taken part in a new transect in 2022 at Princes Wood, a community woodland in Tatenhill, Staffordshire.



The site and volunteers are all part of Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme (TTTV), a five-year

scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund with a focus on enhancing the river environment and community engagement with the landscape and its heritage in East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire.

The idea for a transect on this site came from a local volunteer who helped to plan and develop the new woodland, and regularly records sightings there on an individual basis. TTV helped to set up the transect and organise a group of volunteers to walk the route each week.

Alongside is what the volunteers have to say about being involved. It's clear that volunteering on a butterfly transect brings more than just an increased knowledge of butterfly identification. A common theme that emerged was the sense of teamwork, of making friends, the joy that comes from a shared interest, and the hope that this could be the start of more engagement in the community woodland from local residents.

Article by **Nicola Lynes** Community Engagement Officer for Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme

“ I’ve recorded monthly at Princes Wood; it’s been helpful to improve my ID skills and knowledge of butterflies in the area. It feels great that you are contributing to important data which will be used to build up a picture of how the environment is changing and which species are on the increase or decline. This has been a particularly hot summer so it will be interesting to compare results next year as we move to our second year of recording. Doing a butterfly transect is a nice way to volunteer with like-minded people. ”

“ I was a bit nervous at volunteering to do the butterfly transect as I didn’t know a lot about the different species. Following retirement I wanted to spend more time in nature and was keen to learn as much as I can. This has provided me with that opportunity. By doing my own research, following Butterfly Conservation West Midlands on Facebook and pairing up with more experienced people, I have learned so much and now enjoy being able to identify more butterflies while out and about. I also feel grateful that I have had the opportunity to contribute a small part to environmental conservation. ”



West Midlands Butterfly Conservation is keen to see new transects established throughout the region but especially in Staffordshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire. If you have a site in mind, or you could help out as a volunteer on an existing transect, contact our Transect Co-ordinator John Tilt (see page 27 for details).

“ The one big takeaway from me was how our ability to quickly identify different butterflies improved in such a short time. Although we were initially reliant on using colour, size, and number of spots to make a correct identification, we soon started to recognise the ways in which different species fly. Those added skills made identification so much easier. ”

“ Getting involved in the butterfly transect has been very enjoyable! It has helped me improve my butterfly ID skills, as well as gain an appreciation of the changes in butterfly species and numbers between April and September; from recording nine butterflies in April to over 100 in July! I have also gained knowledge of the life-cycles of some species and where in the transect I would be most likely to see them. I have enjoyed visiting Princes Wood and seeing how it changes during the year, and doing the transect with a partner as it is very useful to discuss what you think you have seen (or not). ”

“ The enthusiasm of everyone and a willingness to help each other has given us all more knowledge. The numbers of butterflies counted is higher than I expected, which proves the value of using a transect. Comparing and analysing future years’ results to show trends will be fascinating and can be used to plan the future management of the woodland. ”



Princes Wood (Emma Bungay)

For more information about TTV or Wildlife Recording Volunteers, see www.thetrentvalley.org.uk or contact me on Nicola.lynes@supportstaffordshire.org.uk.



Grizzled Skipper

Who Dares, Wings

Grizzled Skipper's last hope in Staffordshire – with apologies to a certain Regiment

Ten years ago, a work colleague and fellow amateur naturalist brought me an image of a butterfly for verification. I was pleased to confirm that it was a **Grizzled Skipper**. I asked where he'd seen it and he said he was 'just asking for a friend', who'd found a small number on privately owned land while working in north Staffordshire.

Over the following months, I harangued my workmate to see if his friend would divulge the site at least. Opportunely, at the end of a Branch AGM held at Westport Lake near Stoke-on-Trent, the finder came up to me and said he'd arranged permission for me to access his works site that afternoon, so long as I agreed to don a hard hat and Hi-Viz jacket. It would have been rude not to, so we were soon trundling through the BIFFA waste disposal site at Cold Meece.

Our sightings back then

I didn't expect much, as the site was the usual wasteland you'd expect, but within five minutes I'd found three Grizzled Skippers in a rabbit-grazed gully tucked up against a formidable fence. At that time I

was vaguely aware of two sites for Grizzled Skippers in Staffordshire but neither had recent proven records. I later learned that a developer had destroyed one site and the location of the other was uncertain, said to be at the bottom of a private garden near Lichfield, over the fence and on a railway cutting.

As I wandered along BIFFA's fence-line, the habitat on the other side looked even better for butterflies. I contacted **John Bryan**, local entomologist and Branch member, who told me the land beyond was Swynnerton Army Training Camp. I asked him if he would contact the camp to request access to survey the site and he was successful in obtaining permission.

On our first visit, the gatehouse security man half-whispered to us not to talk to any troops on site because they were hosting the SAS that week! What more could a butterfly need for future protection? On later visits, John recorded up to thirty Grizzled Skippers and two dozen **Dingy Skippers**, plus a host of other butterflies.

Years elapsed until, in 2021, I heard a rumour that the training camp might be coming up for disposal. I



Dingy Skipper

other caterpillar food and adult nectar sources. We were pleased to find a couple of Grizzled Skippers and Dingy Skippers to show Joe, as well as **Small Heath** and **Common Blue**, attesting to the importance of this type of bare ground and disturbed habitat.

Our hopes for the future

We intend to draft an initial Management Plan, to be agreed with the DIO and Major Salisbury. We'll ask for access to the site over a week next spring, during the Grizzled Skipper's flight period, with the aim of carrying out a full mapping survey over four discrete areas. This will tell us how well the Skippers are doing. As their habitat hasn't changed much over the past five years, the site may only require light management.

The DIO produces *Sanctuary*, a magazine showcasing nationally

asked John if we could arrange another site visit. I also contacted **Joseph Hamer**, an ecologist with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). Joe put our minds at ease, telling us that the site was not earmarked for disposal. He agreed to meet us in May this year and we were warmly welcomed by **Major Jim Salisbury** (retired), who gave us access to re-familiarise ourselves with the land.

We needed to check if the habitat had changed much since John's last visit; thankfully it hadn't, due to the gravelly ground and demolished bases of buildings throughout the main part of the site. Wild Strawberry and Bird's-foot Trefoil still grow in decent quantities, with

important ecological sites protected by the MoD on its land. We hope that, if we're allowed to form a partnership, we can work with the Officers on site and the DIO to support the butterflies' continued survival in Staffordshire with the media coverage it deserves.

It looks like the BIFFA slope adjoining the camp has been remodelled over the past three or four years, so it'll be interesting to see if we can also survey this area. I'll seek permission to do so.

Article and photographs (taken on the 2022 site visit) by **David Jackson**



Not widely known is that the SAS's full mantra is 'Who dares, wins; who sweats, wins'. With a little sweat, this could be a win-win for the butterflies and its guardians. If you'd like to get involved and potentially help monitor and manage this habitat, please contact David Jackson (see page 27).

Cleopatra on



Swallowtail



Spotted Fritillary

Our Corfu butterfly break adventure took us along unspoilt dusty mountain tracks with beautiful hidden villages offering welcome taverna breaks for refreshments and rest.

Our first five days

We stayed at Kalámi, overlooking the beautiful Ionian Sea on the north-eastern coast, from which Mont Pantokrator was only a short drive.

A lot of the paths are hidden these days, but the dusty tracks that were marked out led us through sunlit olive groves to 14th century villages such as Old Perithia, where there was an abundance of butterflies. Early starts are advised, as Corfu's summer sun soon takes the temperature over 30°C.

The stunning **Cleopatra** and **Eastern Bath Whites** fluttered frantically on the abundant scabious and meadow thistle; **Southern White Admirals** glided over bramble along welcome shaded rides, while **Spotted Fritillaries** skipped from one dandelion to another.

The Cleopatra is very similar to our own **Brimstone**

and can be quite easily mistaken for one as they nectar on their food plant. The flash of orange as it opens its wings is the giveaway – a challenge to capture on camera.

Our second five days

We drove our little red Suzuki hire car over the mountains to the north-western coastal village of Liapades. This is a great starting point for hikers, with many picturesque paths to explore on foot close to the village.

A short early morning drive to the sleepy village of Doukades took us far enough away from tourists and positioned us perfectly for our planned six-mile hike to Agios Symeon. The start of the trail was not easy to find and asking locals for directions also wasn't easy – we found that they won't speak to you unless you speak to them first. However, friendly taverna owners were very helpful in pointing out the way and, once we got started, the walk was fairly well signposted. Regular stops for butterfly photographs and water followed – don't set off on any walk in Corfu without plenty of water and good walking boots. The view from the top of the mountain was just breath-taking and well worth the climb.

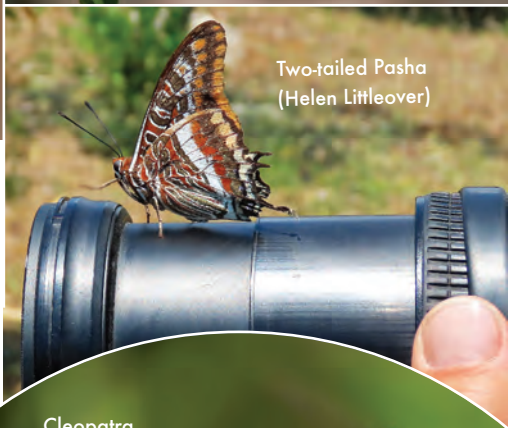
Kaiser's Throne, a look-out point above Pelekas, is one of the highest points in Corfu and provides panoramic views of the island and, on a clear day, the mountains of Albania. The gardens there are a good place to see the

the Corfu Trail

Eastern Bath White



Scarce Swallowtail



Two-tailed Pasha
(Helen Littleover)

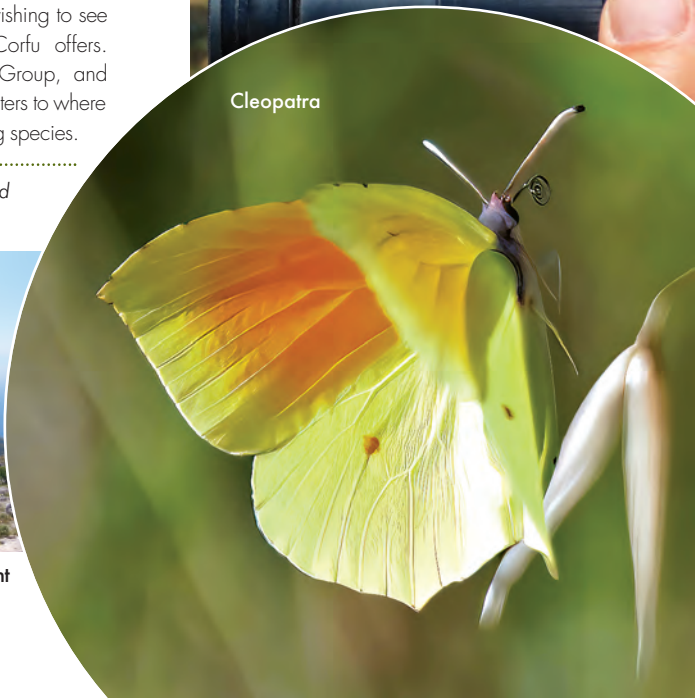
big three butterflies: **Swallowtail**, **Scarce Swallowtail** and **Two-tailed Pasha**. We chose to drive up to the spot, as walking mountain roads isn't a pleasant experience, where there was free parking and free entry to the gardens.

All in all, it was a very enjoyable 10-day butterfly adventure, highly recommended for those wishing to see butterflies in the unspoilt habitats that Corfu offers. Corfu Butterfly Conservation's Facebook Group, and administrator, were very helpful in giving pointers to where and when to see some of the island's stunning species.

*Article and photographs (except where credited otherwise) by **Roger Littleover***



Vista from Kaiser's Throne, favourite viewpoint of Kaiser William II, emperor of Germany



Cleopatra

From Herefordshire to the Black Isle in Scotland

My wife and I made a monumental decision last August. We decided to make one more house move before we became too old to do so and take on one more challenge.

We were looking in Herefordshire and also in Scotland, from the Borders in the south all the way up to Tain in the north. It was the tail end of the Covid house-moving boom, when everyone wanted to escape to the country. We timed putting the house on the market with going up to Scotland for a holiday and maybe having the opportunity to do some house-hunting. But our house sold in three days and so a slight panic set in. Nothing in Herefordshire but a smallholding appeared on the Black Isle and we went to look. Another trip up for a second viewing and we put in an offer and, after fighting off six other contenders, here we are.

We're just behind the small seaside town of Rosemarkie, with about five acres of land and an old farmhouse joined recently to a steading (barn conversion). We have some paddocks, conifer plantations on three sides, a bit of mixed woodland, and the Fairy Glen next door (an area of ancient woodland) and an RSPB nature reserve. For those of you who have already popped in to visit and stay, hopefully this will bring back good memories and encourage you to return.

On to moths

I'm the Herefordshire County Moth Recorder and decided long before we moved that I'd be happy to stay on in the role. Why? Because, after spending thousands of hours updating the county database, I was rather proud of what I'd achieved and reluctant to hand it over. Also, I still have a keen interest in the moths of the county and its recorders; I returned in late June to do some moth trapping and meet up with some of you, and I intend to repeat the exercise next year.

So what's different up here?

As you'd expect, there's a large overlap of the same species but some come out earlier, some at the same time and some later. Some have a longer season and some don't.

And they can look different different (see the **Scalloped Oak** and **White Ermine**) - I've been cautious in my identifications and kept examples back to confirm over winter.

On suitably warm nights, I've been astonished at just how many species are around. You all see the small grass micro-moths *Agriphila straminella* and *Agriphila tristella*, but here they are absolutely everywhere. I counted more than 50 *straminella* one morning, disturbed as I walked down to my moth trap. There are lots more of species such as **Large Yellow Underwing** (yes more than down south), **Rosy Rustic**, **Pinion-streaked Snout**, **Pale Brindled Beauty** and so on. Others have just put in a brief appearance. And when have any of you recorded **Broad-barred White** as the most common moth of a night's trapping?

So I get a lot of the same species, in different proportions and often at slightly different times and often looking slightly different. But what do I get here that you rarely or never see? Well, one that has most excited me is a Pug moth: **Cloaked Pug**. One record in Herefordshire (me in 2020 in Mortimer Forest) and a county first here: I've had around 10. I've had three **Marsh Pug** flying around the garden during the day. Common moths down your way like **Buff Footman** and **Scallop Shell** are both county firsts here. I still have many micros to identify but I'm confident I'll have more county firsts at the end of the season when all are identified.

I was delighted to see a **Red Sword-grass** here, soon followed by two **Sword-grass** - that one is uncommon up this way. **Welsh Wave** and **Dotted Carpet** have been abundant in the garden. **Barred Carpet** also appeared; they were mostly very tatty at first and difficult to identify until I dissected a dead one, but soon two pristine ones turned up (38 of those this year, bringing the county total to 41). Recently, **Plain Clay** has shown up in ones and twos, a moth I'd never seen before. You're all seeing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ►



Broad-barred White (15 Jun)



Barred Chestnut (12 Aug)



Barred Carpet (29 Jul)



Sword-grass (13 Apr)



Welsh Wave (7 Jun)



Plain Clay (8 Aug)

Scalloped Oak (28 Jul)



White Ermine (1 Jun)



Dotted Carpet (12 Jul)



Gold Spot: up here **Lempke's Gold Spot** now dominates, having largely taken over in recent years.

Gold Spangle is a frequent visitor and to date (still arriving as I write this) 36 **Angle-striped Sallow**, all of which are slightly darker than Herefordshire ones.

In summary

As of 17 August 2022, my garden list stands at 295 species and, remarkably, I exceeded 100 species in a night not long ago, something I didn't expect up here. With as many as 300 **Large Yellow Underwings**, my three traps are often full and highly active: there's a reason these moths are nicknamed Blunderwings!

I've hung up lots of pheromone lures but no clearwings have appeared as yet. However, my captive-bred colony of **Emperor** moths was highly successful. It was like watching London buses, as male after male turned up to pair with my captive females: 45 recorded.

I'm already looking forward to 2023 and hope to see some of you when I return to Herefordshire for more socialising and moth trapping, or if you decide to venture north.

Article and photographs by **Peter Hall**



Gold Spangle
(12 Jul)



Angle-striped Sallow
(1 Aug)



Lempke's Gold Spot (7 Aug)



Worcestershire Moth Review 2021

Written by **Tony Simpson** (County Moth Recorder for Worcestershire) and **Oliver Wadsworth**, this is based on nearly 42,000 records covering 1036 species.

There was one new macro-moth, the rare immigrant **Radford's Flame Shoulder** (*Ochrolepleura leucogaster*), and four new micro-moths: *Phyllonorycter distentella*, *Phtheochroa schreibersiana*, *Triaxomasia caprimulgella* and *Cydia amplanata*.

Some formerly rare migrants may now be resident, including **Dewick's Plusia** (as shown on the cover of this issue) and **White Point**. Several *Caloptilia* species have also been seen in the UK

recently. Although migrant numbers were generally low, 74 **Box Tree** moths (*Cydalima perspectalis*) were recorded, compared with seven last year, and breeding was reported in the county.

The use of pheromone lures has shown that many clearwing species are widespread and fairly common, having previously been under-recorded. These lures also attract other moths, especially some *Tineidae* and *Tortricidae*, and moth-ers using them are asked to keep specimens for later identification if possible.

The full document, with more detail and photographs of some species, is available from the moths section of the Branch website: westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com/wm-moths

Branch contacts

Officers

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Chairman | Mike Southall* | michael_southall58@hotmail.co.uk | 01299 251467 |
| Vice Chair and Malvern Hills | Mel Mason* | mbg.records@btinternet.com | 01684 565700 |
| Secretary | Martin Harrison* | martinh1236@yahoo.com | 01743 351929 |
| Treasurer | Ian Duncan* | erebia13@gmail.com | 01684 891446 |
| Recording, Transects, Website | John Tilt* | john.tilt2@btopenworld.com | 01386 792458 |
| Publicity, Marketing | Mike Williams* | wmbutterflies@gmail.com | 01299 824860 |
| Conservation – Herefordshire | Ian Hart* | yellowrattle4@aol.com | 01981 510259 |
| Conservation – Worcestershire | Trevor Bucknall* | trevor.bucknall@outlook.com | 01905 755757 |
| Moths – Birmingham, Black Country | David Jackson* | jacksongrus@talktalk.net | 01902 344716 |
| Moths – Herefordshire | Robin Hemming* | robinhemming@btinternet.com | 01568 797351 |
| Moths – Worcestershire | Mike Southall* | michael_southall58@hotmail.co.uk | 01299 251467 |
| Brown Hairstreak Champion | Simon Primrose* | simonjprimrose@aol.com | 07952 260153 |
| Herefordshire Newsletter Editor | Martyn Davies* | martyn.davies808@gmail.com | 01432 266703 |
| Social Media Manager | Craig Jones | cfjmarlpool@gmail.com | 07970 808898 |
| Wider Countryside Butterfly Count | Philip Nunn | philip-nunn@hotmail.co.uk | 07931 488624 |
| Regional Conservation Manager (BC) | Rhona Goddard | rgoddard@butterfly-conservation.org | 01746 762364 |
| Midlands Landscape Officer (BC) | Natalie Norton | nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org | 07485 372199 |

Reserve Managers

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Ewys Harold | Ian Hart* | yellowrattle4@aol.com | 01981 510259 |
| Grafton Wood | John Tilt* | john.tilt2@btopenworld.com | 01386 792458 |
| Monkwood | Phil Adams | pdadamsrainbow@gmail.com | 07725 622342 |
| Prees Heath | Natalie Norton | nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org | 07485 372199 |
| Trench Wood | Matthew Bridger | bridge1805@btinternet.com | 07801 568334 |

County Records Coordinators – butterflies

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Birmingham, Black Country | Richard Southwell | richard_southwell@hotmail.co.uk | 01384 397066 |
| Herefordshire | Bob Hall | randphall@gmail.com | 01432 850623 |
| Shropshire | Jason Kernohan | jasonkernohan@blueyonder.co.uk | 07856 276512 |
| | Peta Sams | peta.sams@gmail.com | |
| Staffordshire | John Bryan | johnpbryan15@aol.com | |
| Worcestershire | Mike Williams* | wmbutterflies@gmail.com | 01299 824860 |
| | Mel Mason* | meljmason@btinternet.com | 01684 565700 |

County Moth Recorders

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Herefordshire | Peter Hall* | peter.herefordcmr@gmail.com | 01381 621470 |
| Shropshire – macro | Tony Jacques | rec-vc40@vc40tj.plus.com | |
| Shropshire – micro | Mike Shurmer | mpshurmer@gmail.com | |
| | Graham Wenman | gjwenman@yahoo.co.uk | 07565 802480 |
| Staffordshire | David Emley | recorder@staffsmoths.org.uk | 07484 185039 |
| Worcestershire | Tony Simpson | tonysimpson.1945@hotmail.co.uk | |

Other committee members

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| George Davis* | georgeedavis@gmail.com | |
| Jenny Joy* | jenny.joy17@outlook.com | 01952 249325 |
| Lucy Morton* | hlucymorton@yahoo.co.uk | 07503 220191 |
| Joy Stevens* | joystevens@blueyonder.co.uk | 01384 372397 |
| Sarah Wager* | s.wager01@btinternet.com | |
| Steven Williams* | williams0yq@btinternet.com | 07974 152081 |



Planting for Butterflies

The Growers Guide to Creating a Flutter

• ISBN: 978-1-78713-535-2 • Author: Jane Moore • Illustrator: James Weston Lewis • Publisher: QuadrilleBooks • Publication date: June 2020
• Cost: £12.00 • Format: Hardback, 144 pages

There can't be many wildlife or gardening magazines that don't feature an article about the need to grow plants for pollinators. Whenever we visit our favourite nursery, we'll be encouraged to prevent the insect apocalypse by buying nectar-rich flowers. This, we are assured, is good for our mental health as well as our beleaguered wildlife – but there is so much choice.

Jane Moore's little book *Planting for Butterflies* is one of a growing number of publications on this subject, designed to help us select plants that are pollinator-friendly. An attractive book with clear descriptions of the butterflies most commonly seen in our gardens, it's ideal for those new to gardening and keen to learn to identify their wild visitors. Interesting facts accompany the descriptions of each species: not everyone would know that butterflies have transparent wings or that they need water to be available.

Stylish illustrations by James Weston Lewis add to the book's

appeal, although showing the undersides of all insects would have helped with identification. Some species, such as **Comma** and **Speckled Wood**, had no accompanying picture at all. Five moths are included; a few more occasional day-fliers, such as the **Magpie** (sometimes mistaken for a butterfly), could have been added.

Jane Moore has been a researcher for various gardening television programmes, as well as appearing on *Gardeners' World*. The plants she suggests for a butterfly-friendly garden are easy to acquire online and she gives useful details, such as flowering times and ideal planting positions. Importantly, she includes caterpillar food plants that can be incorporated into designs.

I particularly liked Jane's ideas for smaller plots. Many new-builds do not have large gardens and, with our recent hot weather and the need to conserve water, small gravel gardens with plants tolerant of these conditions are ideal. I've seen established gardens looking amazing with this type of planting. Also included are ideas for colour-themed pots, window boxes and climbing plants to cover bare fences and provide shelter for hibernating species. I will consider her suggestion of planting annuals

among herbs to add colour.

Jane is keen to encourage the establishment of neighbourhood eco systems wherever possible and she congratulates enlightened planners who incorporate wildlife corridors within newly developed housing estates.

There's a small piece on the purchase of larvae from internet sites. I don't personally agree with this, although I sometimes put a **Large White caterpillar** in a jar when I want children to observe metamorphosis. Jane does warn that buying larvae isn't a sustainable way to introduce butterflies into a garden and that captive-bred insects are weaker than wild ones, so unlikely to survive. She prefers the creation of rich, flowery habitats with year-round nectar sources.

The book concludes with a useful list of resources and suggestions for further research, plus encouragement for the reader to take part in the Big Butterfly Count.

This book provides an excellent start to understanding the intriguing relationship between plants and insects. It's ideal for a newcomer to wildlife gardening and would make an ideal house-warming present for someone who has just acquired a property.

Review by Carol Wood

See the Herefordshire newsletter, March 2022, for further tips on gardening for Lepidoptera:
westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.files.wordpress.com/2022/04/newsletter-13.pdf