

the **Comm**

No. 115 Spring 2023

Regional Magazine of West Midlands
Butterfly Conservation



Inside the atlas:

westmidlandsmoths.co.uk

Action for endangered species:

Progress on Branch projects

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



Chairman's Address

Committee news



Michael Southall

The Branch Committee meeting on 4 March was well attended and productive. I was able to report that Branch membership had increased by 7.5% in the year to January. With 1,830 households made up of 2,498 individuals, we remain the largest branch (followed closely by the Yorkshire branch). The national trend is similar, with a successful new campaign restoring Butterfly Conservation membership to nearly 40,000 individuals.

Peter Seal, our former Chair, received a Richard Lewington **Brown Hairstreak** print to mark his years of service, which he commented reminded him of Grafton Wood.

Black Country

Although unable to attend the meeting, **Joy Stevens** sent an excellent illustrated update on the **Scarlet Tiger** project and the conclusion of work following a grant from Ibstock Enover (see pages 4-5). Two information boards installed on Roman Road have proved very successful, drawing many compliments from locals and visitors. We hope to arrange a guided walk there in the summer. Joy's update included news that nearby Amblecote Meadow has been designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) by Dudley Council and saved from development.

Herefordshire

Robin Hemming reported on successful work parties at Haugh Wood and Ewyas Harold. There was a well-attended moth-ers meeting and we hope that will lead to some regular trapping events in Herefordshire.

Finances

A financial report and budget discussion followed. Our sound financial position has allowed us to budget for a wide range of items, including equipment repairs/replacement, interpretation boards, contractor's work, magazine production/posting and ongoing projects. It was interesting to hear of the success of the new light and quiet electric chainsaws (which we are now using for coppicing work at Grafton Wood and Monkwood, among other places), although spare batteries are needed to run them all day.

Cover story

Peach Blossom moth by **Ian Duncan**, who reflects on over 20 years of garden moth recording (see pages 15-19)

Contributions

Please send articles and images to the Editor. Photographs should be as high-resolution as possible and sent as separate files. Copy deadlines:
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

Publisher

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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Habitats are crucial

I've been reading *The Botanical Looker-Out among the Wild Flowers*, written in 1842 by local Victorian naturalist **Edwin Lees**. In it, he quoted from a lecture he gave in 1833: *Watch the beauteous Vanessa Atalanta butterfly, lovely as the rose over which she flutters, see her sporting in the balmy air as if she had derived her origin from heaven, and was returning thither. But when she has to provide for her progeny, does she deposit her eggs on the brilliant flowers where she spent her bridal? – No! she retires to the nettles, and there safely leaves the infant embryo of a future race secure amidst the armature of the urticae. Thus, a host of insects are sustained by an apparently useless weed, which is itself kept within bounds by the caterpillars that feed upon it.*

Although Lees was talking about the **Red Admiral**, it could have been the **Peacock** or **Small Tortoiseshell**, and both **Comma** and **Painted Lady** will also use nettle. Despite dating from nearly 200 years ago, the message remains the same: habitat is crucial for species' survival. He goes on to explain why it is often better to 'grasp the nettle', both literally and metaphorically.

Recording

John Tilt spoke about the excellent ongoing increase in recording in the region and how the records can be best utilised. The records and transect trends can be found on our West Midlands Branch website, which is a fantastic resource and worth a look (see pages 9–11 for recording highlights).

Grayling Action Group

A Grayling Action Group was proposed by **Jenny Joy** and supported by the committee. This resident but declining species is in danger of being lost from the region, so the sooner more information can be gathered about the species and its habitat the better (see pages 8–9 for details).

Saving Butterflies and Moths

Rhona Goddard, Conservation Manager – Midlands, gave an update on Butterfly Conservation's Saving Butterflies and Moths strategy. Nationally, 71 threatened species and 114 landscape areas have been identified for staff to prioritise. Twelve threatened species are listed for the West Midlands:

- Three butterflies: **Wood White**, **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and **Large Heath**
- Nine moths: **Large Red-belted Clearwing**, **White-barred Clearwing**, **Yellow-ringed Carpet**, **Barred Tooth-striped**, **Silvery Arches**, **Current-shoot Borer**, **Brown Sweep**, **Greenweed Flat-body** and **Scarce Aspen Knot-horn**

More volunteers to monitor these species would be appreciated. Many of our remaining threatened and localised species are found in the priority landscape areas and will therefore not be overlooked.

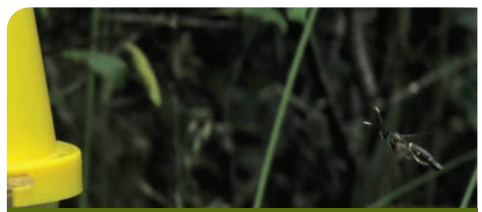
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Michael Southall Branch Chair

Grasping the nettle in your patch

As part of our strategy to increase our work at a local level (see pages 12–13, *The Comma* 114), we'd welcome some new blood on our committee – particularly from Staffordshire and Shropshire. If you'd like to become more involved in the Branch's work, please get in touch to discuss it further.



Large Red-belted Clearwing,
Deeside, 11 May 2022
(Michael Southall)



White-barred Clearwing coming to a lure,
Wyre Forest, 2 July 2021 (Michael Southall)

Scarlet Tiger Project



Scarlet Tiger information boards

Project Update

In April 2021, this project benefited from a grant of £3,938 from Ibstock Enovert Trust, an Environmental Body funded through the Landfill Communities Fund. Work supported by this grant has recently been concluded.

Information boards

Two boards installed on Roman Road proved very successful, eliciting compliments from locals and visitors alike. Text and photographs were created by **Joy** and **Jenny Stevens**, layouts designed by Morgan Creative, and frames supplied by Dudley Council.



Bug hotel

Wild flowers and hedgerows

Work along the bridle path has been designed to increase bio-diversity by planting and sowing wild flowers and to replace dead and dying hedgerows. Over 200 hedgerow saplings were bought through Dudley Council and, although they could not all be planted within the period of the grant, the Council cared for the remainder in its nursery so that planting could be completed over this past winter.

Equipment

A variety of tools and safety equipment was bought, together with pheromone lures and traps for Clearwing moths. The traps have already been used successfully on the bridle path and the bird boxes, bat boxes and bug hotels have been mounted at various points along it. The butterfly net was used for the Big Butterfly Count event organised by the adjacent Three Fields wild flower meadows project.



Article and photographs by **Joy Stevens**



Tools



Bird boxes

Lures



Scarlet Tiger Project team with one of the information boards

Butterfly Mosaics

A project that demonstrates how organisations, staff, contractors and volunteers working together can benefit vulnerable species



Wood White (David Green)



Funded by Severn Trent Water, Butterfly Mosaics is a three-year conservation project that started in April 2021 with the aim of reversing the declines of specific species of butterfly and moth in the Midlands. The project forms part of Severn Trent's Great Big Nature Boost, a scheme to look after water by looking after nature too.

During the first two years of the project, about 17 hectares (42 acres) of habitat management has been completed at a variety of key sites across the Midlands that support some of our most threatened butterfly species.



Welsh Clearwing (Iain Leach)

In the West Midlands, such work has taken place at 23 project sites and has included:

- Woodland ride management and glade creation at key Forestry England sites in South Shropshire to benefit **Wood White**
- Scrub and gorse clearance using a robocutter at a Shropshire Wildlife Trust nature reserve to benefit **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**
- Scrub clearance at North Hill, part of the Malvern Hills, to benefit **Grayling**
- Blackthorn management at a privately owned site in Worcestershire to benefit **Brown Hairstreak**.

Also, thanks to **Natalie Norton** (Butterfly Conservation's Midlands Landscape Officer), Worcestershire Wildlife Trust staff and our fantastic volunteers, we've undertaken tree stump removal at both Trench Wood and Grafton Wood reserves. This will benefit a number of woodland species, including the nationally threatened Wood White butterfly. Stump grinding in key areas should result in glades and verges remaining open for a longer period, hopefully making management easier and more sustainable.



Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth (Tamás Nestor)

Across the West Midlands, 24 project sites have been surveyed by Butterfly Conservation staff and contractors (butterfly and moth surveys, and habitat assessments) to determine the presence of priority species, assess the impact of management works and/or identify key areas that require management. The efforts of our fantastic volunteers, who regularly walk butterfly transects, complete timed-counts and submit sightings, mean that we have species records for a large number of project sites. These records have helped us target habitat management works; my sincere thanks to all who have submitted their sightings.

The habitat management and surveys completed over the last couple of years should benefit a number of nationally threatened and Wood White, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Welsh Clearwing, Grayling, Brown Hairstreak, **Silver-studded Blue** and **Dingy Skipper**.

Work planned for the coming year includes more butterfly and moth surveys, habitat assessments and targeted habitat management works. As well as the species mentioned already, these should benefit



Stump grinding at Trench Wood in March 2023 (Natalie Norton)

Grizzled Skipper and Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth.

Butterfly Conservation couldn't do this work without the help and dedication of its many volunteers, staff and contractors. Thank you to everyone involved for the time and effort you have put into this project and to Severn Trent for its support.

Article by Rhona Goddard

Action planned for endangered species



Batch Valley in 1993 and 2018, showing the spread of gorse on the slopes (National Trust)



Can you help us save the Grayling?

As reported in the last *Comma*, the **Grayling** butterfly is now classed as Endangered at a national level, even though there is much left to learn about this species. It is now primarily a coastal species but does still occur at a number of inland sites, including some in the West Midlands. There are, however, real concerns regarding its current status in the region. It appears to be on the verge of extinction on the Malverns, where there has been a steady decline in both abundance and distribution despite efforts to conserve it.

Situation in Shropshire

In Shropshire, while a survey by **Dave Green** in 2022 showed that there were still two really good sites for this butterfly at Earls Hill and The Bog Mine, most of its other former sites in the south of the county only support a few adults at most. The Grayling has also been a target of survey work in the Our Upland Commons project, which has so far identified only three small extant habitat areas on the Long Mynd (Batch Valley, Cow Ridge and Townbrook Valley). Elsewhere, on the Stiperstones away

from The Bog, most records are of singletons which mean little, apart from showing there is still a good metapopulation structure here.

Having spent quite a bit of last summer surveying in the Long Mynd area, I think the Grayling is potentially going the same route here as it did on the Malverns. The amount of gorse on the slopes has quadrupled in the past few decades and the National Trust is now looking at various ways of managing it, including using a robocutter – these small remote-controlled tractors are already being used effectively to manage bracken on steep slopes (benefiting Dark Green Fritillary). We are encouraging the Trust to focus further work with the robocutter in the three remaining areas where Grayling is present.

Grayling Action Group

The situation was discussed at the Branch committee meeting in early March, when it was agreed that we would establish a Grayling Action Group. Its aims would include the following:

- To bring together all current knowledge of this species nationally and all of the local records from the past 20 years.
- To learn, from where it is still strong, its exact habitat requirements in today's climate. Why is it disappearing from sites where the habitat appears



Graylings (Rob Stokes)

How you can help

We hope that, after its inaugural meeting in March, the Grayling Action Group can begin the search for answers to these questions and others. We're looking for help from those who can assist, particularly with survey and monitoring work over the summer. If you feel you have time to become involved and live fairly close to a current or former Grayling site, please contact Mike Williams at wmbutterflies@gmail.com

unchanged? Can we perhaps encourage some large student research projects?

- To encourage landowners in Shropshire to do more for this species and, in the Malverns, encourage the Malvern Hills Trust to look more closely at the current habitat and what needs to change before reintroduction can be considered.
- To consider alternative management approaches. Our traditional methods, using brush cutters and hand tools to control encroaching scrub, do not appear to be working. What other management tools might be required? Examples include using diggers to create bare ground, grazing cattle on some sites and introducing artificial substrates.

Article by **Jenny Joy**

Butterfly recording 2022



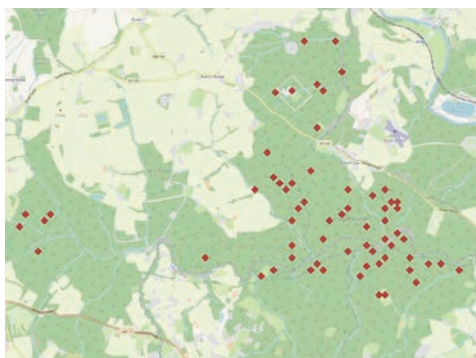
Register your sightings
at irecord.org.uk

Introduction

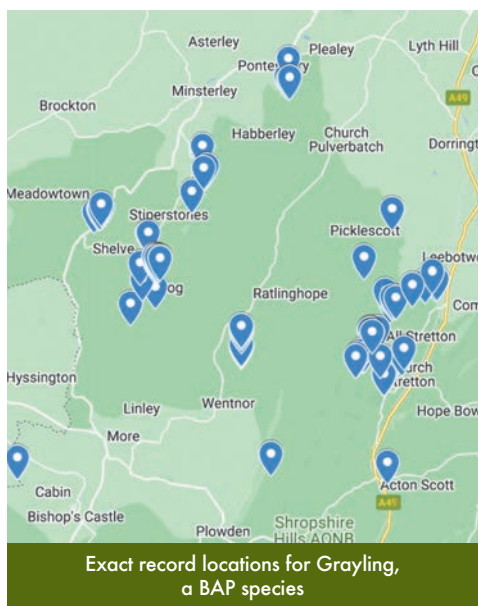
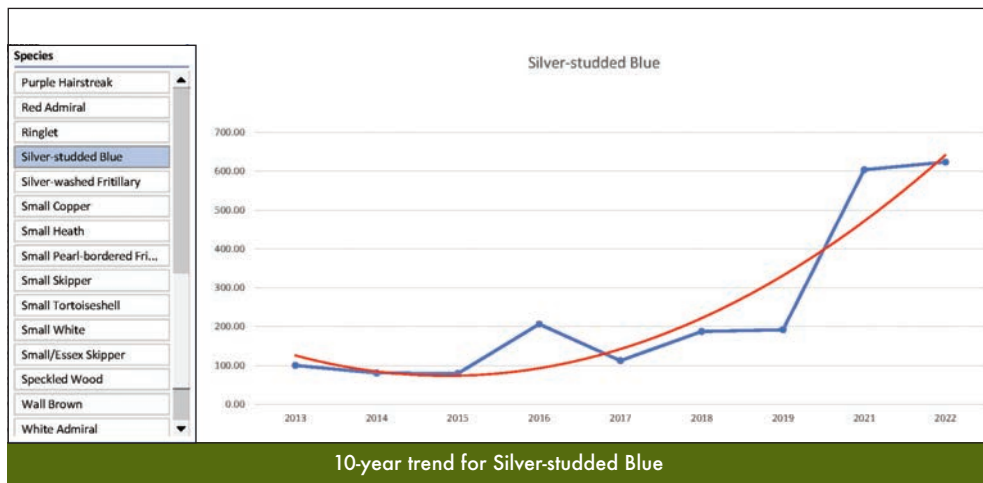
The purpose of recording butterfly numbers, through transects and other surveys, is to monitor population trends and to feed that information back into habitat management. There's little point in doing surveys unless the results are used to improve habitats and, conversely, there's little point in managing habitats unless the effects of the work are measured.

In 2022, we received almost 70,000 records from over 3,000 recorders, covering 139 10km-squares within the West Midlands region. The records came from the United Kingdom Butterfly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►



Timed GPS count results for Pearl-bordered Fritillary
in the Wyre Forest



Transects

Recorded over a period of years, UKBMS transects give us population trends for the West Midlands. In 2022, 85 transects were walked – the most ever. This has enabled us to show 10-year population trends on the Branch website for all species, running from 2013 to 2022 (excluding 2020, when Covid restrictions prevented transects being walked). An index is calculated, with 2013=100.

Most of the common species show a fairly steady trend. However, the star of the last ten years by far was **Silver-studded Blue**, with colossal increases over the last two years. It even seemed to extend its flight period in 2022.

Two disappointments are:

- The loss of **Grayling** on the Malvern Hills, although numbers were still reasonable in Shropshire
- No **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** in Haugh Wood for the first time in many years.

Two achievements, both progressing well, are:

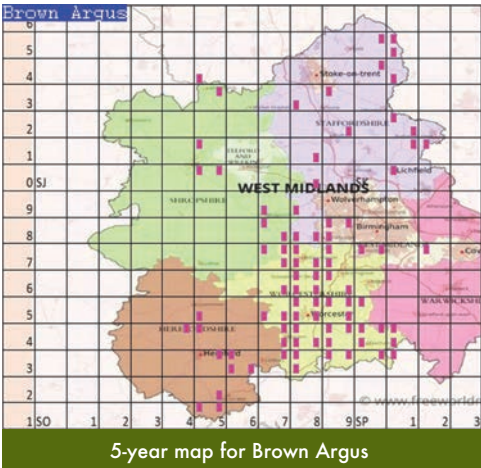
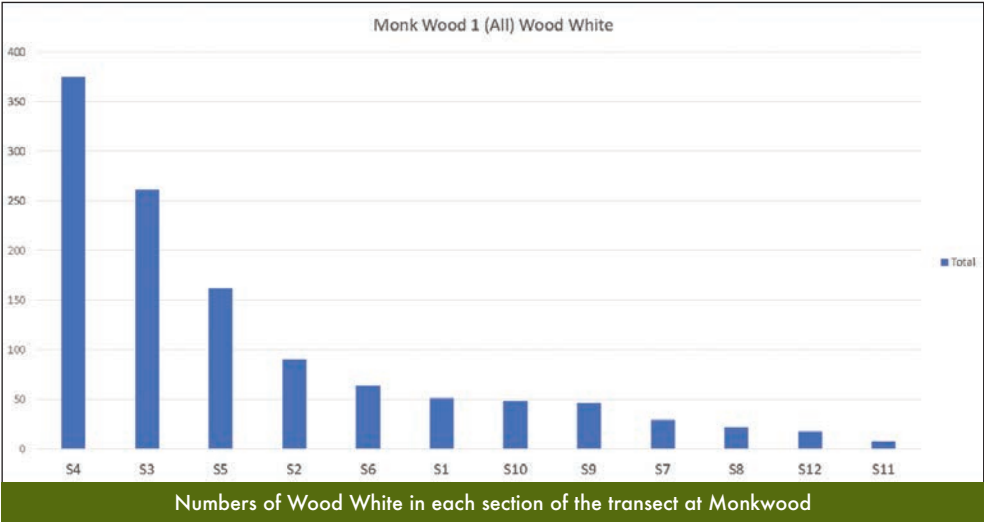
- The introduction and breeding of Pearl-bordered Fritillary on the Malvern Hills
- The introduction of **Wood White** in Monkwood and Grafton Wood.

Detailed analysis is shown in a series of spreadsheets on the Branch website. This year, we are also able to show numbers seen in each section of the transects, which will help with site

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9 ►

Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS), Big Butterfly Count and Wider Countryside Butterfly Count, plus various casual recording methods including timed counts with GPS recording. This is a great achievement and a big thank you to all our recorders and also to our County Records Coordinators, who undertake the painstaking work of checking and verifying records.

So, what do we get out of recording?



management. An example is shown for Wood White at Monkwood.

Other records

The casual records enable us to produce 5-year species maps at a 5km-square resolution. An example is shown for **Brown Argus**, with maps available on the Branch website for all species.

For the Branch's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, we are able to produce more detailed maps, showing the exact location of each record for

the current year. An example is shown for Grayling. These can be enlarged and converted to aerial photographs, if required.

Some of our rarer species have been studied using timed GPS counts, where recorders count for a defined period and record exact locations. The results are shown using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping. An example is shown for Pearl-bordered Fritillary in the Wyre Forest – each spot denotes a record. This type of recording and mapping is far more useful for the rarer species.

Article and graphics by **John Tilt**

Full details of butterfly recording in 2022 at westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com/recording



Our reserves: Ewyas Harold Meadows



Cowslips on the Meadows (Dilys Hart)

Located to the south-west of Hereford, Ewyas Harold Meadows Reserve has been owned and managed by Butterfly Conservation since 2009. It comprises five hectares of neutral grassland with underlying limestone geology. This gives rise to botanical diversity that is regionally and nationally important, given the 97% loss of species-rich grasslands in the UK in the last century.

Spring is ushered into the meadows by the blossoming of cowslips (a characteristic plant of unimproved, species-rich, neutral grassland) followed by a bountiful display of common spotted-orchids.

Marbled White butterflies flutter between stands of black knapweed in mid-summer, with a dash of lilac devil's-bit scabious in late summer.

Local Wildlife Site status

A botanical survey was undertaken at Ewyas Harold Meadows in summer last year to assess the site under

criteria for Local Wildlife Site status in Herefordshire, as part of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust's Wilder Hereford Project. The reserve received Local Wildlife Site status and, while non-statutory, this is an acknowledgement of its botanical and invertebrate diversity at county level. The designation is a great achievement and credit to all Butterfly Conservation staff and volunteers who have contributed to the management of Ewyas Harold Meadows. Thanks are also due to **Sue Garratt** for her input in preparing and submitting the Local Wildlife Assessment for the meadows and for producing a follow-up Management Guide.

Nationally, Butterfly Conservation, Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Plantlife have formed a Grasslands+ coalition to raise awareness in both the public and politicians of the important function that species-rich grasslands have in sequestering carbon and providing a nature-based solution to climate change, as well as supporting biodiversity.

The botanical diversity of Ewyas Harold Meadows is important for supporting a variety of butterfly species, including agrimony for **Grizzled Skipper** and common bird's-foot trefoil for **Dingy Skipper** and **Common Blue**.

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How you can help

Of course, our strong volunteer force is integral in being able to manage our nature reserves and assist partnership organisations with their management objectives. With the survey season once again on the horizon, I personally look forward to seeing how butterflies respond to habitat works undertaken through the autumn and winter. We'll be tentatively awaiting survey transect results to begin the cycle of planning responsive habitat works for the next work party season.

There are always plenty of opportunities to get involved with surveys and work parties on our reserves and at third-party sites across the Midlands – volunteer help is always appreciated. On that note, I would like to say a huge thank you to all of you who have given your valuable time to volunteer for Butterfly Conservation on work parties this season and wish you all the best for the up-coming survey season!



Caption anyone? Send your suggestions to the Editor, details on page 2 (Natalie Norton)

Ewyas Harold Common

Pearl-bordered Fritillary utilises bugle in the meadows for nectar and breeds on Ewyas Harold Common, which is renowned regionally for its stable population of this species and is situated adjacent to the reserve. Butterfly Conservation volunteers work in partnership with Ewyas Harold Common Trust to clear scrub on the common to maintain flight paths between the common and the meadows, as well as maintaining suitable breeding habitat for the fritillaries on the common.

In 2022, **Dr Dave Green** and **Dr Sue Clarke** undertook a habitat condition assessment survey on Ewyas Harold Common, something that was originally carried out in 2005. The assessment is designed to monitor the suitability of breeding habitat for Pearl-bordered Fritillary, such as the presence of larval food plant and nectar sources, as well as bracken structure

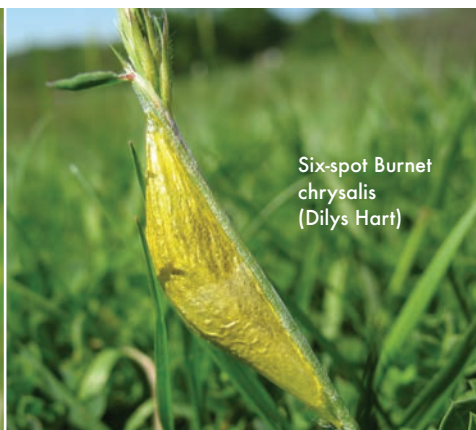
and management. The outcome of the survey in 2022 was very positive, with the current management working exceptionally well to maintain a wide range of suitable habitat for Pearl-bordered Fritillary on Ewyas Harold Common.

Although Butterfly Conservation's reserves vary in their habitats and the species for which they are managed, a common theme that unites them is their importance in enabling the organisation to demonstrate the benefits of best practice in land management. That may entail maintaining, restoring and/or re-creating habitats to provide evidence that can be used to influence other landowners to manage land sustainably. In this way we can build resilient nature recovery networks across landscapes and make progress towards our goals of halving the number of UK's threatened butterfly and moth species.

Article by **Natalie Norton**



Six-spot Burnet adult (Dilys Hart)



Six-spot Burnet chrysalis (Dilys Hart)



Six-spot Burnet caterpillar on bird's-foot trefoil (Dilys Hart)

Members' Day and AGM

11am on Saturday 20 May 2023

The Flyfords Hall in Grafton Flyford

Great line-up of speakers including **Andrew Fusek Peters**, wildlife photographer and author of the recently published book *Butterfly Safari*, and **Sam Macvie**, Biodiversity Data and Survey Officer for the Heart of England Forest, who will talk about the latest extensions of the forest into Worcestershire and his recent research on the West Midlands' newest butterfly, the **Purple Emperor**.

Starts at 11am, with buffet lunch provided.



Sam Macvie, Biodiversity
Data and Survey Officer for
the Heart of England Forest

The Heart of England Forest

The Heart of England Forest covers a mosaic of habitats across 7,000 acres of land in Warwickshire and Worcestershire, including 4,450 acres of new woodland and 600 acres of mature and ancient woodland. At just 23% of a goal of 30,000 acres, it is already the largest new native broadleaf woodland in England.

So far, the charity behind the Forest has planted two million trees. Tree planting on this scale makes a significant positive environmental impact, creating a huge carbon sink and helping to mitigate climate change. Further environmental and social impacts of planting include water purification and flood alleviation.

Important as they are, the Forest is more than just trees; it is an incredible mosaic of habitats helping to boost diversity for plants, animals and people,

To find out more, visit
heartofenglandforest.org/news/why-purple-emperor-butterfly-flourishing-forest



Purple Emperor, 5th instar larva (Sam Macvie)

and also includes grassland, heathland, farmland and wetland. The **Purple Emperor** is just one of many species that will benefit.

IMPORTANT: Always contact the organiser before attending an event.

Shropshire

Llanymynech Rocks Reserve Butterfly Walk

Sun, 30 Apr. 2pm in the Shropshire Wildlife Trust car park at the end of Underhill Lane in Pant (SJ271219), entrance 100m SW of Cross Guns Pub, where there is additional parking. **Leader:** **Dr Simon Spencer.** Target species: **Dingy** and **Grizzled Skippers**. If weather is poor, check with Simon on 07866 428875. Accompanied children welcome. No dogs. Sensible footwear. Usually finishes at 4.30pm (it's a there-and-back walk, so you can stay as long as you like).

Oswestry Hills and Border Group

Simon Spencer and others are setting up an informal butterfly group in the Oswestry Hills area, which includes Llanymynech Hill and many other great butterfly sites. There are opportunities for practical volunteer work but, at least initially, this will not be their priority. They want to help younger members to improve their identification skills, organise some guided walks, set up new transects, do targeted recording for several rare species and possibly organise shared-car field trips to sites around the West Midlands. They'll encourage moth recording and might organise moth recording nights. **If you'd like to join, contact Simon Spencer: 07866 428875, 01691 649615, cerisyi@btinternet.com**



Dingy Skipper (Roger Littleover)



Grizzled Skipper (Roger Littleover)

Prees Heath Common Survey Days

Wed, 10 May and Wed, 21 Jun. 10.30am – 3.00pm. Meet at the access track opposite the Steel Heath turning off the A49 (SJ557363). **May:** Botanical survey of experimental heathland turf stripped plots and hunt for **Silver-studded Blue** caterpillar attended by ants. **Jun:** Silver-studded Blue habitat condition assessment survey. **Contact Natalie Norton: 07485 372199, nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org**

Telford Millennium Nature Reserve Survey Session

Tue, 23 May. Target species: **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak**. Meet at 10.30am in the car park (SJ685109); this is behind Jenko's Mongolian BBQ/The Compasses Inn, Beveley Road, TF2 6SD – turn onto this road from the eastern end of Ketley Park Road, off the B5061 near Farmfoods (TF1 5DS). **Contact Jenny Joy: 07968 549580**

Prees Heath Common Heathland Restoration and Silver-studded Blue Guided Walk

Sun, 18 Jun. 2–4pm. Meet at the access track opposite the Steel Heath turning off the A49 (SJ557363). **Contact Natalie Norton: 07485 372199, nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org**

Comer Woods – White Admiral Survey and Picnic

Sun, 2 Jul. 11am at Comer Wood car park signposted off A442 Kidderminster-Bridgnorth road (SO743900). Event organised in memory of the late Adrian Miles. Advance booking required. **Contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552, wmbutterflies@gmail.com**

Last
Chance

Butterfly Conservation International Symposium 'Conserving Lepidoptera in a Changing World'

13–16 April. Wyboston Conference Centre, Bedfordshire
Details at butterfly-conservation.org/symposium

IMPORTANT: Always contact the organiser before attending an event.

Staffordshire

Cannock Chase Ramble

Sat, 17 Jun. Target species: **Welsh Clearwing** and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. Meet at 11am in the Punchbowl car park, ST17 0XA; this is off the A513 between Milford and Shugborough. Please bring a Welsh Clearwing pheromone lure and small net, if you have them.
Contact Dave Jackson: 07940 826671

Moth Morning, Kinver Rock Houses

Sat, 8 Jul. Joint event with the National Trust,

West Midlands Butterfly Conservation and Kinver Moth Group. 9am at Kinver Rock Houses (NT); pastry plus hot drink £6.

Contact Clare Hale:

clare.hale@nationaltrust.org.uk

Highgate Common – Walk 10 in Butterflies of the West Midlands

Sun, 16 Jul. 10.45am for 11am start, Corey Centre Car Park on Highgate Common (SO835895). Target species: **White Admiral** and **Purple Hairstreak**. **Contact Dave Martin: 07885 788124, dave.martin3@btinternet.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

Dudmaston Estate Walk

Sat, 8 Jul. 11am at Comer Wood car park (see above). Joint event with the National Trust.

Leader: Roger Littleover. Target species: **White Admiral** and **Silver-washed Fritillary**.

Contact: rogerlittleover@hotmail.com

Prees Heath Common Moth Night

Fri, 28 Jul. From 9pm. Bring a torch and wear warm outdoor clothing. The event is dependent on suitable weather conditions – please contact beforehand if you are interested in attending. Meet at the access track opposite the Steel Heath turning off the A49 (SJ557363). **Contact Natalie Norton: 07485 372199, nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org**

Bat & Moth Evening on the Stiperstones

Fri, 18 Aug. Meet at the Knolls car park (SO369977). **Leader: Dave Green.** Event is free, no need to book. **Contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552, wmbutterflies@gmail.com**

Shropshire Moth Group 2023 Programme

Mar to Oct. The Group organises a programme of moth trapping field trips on Friday nights. Observers, beginners and experienced trappers welcome, so why not join them? **For further details please contact Tony Jacques (Shropshire County Macro-moth Recorder) at vc40tj@gmail.com**



Green Hairstreak (Roger Littleover)

Volunteer Opportunities

Our Upland Commons Project – Survey Days

Target species: **Emperor Moth**, **Green Hairstreak**, **Grayling**, and **Small Pearl-bordered** and **Dark Green Fritillary**. Only for people prepared to undertake follow-up surveys and monitoring on the Long Mynd and Stiperstones. **To join the group, contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552, wmbutterflies@gmail.com**

Prees Heath Common Transect Surveyors

Monitor **Silver-studded Blue** and other butterfly species by helping to walk the weekly transect (Apr–Sep). Training can be provided and minimum commitment discussed. **For more information, contact Natalie Norton: 07485 372199, nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org**

Worcestershire

Big Help Out Day

Mon, 8 May Celebrate the King's Coronation by attending our Volunteer Recorders Day in the Wyre Forest. We are looking for volunteers to help us survey for rare species of butterflies and moths in the forest. Existing and new recorders all welcome. 11am at Dry Mill Lane car park, Bewdley (SO772763) for morning walk followed by lunchtime picnic. **Contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552, wmbutterflies@gmail.com**

Celebrating the Wyre Weekend 27–28 May

Sat: 11.30am in Dry Mill Lane car park for butterfly walk. **Leader: Mike Williams**
Sun: 10am at Callow Hill Visitor Centre for Family Fun Day and Moth Morning. **Leaders: Mike Southall, Mary Singleton. Contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552, wmbutterflies@gmail.com**

Purple Emperor Hunt at Tiddesley Wood Nature Reserve, near Pershore

Sat, 15 Jul 9am and 9.30am starts – book allocated start time at wmbutterflies@gmail.com. Meet at car park off minor road (SO929460). Donation of £3 to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, payable on the day. **Leaders: Paul Lloyd and Mike Williams. Contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552, wmbutterflies@gmail.com**

Birmingham and Black Country

City Nature Challenge 2023

28 Apr to 1 May Birmingham and the Black Country (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall & Wolverhampton) will be taking part in the 2023 City Nature Challenge, which is an annual competition between cities all over the world to see how many wild species their citizens can spot over four days. We need YOUR help to spot as much wildlife as we can in that time!

See page 26 for details.

The Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust organises events and has volunteer opportunities within the West Midlands county:
bbcwildlife.org.uk/events
bbcwildlife.org.uk/volunteer

Herefordshire

Moth trapping events

Apr: Moreton Wood, **19 May:** Broadmoor Common and Haugh Wood, **Jun:** Snodhill Castle near Dorstone, **Jul:** Mortimer Forest, **4 Aug:** The Doward, **Sep:** Morle Wood. Details to follow on both Facebook groups (Butterfly Conservation West Midlands and Herefordshire & Worcestershire Moths).

Ewyas Harold Meadows & Common Survey Day

Tue, 9 May 1–4pm. Meet at the cattle grid at the northern Cwn Hill end of Ewyas Harold Common, adjacent to the top cattle grid (SO382302). Approach from Abbey Dore off the B4347 (SO384306).
Target species: **Dingy Skipper** (surveys) and **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (habitat surveys).
Contact Natalie Norton: 07485 372199, nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org

Guided Walk at Haugh Wood

Tue, 1 Aug 2pm. A walk of about two hours following the green trail. Children are welcome but must be accompanied by an adult. No dogs please. Meet at Forestry England car park off the minor road from Mordiford to Woolhope (SO593365). **Contact Bob Hall: 01432 850623, randphall@gmail.com**

Growing Up Green, part of the Great Big Green Week

10–18 Jun Scarlet Tiger Project walk planned at Roman Road, Stourbridge, along with other events.
Contact Joy Stevens: 01384 372397, joystevens@blueyonder.co.uk

Guided Butterfly Walk at Portway Hill (part of the wider Rowley Hills in Sandwell)

Sat, 24 Jun 11am–1pm. Meeting just inside St Brades Close, off Tower Road. Join Sandwell Valley Naturalists group for a guided butterfly walk at Portway Hill. Target species: **Marbled White**. The terrain will include slopes and uneven ground, so may not be suitable for people with limited mobility or pushchairs. **Contact Mike Poulton: poulton_mike@yahoo.co.uk**

Garden Moth Recording

1998-2022



Black Arches (2012)

Introduction

These are my reflections on over 20 years of moth recording in my garden. I can say without hesitation that this experience has been interesting, fascinating and stimulating. Every night is different, creating memories of new species, regulars, migrants, bumper nights and sometimes the totally unexpected. This article deals with macro moths, with another planned for micros.

Method

From 1998 to 2004, I used a small Heath trap and recorded on about 150 nights each year. I noted over 11,000 moths of 280 species. Work commitments interrupted recording from 2005 to 2010. I resumed in 2011 using a more powerful Robinson trap. From then until 2022, I recorded 30–50 nights each year and this yielded over 25,000 moths of 364 species (60% of the 609 macro moth species in the West Midlands).

Location

Gardens are important habitats for moths, which are both a vital link in the food chain and major pollinators. My garden is on the edge of Upper Welland, within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is surrounded by open countryside, 1km from British Camp (an Iron Age hill fort) and 2km from Castlemorton

Common. Bounded

by an old hedge of maple, elm, hawthorn, privet and ivy, it includes two ponds, assorted fruit trees (apple, pear and damson) and some larger trees (oak, ash and wych elm). Areas of grass are left unmown and the borders include a variety of plants to provide nectar for pollinators and food for caterpillars. To make the garden as wildlife friendly as possible, no chemicals or artificial fertilisers are used.

History of recording

Moth recording in the late 1990s was very different from today. There were only a handful of recorders and one identification guide, *The Colour Identification Guide to Moths of the British Isles* by Bernard Skinner (1998), which was difficult to use as all the illustrations were of pinned specimens. Several events transformed the face of recording: the publication of the *Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland* by Waring and Townsend in 2003, the introduction of digital photography and the growth of online resources.

Today, it is easy to start moth recording and there are many sources of information to help with identification. For both beginners and experienced recorders in the West Midlands, the Branch's book (*Moths of the West Midlands* by Simpson et al, 2020) and online moth atlas (westmidlandsmoths.co.uk) are recommended.

Limitations of the data

Despite my using two different trap types and not following a rigorous recording routine, some general points can be drawn from the data. Not surprisingly, using a larger trap and recording on more nights



View of the garden

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ►



Swallowtail (2019)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15 ►

increases the number of species recorded. The other major variable is the weather: much larger numbers of moths are typically on the wing on muggy, warm and overcast nights. It is important to try to record on these nights, as they can add lots of species to the year list.

Variations through the year

I do not record in December or January, when few species are around. **Table 1** shows variations in macro moths over the other ten months since 2011. Generally, numbers of individuals and species gradually increase from February to July but this depends on the weather. For example, cold springs can delay emergence and



Buff-tip in camouflage

then lead to an explosion of species in June or as late as July.

My highest seasonal counts for individual species are **Heart and Dart** (190) in summer, **Square Spot Rustic** (175) and **Lunar Underwing** (160) in autumn, and **Small Quaker** (120) in spring. Other species with occasional counts above fifty are **Large Yellow Underwing**, **Common Rustic**, **Common Footman**, **Uncertain**, **Black Rustic** and **Common Wainscot**.

One of the joys of moth recording is seeing the mix of species change with the seasons. New arrivals are highly anticipated, like meeting old friends again. It's a delight to see the first **Hebrew Character** of the year showing spring is on its way, and later

Swallowtails heralding high summer while **Salallows** are autumnal beauties.

The most favourable conditions for moths to flourish appear to be cold winters, warm and sunny springs, with not-too-dry summers.

Observations

Table 2 shows how often I record various species. Interestingly, the top ten most recorded moths in recent years differ little from those in 1998. Surprisingly, 52 species (14%) have been recorded only once. Most species are recorded intermittently, sometimes with a large interval between sightings (for example, **Old Lady**). Others, such as **Leopard**, appear for a few years and are never seen again.

Some species can be attracted by planting their food plant in the garden: **Clay Triple Lines** (beech), **Sandy Carpet** (campion), **Scarlet Tiger** (comfrey), **Scarce Tissue** (mahonia), **Cypress Carpet** (cypress), **Cinnabar** (ragwort) and **Elephant Hawk-moth** (willow herb).

Some rarer species have clearly come from the nearby hills (such as **Annulet**, a heather feeder) and others from Castlemorton Common (**Blackneck**, a vetch feeder, and **Garden Tiger**). Others were previously rare migrants but now being seen in increasing numbers and probably becoming

Table 1 Monthly totals since 2011

	Individuals		Species	
	min	max	min	max
Feb	1	8	0	4
Mar	9	184	4	10
Apr	17	85	5	21
May	21	107	9	42
Jun	40	256	17	56
Jul	60	246	36	60
Aug	50	180	15	49
Sep	50	280	12	35
Oct	17	151	9	17
Nov	2	9	1	4

Table 2 Recording frequency

Every year	Intermittent	Years recorded
Beaded Chestnut	Blackneck	2014, 2019, 2021
Brimstone	Blue-bordered Carpet	1998, 2013, 2021
Buff Ermine	Cabbage	1998, 2004, 2014, 2021
Clouded Drab	Dingy Shears	2002, 2011, 2014, 2020
Common Footman	Hummingbird Hawk-moth	2000, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2022
Common Quaker	Old Lady	2003, 2013
Common Rustic	Privet Hawk-moth	2011, 2020
Common Wainscot	Vestal	1998, 1999, 2022
Dark Arches		
Flame Shoulder	Limited period	Years recorded
Flounced Rustic	Leopard	2013–2014
Heart & Dart	Mocha	2019–2020
Hebrew Character	Pebble Hook-tip	2011–2016
Large Yellow Underwing	Shark	2017–2019
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	Vapourer	2013–2015
Lunar Underwing		
Poplar Hawk-moth		
Riband Wave		
Setaceous Hebrew Character		
Shuttle-shaped Dart		
Small Fan-footed Wave		
Small Quaker		
Snout		
Square Spot Rustic		
Treble Lines		
Uncertain		
Willow Beauty		



A bumper catch

established as resident breeders (such as **Clifden Nonpareil**).

Silver Cloud is an interesting species, nationally scarce and largely confined to the Wye and Severn valleys. It is much sought after by recorders from outside the area yet it occurs almost every year in my garden. Intriguingly, its food plant in the wild is unknown; as I record it more often when my light is next to an elm in the hedge, could it be elm?

Table 3 shows the ten species of migrant recorded; their appearance is related to large-scale weather patterns, notably southerly winds.

Changes

The decline in moth numbers over the past few decades is well documented. Species' distributions have also changed significantly, both nationally and in this area. The changes in Worcestershire, and possible

Table 3 Migrants

	Records
Clifden Nonpareil	1
Dark Sword-grass	1
Delicate	1
Hummingbird Hawk-moth	8
Large Wainscot	2
Pearly Underwing	1
Scarce Bordered Straw	2
Silver Y	20
Small Mottled Willow	1
Vestel	4
White-point	1



Clifden Nonpareil

reasons for them, are set out by Tony Simpson in the Worcestershire Record, January 2023. In summary, since 1998, 156 new species have been recorded in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►

Table 4 Changes noted

New	Seen more often	Seen less often
Annulet	Black Arches	Brick
Antler	Clouded-bordered Brindle	Common Carpet
Blossom Underwing	Common Footman	Common Marbled Carpet
Brindled White Spot	Coronet (first 2012)	Common Swift
Clay Triple Lines	Cypress Carpet (first 2016)	Early Moth
Clifden Nonpareil	Dingy Footman	Figure of 8
Cloaked Carpet	Dogs Tooth	Flame Carpet
Cream-bordered Green Pea	Dusky Thorn	Garden Tiger (last 2019)
Delicate	Gold Spot (first 2013)	March Moth
Ear	Muslin Footman (first 2010)	Oak Nycteoline
Great Oak Beauty	Rosy Footman (first 2013)	Orange Swift
Great Prominent	Scarce Footman	Red-line Quaker
Green Arches	Sycamore (first 2011)	Satellite
Haworth's Pug	Vine's Rustic (first 2004)	Silver Ground Carpet
Lobster		Small Phoenix
Mocha		
Orange-tailed Clearwing		
Scarce Tissue		
Scarlet Tiger		
Tawny Barred Angle		
Triple-spotted Pug		
Yellow Horned		

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17 ►

county (43 of them macros). A number have turned up in my garden, including Cypress Carpet, Dotted Chestnut, Clifden Nonpareil and Scarlet Tiger.

Table 4 shows some of the changes in my garden. I've recorded more than 20 new species in the last five years but this is largely due to recording more often during the lockdowns. Longer term trends are also apparent: some species are recorded more often, others less often.

Increased numbers of the footman species are thought to result from reduced air pollution allowing lichens, the larval food plant, to do well. The decline in carpet species is observed nationally, as it



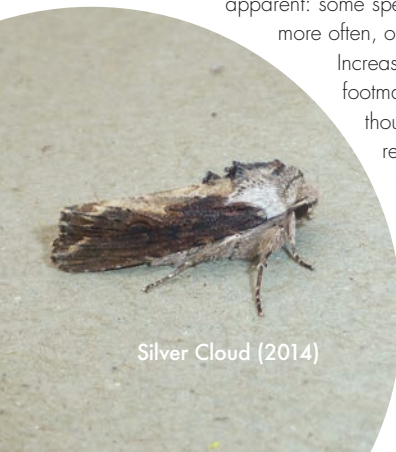
Garden Tiger (2014)

is for the Garden Tiger – sadly not seen since 2019, after being a regular for many years. I do hope, with more recording in the flight period, I will see it again.

Pheromones

In recent years, I have used pheromones in the garden and have attracted **Red-belted Clearwing** in the apple trees and **Orange-tailed Clearwing** on viburnum. Clearwings were previously considered rare but are now being recorded regularly using pheromones. **Emperor Moths** appeared within minutes of first putting up the lure; probably from Castlemorton Common, they had not been seen in the garden before.

I have tried using a wine/sugar mixture on several occasions, as this is known to attract moths, but it has always been unsuccessful. Perhaps I need more alcohol in my recipe!



Silver Cloud (2014)

Table 5 Broods per year

1	1/2	2
Clouded Drab	Green Carpet	Brimstone
Drinker	Light Emerald	Double-striped Pug
Muslin Moth	Oak Hook Tip	Early Thorn
Swallowtail	Spectacle	Flame Shoulder
Treble Lines	Swallow Prominent	Poplar Hawk-moth
Uncertain	Vine's Rustic	Shuttle-shaped Dart



Gold Spot (2019)



Blotched Emerald (2018)

Broods

I've long been fascinated by the number of broods that species have each year. However, as with so many moth-related issues, this is not straightforward and more study is required to unravel the details. **Table 5** shows some of the clearer cut examples.

Single-brooded species may have their one brood in the spring or later in the year. Some species may be breeding more continuously, such as the Large Yellow Underwing, while others seem to be having a third brood, such as Heart and Dart (now present in late September or early October).

The emergence of broods depends on the weather and can be very variable, with first appearances of **Muslin Moth** from 24 April to 29 May, **Early Thorn** from 17 March to 18 April, and **Vine's Rustic** from 9 May to 17 June. Vine's Rustic is interesting: when it first appeared in 2004 it only bred once but now it has two broods every year.

With a warming climate, we can expect more species to have more broods earlier and later in the year.

Other insects

It's worth pointing out that light traps attract more than moths. I've recorded the following and wish I had more time to identify them all to species level: lots of flies (including caddisflies), wasps (can be a problem when

tens appear), hornets, cockchafer (lots), summer chafers (once), lacewings, ichneumon wasps, ants, mayflies, bumblebees (especially tree and rarely white-tailed), shield bugs (green and red-legged commonly, hawthorn and gorse once), weevils, ladybirds (harlequin most common, followed by 7-spot, then rarely cream-spot and 16-spot), butterflies (**Painted Lady** once) and lots of beetles – various species of ground beetles, soldier beetles, click beetles, diving beetles and the spectacular burying beetles *Nicrophorus vespillo* and *Nicrophorus investigator* (both annual visitors).

A project for the next 20 years?

Conclusions

Recording moths in your garden is not only a great activity but is also a good example of citizen science. Moths are sensitive environmental indicators and keeping records and sending them to the county moth recorder for integration into the national database provides valuable information on biodiversity.

It can be undertaken by anyone and is endlessly interesting, with so much still to be learned about these amazing insects.

Article and photographs by **Ian Duncan**



Spectacle (2021)

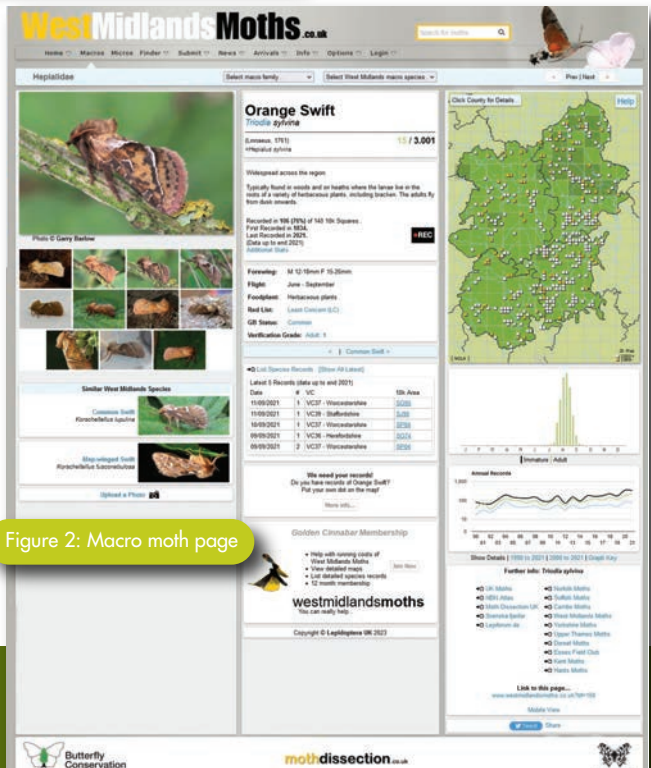
Background

During the period when **Peter Seal** was Branch Chairman, I was approached about joining the committee. He said this was to provide a better balance, as he felt the committee was too butterfly-orientated at the time and he wanted to do something for moths. An online moth atlas was suggested. This happened when the Moths of the West Midlands book was being written, although the timing was pure coincidence.

We had various meetings in Staffordshire with an IT developer called **Craig Slawson**, involving most of the county moth recorders for Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire (along with Peter Seal), to thrash out

ideas about what the atlas would look like and do. We literally got to the point when it was about to be launched, when Craig very sadly passed away. We lost all his development work and had to start again. I was already very involved in managing the UK Moth Dissection website and so contacted its designer, **Jim Wheeler**, and asked if he could fill Craig's boots. He said he could and did. And so the West Midlands Moth Atlas was born.

I did a 20-minute presentation about it at the 2022 National



Midlands Moth Atlas

Moth Recorders Seminar, which was a Zoom meeting, and I created a pre-recorded version just in case. You can see that at tinyurl.com/33nw2f7r. Otherwise, you can play with the atlas yourself at westmidlandsmoths.co.uk/index.php. If you become a Golden Cinnabar member, you get access to a lot more detailed information and your membership helps maintain the website.

Functionality

So what does the website do? Well firstly it is up to date. The aim is to refresh the data each October with the previous year's records. So, in late October 2022, we added all of the 2021 data for the four counties. The same happened the year before. This requires a bit of effort by the six county moth recorders and so far so good. We also get preferential treatment from Butterfly Conservation Head Office in the processing of new data.

Figure 1 shows the Home page. The main picture on the left is a random photograph, which changes when you click on the home button. The website is full of hyperlinks, so clicking on things takes you to other parts. Clicking on the name below the random photograph takes you to the page for that species. Clicking on **We need your photos** takes you to a

section where you can upload your own moth images. Photos are vetted for quality and accuracy, and then made public. This allows users of the atlas to become more involved. On the right, we are still advertising the companion book; click on the cover image to check it out.

Across the top of the page is a row of tabs, described in the following sections.

Macros

Clicking on this takes you to the first macro-moth in the modern numbering system, which is the **Orange Swift** (Figure 2). You can find a specific moth using the **Search** box in the top-right corner of the page; this recognises English and Latin names, and parts thereof.

This opens up all kinds of

information. Below a randomly selected main photo are 11 photos in total for Orange Swift. Below them are similar species in the West Midlands that are easily confused with this one. In the centre of the page, you can see how many records we have for the species, what it feeds on, when it is out and about (as an adult) and how rare it is nationally. Below that are the last five records; Golden Cinnabar members can click on the **Show All Latest** link to see the last 100 records and click on each record to see a small map of where it was (this goes down to tetrad resolution to preserve people's privacy). Figure 3 shows this process.

To the right of the page is a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ▶

Figure 3: Viewing records for a species



A pop up map appears in this example when Robin Hemming's tetrad of his record appears



Figure 4: Viewing the last 100 records

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21 ►

distribution map of the four counties, with dots in different colours representing year ranges. Golden Cinnabar members can click on a single county to see four date-range colours and three maps options and, below the map, details of the latest 100 records. But you can go further: clicking on individual dots pulls up the records

for that species for that site. Figures 4 and 5 show these processes.

Below the distribution map is a phenology bar chart showing when the species occurs and, below that, a line graph showing how it has been doing.

Micros

This works in the same way as the **Macros** tab but for micro-moths.

Finder

This enables you to browse species by type. For example, selecting **Day-flying moths** shows moths that fly by day (Figure 6). The photographs are all of adult specimens, a great aide for beginners to identify them.

The coloured letters beside some images indicate the national status of the species shown. The blue B is Nationally Scarce (INCC).

Submit

This gives contact details for sending in records, along with some other options.

News

This takes you to the Butterfly Conservation West Midlands Facebook group.

Arrivals

This is a brilliant section. Selecting **Flying Tonight?** shows all the macro-moths found in the West Midlands that have been seen ± 4 days from the your login date, along with photos and numbers of records (Figure 7). Selecting **Micros** in the left column does the same for micro-moths. So, if you're not sure what you've caught, this narrows down the options and provides an image of each.

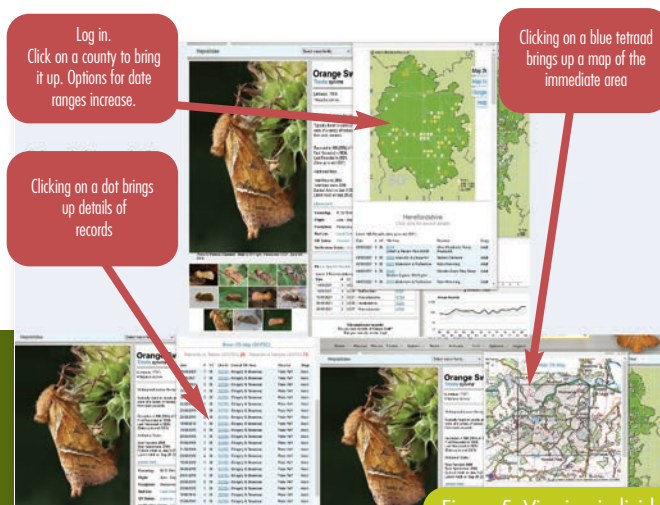


Figure 5: Viewing individual records

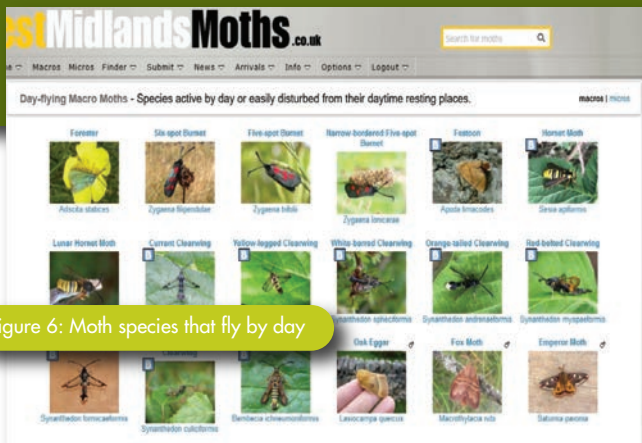


Figure 6: Moth species that fly by day

Info

The most useful option here is [Links](#), which provides weblinks for just about everything you need and probably some things you didn't know you needed.

Options

This gives us older traditionalists the option to hide micro-moth vernacular names, among other things.

Login/Logout

This is for Golden Cinnabar members and also provides a link to become one.

As the County Moth Recorder for Herefordshire, I find this website invaluable. But I also simply refer to it when going through catches to see if what I've caught is rare or yet to be recorded on my county dot. Your records are then seen with everyone else's, so moth recorders who previously sent in their records and never saw them again, can now see how they are doing alongside all the others doing the same. And that, along with contributing photos, makes everyone more involved, which has to be a good thing.

Article by Peter Hall

A user's perspective

I was slow to register as a Golden Cinnabar member because of the cost but I finally swallowed my pride and coughed up! Since then I've found the atlas invaluable: almost daily, I want to find out something about our Lepidoptera.

The atlas shows exact flight periods, with earliest and latest dates. After last year's extraordinarily mild autumn, I've been able to extend some of the latest dates. I can also find out precisely where and when species have been found in each county. There's an excellent selection of photos, with ID tips for some species and easily confused species listed. I can see whether I've recorded a species before and which species others have recorded. It inspires me to try to add missing species to my square on the map.

It's really worth becoming a Golden Cinnabar member if you're interested in moths and their history in our region.

Panel by Robin Hemming



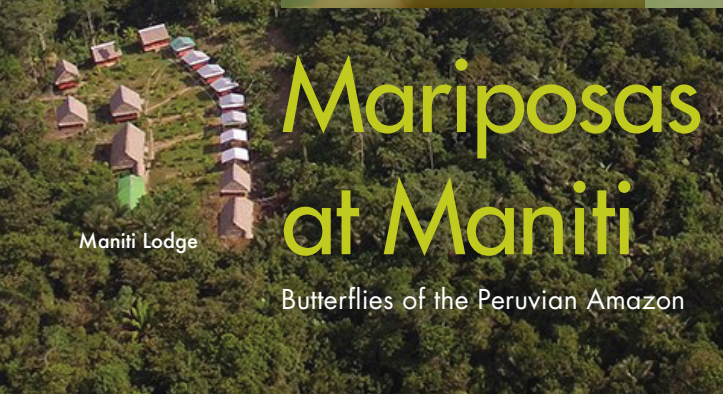
Figure 7: Moths seen ± 4 days from login



Dirce Beauty



Dotted Glory - underwing (Martyn Davies)



Maniti Lodge

Mariposas at Maniti

Butterflies of the Peruvian Amazon

park, where many butterfly species were to be seen. Walks on trails in the jungle revealed many more, including different species of huge Morpho butterflies. A feature of the trip was the large number of Hairstreak and Groundstreak butterflies seen. Small and often difficult to identify to species level, they were everywhere, not just in the jungle but also on the floor of the hotel lobby, on planted shrubs in the street and on the handrail of steps leading down to a creek.

The Amazon: home with its tributaries to the Amazonian Rainforest, which contains one third of all known species of the world's fauna, including a bewildering variety of butterflies, moths and other insects. Our two-week trip last October, organised by **Mike Williams** for a group of 11 people, was to the Peruvian Amazon.

The first part was based in a hotel in the vibrant Amazonian city of Iquitos, accessible only by boat or plane, with day trips to local nature reserves outside the city. The Allpahuayo-Mishana National Reserve was explored over three days, led by our excellent guide **Miguel** and his assistant **Pedro**. Initially, as is often the case, the group spent a lot of time around the grassy car

Next was a two-hour trip on the Amazon, with sightings of river dolphin, and four nights at Maniti Lodge, a couple of hundred metres from the river. Here the Maniti guide **Rodrigo** worked alongside our excellent guide Miguel, and not always harmoniously as far as the wishes of the group were concerned. Helped by Miguel's baiting with rotten fruit, jungle walks again revealed numerous butterfly species, all of which had to be checked later in the day by examining photographs and referring to a book and online resources. Records are still being collated as I write this but at least one species we recorded, *Mesene leucophrys*, was new to the Peruvian list, with the nearest known location over 400 miles away in Brazil. The photos shown are just a



Dotted Glory - upper side (Mike Williams)



Crossing a creek

small selection of the multitude of species we saw.

Our Branch Chair, **Michael Southall**, had brought a portable moth trap that he set up most nights both in Iquitos and at Maniti, where we also used a sheet and a hanging light provided by Miguel. Each catch was huge and fascinating; it's likely that some of the moths have not yet been formally identified and named by taxonomists.

Of course it was not just butterflies and moths that we were fortunate to see. Many birds were present, mainly in the treetops, especially Oropendolas with their hanging woven nests and eerie calls which resonated around the jungle. Squirrel and woolly monkeys, saddle-back tamarins, bats, a bird-eating tiger rat snake, poison dart frogs, lizards, orchids and a tarantula slowly

crossing the road all added to the riches to be seen. We also visited two animal sanctuaries.

Finally, a word about the trip overall. It was very hot and incredibly humid, and I have never sweated so much. Some became unwell during the trip and the travel, especially the return journey which took over three days, was exhausting. It was Lucy's and my last long haul trip, and I know that some of you will be critical that we went at all, but to be on the Amazon and in the Amazonian jungle was an unforgettable experience.

.....
*Article and photographs, unless otherwise credited, by **Stephen Lewis***



Mesene leucophrys (John Maddocks)



Periander Metalmark (Michael Southall)



Mike Williams meets a woolly monkey (John Maddocks)



City Nature Challenge 2023

Join the global wildlife count!



28TH APRIL -
1ST MAY

Help us to document the wildlife of Birmingham and the Black Country in a global challenge to see which city is the wildest!

The **City Nature Challenge** is an annual competition between over 450 cities **all over the world** to see how many wild species their citizens can spot over the space of four days.

Here's How You Can Take Part:



Download the iNaturalist App

Download the free phone app and create an account. There is also a website version.



Find Wildlife & photograph what you find

It can be plant, animal, fungi or any evidence of wildlife such as tracks anywhere in Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall or Wolverhampton between 28th April and 1st May



Upload your Observations

Share your observations by uploading your photos to iNaturalist by 7th May .



For more information & updates visit:

bbcwildlife.org.uk/CityNatureChallenge



THE CITY NATURE
CHALLENGE
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NATURAL
HISTORY
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UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



eCoRecord



Birmingham &
Black Country
Wildlife Trust



Birmingham
Museums

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Butterfly Conservation: The Warwickshire Approach

• ISBN: 9781399941518 • Authors: Mike Slater and Keith Warrington
 • Publisher: Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire • Publication date:
 December 2022 • Cost: £39.99 • Format: Hardback, 428 pages

Mike Slater has led the Warwickshire Branch of Butterfly Conservation since its formation in 1997 and is known amongst butterfly enthusiasts nationally for his dedication to the conservation of the **Small Blue** in Warwickshire. In the preface he explains that success with the conservation of the Small Blue and other species led to requests for more information on the techniques used. The book describes what has been learned during years of observation, experimentation and monitoring. Attractive design and typesetting and many illustrations help to make it easy to read.

The title implies a distinctive aspect to the work of this Branch. Its 'conservation principles' include trying to preserve rare butterflies at their known sites but also concentrating on sites where there are neither rare species nor, in some cases, any existing suitable habitat, but which are close to an existing large colony. The book's many case

studies exemplify this approach. A section explains the importance of recording and monitoring.

This book's strength lies in the detailed descriptions of the Branch's management techniques, for conservation and colonisation, described with reference to woodland, grassland and hedgerows, and amply illustrated with photographs taken by Branch members and explanatory diagrams. Detailed guidance on woodland restoration includes preliminary planning, the use of contractors where necessary, coppicing technique, brashing of coppice stools, disposing of brash, dead-wood habitat (including standing dead wood), also scallops and glades (a diagram illustrates cutting rotations), weed control and enhancing wildflower populations. The grassland guidance includes seeding, planting, the creation of butterfly banks and scrapes, drain management, ant hills, weed control, grazing, cutting/mowing, monitoring and annual work plans.

A third of the book consists of accounts of each species of butterfly in Warwickshire, with detailed information, based on years of experience and illustrated with excellent photographs and more case studies, about the current distribution of each species, past records, management of habitats,

identification and finding butterflies in flight and in immature stages.

Some attempted reintroductions are mentioned. **Purple Emperor** was unofficially reintroduced, by a local butterfly breeder, in 2004 in three woods and has spread. An unofficial release of **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** died out in one wood but not before it had established two very small colonies on adjacent sites. An authorised reintroduction of **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** died out.

Most of the book is based on personal knowledge and experience. Some of the references listed are mentioned explicitly in parts of the text but there are no footnotes. The book's short history of Warwickshire's countryside mentions Oliver Rackham, but the list includes only one of his books, *Woodlands* (published in 2006, not 2015 as stated). Unfortunately, relevant information in *Woodlands*, such as the research into England's prehistoric landscape, has been overlooked. The estimated figure for woodland in 1086 originates elsewhere.

The book is dedicated to the memory of Phil Pain (1923–2014). Phil taught me about butterflies, inviting me to join Butterfly Conservation. He would have promoted this book enthusiastically.

Review by Sarah Wager

We carry a book review in each issue of *The Comma*. Newly published titles are ideal but particularly interesting or useful books from the past are also worth highlighting. See page 2 for contribution details.