

#### Cover story

Wing scales on a Heath Fritillary at Haddon Hill in Somerset, by Andrew Fusek Peters (see pages 24-26).

#### 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

#### **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



Butterfly Conservation
West Midlands



@BC WestMids



westmidlandsbutterfly conservation.wordpress.com



(C) @westmidsbutterflyconservation





### Chairman's Address



#### Branch Committee meeting

This meeting, held in early October at the recently refurbished Flyfords Hall in Grafton Flyford, was our first face-to-face meeting since early in 2020. Some members who could not attend had sent very useful updates from their areas, which were read to the committee.

Our treasurer, lan Duncan, presented a sound financial report. The largest branch expense is the production and distribution of the three annual copies of

The Comma. Then Natalie Norton, Butterfly Conservation's Midlands Landscape Officer, gave an update about practical habitat-improvement work done by volunteers and contractors across the region. Both reports were added to the minutes, which were sent to committee members afterwards and made a beefy read.

Expressions of thanks were given to Peter Seal, who has now moved away, for his tremendous contribution over many years. George Davis was added to the committee. A lively discussion then followed about how we can involve more people in the Branch from right across our large region. It was concluded that remaining as one branch had more advantages than splitting into smaller county branches, production and distribution of this magazine being one of them, but that there was still much room for improvement. The committee agreed to pay a mileage allowance to people attending work parties and committee meetings, for those wishing to claim. We are also keen to hear from anyone, particularly in Staffordshire and Shropshire, who might be interested in helping us to organise local activities - do get in touch.

Our next meeting was scheduled for 4 March at the same venue.

#### Head Office initiatives

Communications with Head Office have remained mainly by online Zoom meetings. Three recent meetings, which included BC regional staff, continued work on defining threatened species, landscapes and wild spaces for the 2021–2026 national strategy. 71 threatened species have been identified as priorities. The ambition for Landscapes improvement involves making more of them, making them bigger, better and joined up. There are 129 Landscapes on the draft list from which the final 100 will be selected. An action plan for Wild Spaces has been produced following the meeting and the feedback given at the time. Branch membership reports are showing a healthy increase especially from people who took

part in the annual Big Butterfly Count so a big welcome to our new members and thank you for joining.

#### Personal highlights

Looking back over the year, I've been fortunate to see some new species of moths to my garden. Most of these have been migrants, for which it has been an exceptional year. Some have been recent colonisers to the south-east that had a sudden range and population expansion, such as the **Beet Moth** (Scrobipalpa ocellatella) which was recorded in numbers for the first time. This could well be linked to climate change, as we see warmer average temperatures. However, these new highlights tend to mask the species like the Garden Tiger moth that slip away almost unnoticed, possibly for the same reason.

I missed the exceptional moth migration period in late October, when among others the spectacular Crimson Speckled moth appeared in the region (see page 15). I had joined a group of friends who travelled to the sauna-like Peruvian Amazon for a fortnight. We were not disappointed and encountered some fantastic butterflies, moths and other wildlife and scenery, not least the mighty Amazon River itself – more about this in the next Comma

#### Getting involved

There are still plenty of opportunities to help at work parties around the region to improve habitat for our butterflies and moths; details are in the Event Calendar section. You may be able to shed some pounds gained during the Christmas festivities while you're at it.

Meanwhile, have a great New Year!

Michael Southall Branch Chair



#### Company limited by augrantee. registered in England (2206468)

Registered office:Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP

Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)





#### Fundraiser: hand-made butterfly and moth earrings and necklaces

I've been fascinated with butterflies since I spotted a 'different' butterfly in our back garden in North Shropshire that turned out to be an Essex Skipper. I've always been creative and my interest in butterflies led me to design and make butterfly and moth earrings.

I draw each one by hand and then bake them to seal them. My designs are based on actual sightings but, being hand-made, each one is unique, as is each butterfly and moth. The fittings are silver-plated and hypo-allergenic. To help raise funds for West Midlands Butterfly Conservation, I'm selling the earrings at £12.99 a pair and donating £3 of each individual item to the Branch. If you'd like details of the range, including necklace information, please email me at beebizze.cm@gmail.com

Caitlin Morgan

Winter 2022/2023 (3) (2) the Comma



# Butterfly of the Year

2022 was not a great year for butterflies: a generally poor spring combined with a hot dry summer had a major impact on numbers. Butterflies have their ups and downs, as we know, but a particular worry this year is the potential long-term effect of the drought conditions in July and August. Those old enough, and with long memories, will remember the drought of 1976, which was followed by a sharp decline in most species. The worry is that the hot dry conditions desiccate larval food plants, meaning that caterpillars do not have sufficient food to feed on and therefore fail to thrive, with the inevitable knock-on effect on adult numbers the following year.

This year's Big Butterfly Count showed a further decline in numbers but, as always, the results need to be interpreted with caution. Apparent declines in species such as Marbled White and Ringlet can be at least partly explained by early emergence causing numbers to peak before the count began. Very unusually,

Gatekeeper was the most recorded species, despite its significant national decline.

#### Slow start

Locally, the season started slowly. Most hibernators were not around in any number until mid-March. Red Admiral, formerly thought of as a migrant species, continues to overwinter in increasing numbers and several were seen in January. Improved weather in March saw some spring species emerge early: the first Orange-tips and Holly Blues were reported some 10 days earlier than in 2021. Orange-tip enjoyed a decent season and was still being reported well into June. Green Hairstreak was not seen until late April in 2021 but was reported before the end of March in 2022 (at Cannock Chase, generally our earliest site). It went on to have a reasonable season overall and showed well at several events in the Shropshire Upland Commons Butterfly & Moth Festival.

mid-April. The first **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** was seen in the Wyre Forest on 24 April (exactly the same date as in 2021) but numbers were disappointing for the second successive year. Worryingly, none were recorded at Haugh Wood in Herefordshire for the first time. In the West Midlands, Wood White is usually seen within a day or two of Pearl-bordered Fritillary and so it proved this year, with the first sighting on 25 April at our Grafton Wood reserve, where numbers were high. At Trench Wood, the newly established population seems to be flourishing with more sightings than last year. At Monkwood, numbers were slightly down but dispersal continues to nearby sites, including the new Worcestershire Wildlife Trust reserve at Green Farm. Small Copper was also out before the end of April and Common Blue in early May but Brown Argus was notable by its absence; all three species had much

Both Grizzled and Dingy Skipper were reported in

#### Impact of climate change

Early emergence continued into May. Very unusually for the West Midlands, both Ringlet and Meadow Brown were seen before the end of the month, along with

improved second generations later in the year.

#### The Awards

It may be a mark of an indifferent season with no standout species that there was so little agreement on our Butterfly of the Year. There was far more agreement on Most Improved Performance (Common Blue and Small Copper received the most votes, largely based on their second broods) and only two nominations for Worst Performance. If we'd offered a Moth of the Year award, Humming-bird Hawkmoth would have been a strong contender with many reports from gardens and elsewhere.

#### **Butterfly of the Year**

#### Orange-tip

Other nominees: Dingy Skipper, Brown Argus, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Heath and Red Admiral

#### **Most Improved Performance**

Common Blue (wooden spoon holder for 2020-1 but one of the top performers in the Big Butterfly Count 2022)

Other nominees: Small Copper, Marbled White and Dingy Skipper

#### **Wooden Spoon for Worst Performance**

Purple Hairstreak (particularly low numbers at most sites)

Other nominee: Peacock (appeared scarce but may reflect abnormal weather)

#### Large Heath. The first Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary was reported in the Wyre Forest on 20 May. Good news came with its rediscovery on the Long Mynd, having not been recorded there for some years, and a single sighting at Clee Liberty, another area targeted by the Shropshire Upland Commons project.

There is no doubt that climate change is affecting the emergence dates of species. We have to continually adjust our expectations for the first of a species to be on the wing. We used to think of White Admiral and both Dark Green and Silver-washed Fritillaries as primarily July species but this year all three were seen from mid-June (White Admiral even earlier). The knockon effect, of course, is that some species finish early -

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

very few White Admirals were reported after the end of July.

The other impact of climate change is range expansion. We have two excellent examples of this in our region: Marbled White and Essex Skipper. Both continue their northward and westward march, with evidence of new colonisation every year. Another example is **Purple Emperor** which, as previously reported, is becoming established in eastern Worcestershire. We must become more aware of this species throughout the West Midlands, as it is clearly very mobile and in an expansion phase.



Abnormally hot weather can sometimes throw up unexpected sightings. In late July, we had three reports of single male Chalkhill Blues from widely separated and unlikely locations, including our Grafton Wood reserve. While foul play may be suspected with some such sightings particularly when they turn up in well visited reserves, reports from more than one location suggest genuine dispersal. The weather also affected Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and especially Peacock, which appeared to go into diapause very early.

#### Red List species

We know from the new Red List review reported in Comma 113 that, of the species found in our region, Grayling is now classed as Endangered along with Large Heath, Wood White and Wall. Sadly, Grayling rather lived up to its billing with low numbers at most of its sites and only a single sighting on the Malverns. Rather ironic that, at a time when we hope to restore a lost species to the Malvern Hills, we may be close to losing another (see pages 16-17). Wall, in contrast, appeared to fare a little better and we received several records from sites where it has not been regularly reported.

> The first **Brown Hairstreaks** were reported on 1 August from three locations but, as two of these were females which usually emerge a few days after the first males, it's likely that emergence started at the tail-end of July. Adult sightings at Grafton

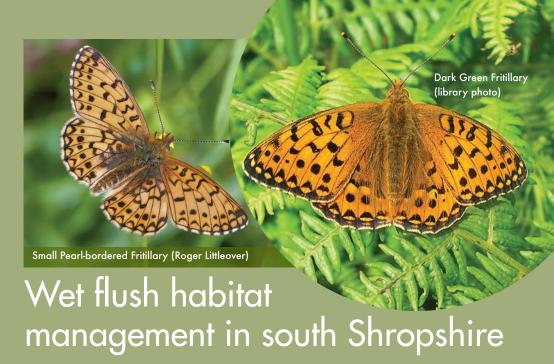
Wood seem to be slightly down but egg numbers are much more encouraging, with the highest count in the orchard for many years. The most exciting news of our egg counts so far has been our first record for the City of Worcester, found by Jenny Tonry at Aconbury Orchard at the beginning of December (see page 14).

#### Late sightings

Migrants such as Red Admiral, Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow increased on last year but numbers were not exceptional. There was evidence of breeding success in Clouded Yellow, with up to 10 individuals recorded at Croome Court in Worcestershire over several days in October. Both Red Admiral and Painted Lady lasted well into the autumn, which this year was exceptionally mild, with regular sightings of the former until the end of November. Red Admirals are now a species that we can expect to see in any month of the year.

Brown Hairstreak, as usual, prompted a few October records at Grafton Wood, Perhaps the most staggering late record was of a Holly Blue on 13 November in a Malvern garden, the latest ever in the West Midlands. Whether this is a possible third brood specimen or just a delayed second generation is hard to say.

Article by Mike Williams



#### Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Dark Green Fritillary benefit from work to help Snipe and Curlew

The Stiperstones National Nature Reserve is known by the general public for its extensive areas of heather and its distinctive rocks, such as the Devil's Chair. Now it is gradually becoming known for its wet flush habitats on a former conifer plantation known as the Gatten. Simon Cooter (the Senior Reserve Manager for Natural England) and his team have been transforming this area by removing conifers, blocking ditches, creating leaky dams and undertaking a significant amount of soft rush cutting on the gentle slopes. Each year, a brush cutter creates random paths through large areas of rush; the loose rush is then raked into piles and left.

This work has been hugely successful in creating a much richer sward and consequently bird life and insect populations have increased significantly. Reed Bunting and Willow Warbler are doing well here and Snipe have increased from two territories in 2019 to five territories in 2022 (Leo Smith, pers. comm.). It is therefore no surprise to find that Marsh Violet is now abundant here and in 2021 a count

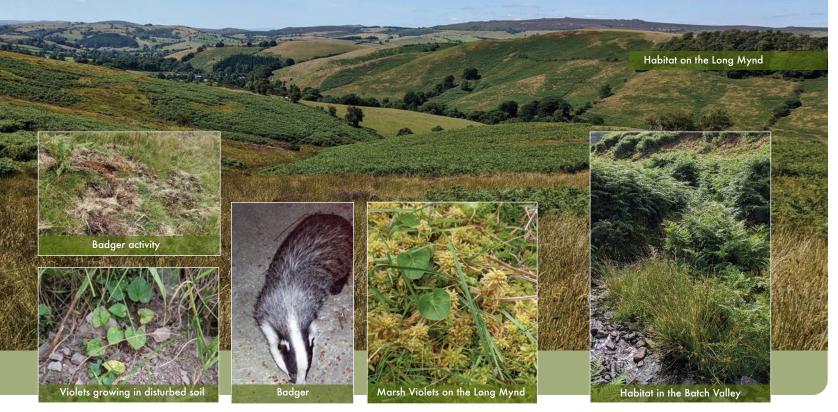


of 70 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary was recorded across this former plantation area.

#### Rush cutting

On the Long Mynd, rush cutting to benefit Snipe has been carried out since at least 2008, and more extensively since 2012. Cutting is done by a combination of a brush cutter and a Robocutter. Peter Carty (Countryside and Property

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ▶



Manager for the National Trust) considers that in general the flushes here are continuing to recover. As on the Stiperstones, we have seen a rich varied sward here and Snipe have increased from seven territories in 2019 to 11-13 territories in 2022 and appear to be moving into new areas (Leo Smith, pers. comm.).

Consequently, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary was recorded for the first time in living memory on three flushes on the Long Mynd in 2022, all in areas with good patches of Marsh Violet. We hope to be able to confirm its residency here in 2023 and continue to work with Caroline Uff, Rob Rowe and Stephen Lewis, who have been trialling a habitat assessment technique for this species, as well as carrying out a rush-cutting programme on other sites in the wider area.

#### Bracken cutting and raking

On the Long Mynd, Dark Green Fritillary is most

commonly recorded in the Batch Valley area, which is close to All Stretton. Here we now know that dog violets are fairly widespread in both the valley bottom and sides but that they are gradually being smothered by deep bracken litter. This has happened because it has been difficult to manage bracken on steep slopes or in hardto-access areas adjacent to the stream.

As part of a management plan agreed with the National Trust through the Shropshire Upland Commons Project, trial cutting of bracken in Batch Valley using a Robocutter took place in the late summer of 2022. Initial results are encouraging in terms of the number of violet plants exposed and we will determine if this creates any Dark Green Fritillary habitat next year.

Raking off the thick bracken litter across some of the cut plots will be trialled this winter to see if it enhances and extends the benefits of the initial bracken-cutting. We hope to undertake this work early in the New Year and,

if you would be willing to help, please contact Mike Williams (see page 27).

It was a great surprise to find two nearby hillside areas in the Batch Valley supporting some extant Dark Green Fritillary breeding habitat in 2022. Very unusually, this habitat appears to be maintained at least in part by badger activity, which creates bare patches that are subsequently colonised by violets. The presence of a mosaic of light bracken and grass in the areas where violets were most abundant seems to be crucial here, in addition to the badger activity!

#### Surveying

Survey work by Rob Rowe on Dark Green Fritillary in the Stepping Stones area in 2022 located two goodsized colonies (in the Darnford Valley and in the Hope Bowdler area), as well as a number of smaller ones. We hope to extend his work in 2023 to identify some of their breeding and nectaring areas and to link that with our findings on the Long Mynd. Interestingly, we saw no Dark Green Fritillary at all in any of the six flushes surveyed for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary adults and habitat in 2022, yet local residents sometimes see

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.

them in their gardens or hay meadows.

We are also hoping that the commoners will create wet flush habitat on Clee Liberty Common, which is included in the Upland Commons Project. This would involve blocking drains and slowing the flow in some of the water courses running through the site. This will potentially benefit Curlew and Snipe, and increase the amount of Sphagnum moss and Marsh Violet. As on the other sites, this work would need to be combined with rush cutting to create a more open sward in which larval food plants and nectar sources can flourish and birds can feed. Wide-ranging discussions have been held with commoners and community representatives and the idea of re-wetting the site was agreed in principle at a recent public meeting organised by the Parish Council.

#### Article by Jenny Joy and Mike Williams

Photographs by Jenny Joy (except where credited otherwise)

#### Find out more

Rush pasture leaflet available at butterfly-conservation.org /sites/default/files/rush-pasture-factsheet.pdf

Stepping Stones

Some of the work described here has been carried out through funding from the Stepping Stones and Shropshire Upland Commons projects



the Comma



As part of an initiative to raise awareness of green issues, a series of events was arranged across Dudley Borough under the banner Growing Up Green. The diverse range of activities included appreciating the beauty of autumn, litter picks, repairing and re-purposing, cutting down on plastic use (Eco-Maniax), a progress report by Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust on their river regeneration work, and apple juicing and bulb planting at one of the local parks.

#### Introducing the Scarlet Tiger

Scarlet Tiger Project joined in by posing a question as if to a green caterpillar: 'What is it like to actually grow up green?' To coincide with the Great Big Green Week (24 September to 2 October 2022), we delayed our September work party by a week and, in addition to our normal maintenance work,

Allan Nolan brought along some of the moths he had trapped overnight in his Amblecote garden – much to the surprise and delight of our visitors.

The work we've carried out over the eight years of the project was explained, followed by guidance on how to find caterpillars or at least evidence of their presence. Scarlet Tiger caterpillars emerge at the end of the summer but at this tiny, vulnerable stage, they stay hidden in the foliage, particularly among dead leaf litter. Thus, although there was the usual tell-tale evidence of caterpillar feeding on the alkanet, I knew we were unlikely to find any larvae. Consequently I was delighted when we uncovered a small caterpillar very early in our search.

#### Reaching out to the community

The second part of our involvement was a joint effort

with Sue and Avril, two members of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, to put on a display at Stourbridge Children's Library. The event also included creative and practical workshops. Helen and Rachel (organised by Wild About Stourbridge) offered children the opportunity to create their own wildlife-themed artwork and to plant bulbs and wild flower seeds in eco-pots to take away. Our spotlight was firmly on caterpillars, using The Very Hungry Caterpillar as a focal point for the library, but we also covered a wide range of flora and fauna.

Information was provided on the need to consider not only nectar-rich flowers but also caterpillar food plants when planning a wildlife-friendly garden. The display items roused the interest of the younger children, the badger's skull proving especially popular, and we gave away sachets of wild flower seeds. Questions were wide ranging and we learned of a thriving colony

of Scarlet Tigers in Stourbridge's old quarter, further evidence of the success of this moth in bucking the trend of general decline.

#### Building on our connections

Growing Up Green was well worthwhile and it is hoped to build on this next year. It was great to work with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and good links have been established with Stourbridge Library staff, who are keen to run similar wildlife-themed events in the future. Stourbridge is on the edge of the West Midlands – travel a few yards south and you're in Worcestershire, with Staffordshire only a short distance to the west. Wildlife has no regard for county boundaries, so linking up is vital for a greener, more sustainable future.

Article and photographs by Joy Stevens





#### Newsletter

No. 1 February 2016



Welcome to a new venture. This newsletter marks a step forward in the work of the West Midlands Branch and I would like to commend Martyn for initiating this. One of the things we are trying to achieve is a

Herefordshire is a County rich in butterflies with areas waiting to be discovered. Whilst we do not have many members in the County there are already some good examples of work to protect our butterflies, for example our reserve at Ewyas Harold and partnership with the Forestry

The Comma-Polygonia c-album )

Cover of first Herefordshire Newsletter

# Establishing Local Groups

∧ s a member of Butterfly Conserv-Aation you are automatically enrolled in a local branch when you join; in our area that is the West Midlands Branch. This is one of a number of branches across the country that serve a particular area; this is usually a county but several branches cover more than one county, such as the East Midlands, North Wales and South Wales branches. It has long been the aim of the West Midlands Branch to establish local groups within its umbrella, rather than five independent branches in Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, West Midlands and Worcestershire.

We favour this approach for a number of reasons:

1 The West Midlands Branch has

an excellent reputation for carrying out carefully planned and effective conservation projects.

- 2 We have a good record of spending the money from your subscriptions well in pursuit of active conservation.
- 3 There are clear benefits to size and we work well with other regional partners.
- 4 We have an established team of volunteer officers used to fulfilling the obligations of a branch within the national organisation.
- 5 We try to cover all aspects of Butterfly Conservation's work across our whole region by sharing expertise and resources.

At a branch committee meeting in 2015, it was agreed that we should try to establish these five local groups as soon as we could.

#### The Herefordshire local group

In Herefordshire, we started the process straight away by organising a planning meeting for all members to come along and have their say on what they wanted. Following this we produced our first newsletter, sent free of charge to all members with a Herefordshire postal address. We organised a further members' evening and continued the work parties already in place, working at Ewyas Harold Common and in Haugh Wood with other groups such as Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the Ledbury Naturalists. This included a follow up to a project of surveying 50+ plus reserves of the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust four times each over a two year period!

Then COVID interrupted plans for a while...

#### Sharing our experience

Following on from a paper circulated to all Branch committee members, it was agreed at the committee meeting last October that I should write this article. The aims are to move ahead with establishing further local groups and to encourage members to volunteer to help if so inclined.

Why should we set up these aroups? It is believed that a local group may be better able to retain membership, which is already good in the West Midlands. A local group could organise a small number of local events, maybe only one or two a year, which would augment National and West Midlands events. It would be more able to recruit volunteers for work parties, and maybe to discover leads for

All issues Herefordshire Newsletter available from westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com/herefordshire-newsletter-2 sponsorship from local firms and organisations.

The biggest problem for a countybased branch would be in finding volunteers to fill the officer roles. This would be less of a problem for local groups, if all of the financial, membership and Head Office matters were dealt with by West Midlands Branch Officers - in other words, one Treasurer not five!

The Data Protection Act is a very necessary hindrance to making contact with local members. However, before COVID we trialled a scheme in Herefordshire working with Head Office and that helped greatly. We now need the West Midlands Branch to establish a system where access to the list is available within the necessary restrictions imposed by this Act.

A local newsletter is a great help for retaining, recruiting and informing members. Butterfly Conservation produces three issues each year of the national magazine, Butterfly. The West Midlands Branch produces this magazine, The Comma, also three times a year. The Herefordshire Group produces its own Newsletter twice a year. This means each member in the county receives eight issues a year in total. The Herefordshire Newsletter is produced at no cost to Butterfly Conservation and wherever possible is sent by email; lately members without an email address will not have received a copy but we hope to rectify this soon for all new issues.

A local evening meeting where members can be canvassed on their 'wants', as well as informed and entertained, could be useful. Also have a germ of an idea which will involve people locally, maybe a site to survey or a project jointly with another

organisation. Encourage members to record and make sure they will pass on their records. Finally, don't try to do all of the above at once. Remember Rome wasn't built in a day.

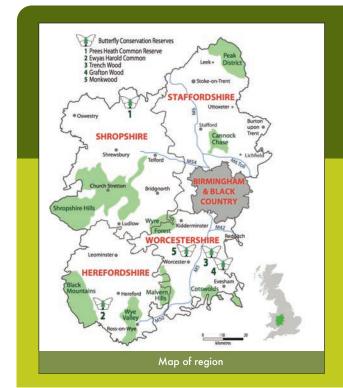
#### Getting started

Help is at hand! I started the process of organising the Herefordshire Group and other people have helped, for which I am personally very grateful. We are not the finished article but, if anyone would like to chat more, please contact me and I'll offer what advice I can. If you've never seen the Herefordshire Group Newsletter, go to the West Midlands Branch website (see page 2) where you'll find all issues produced so far. They have been produced using Publisher, which is part of the Microsoft Office Suite, but are available as PDF files for download.

You could be the one to start the process off in Staffordshire. Shropshire, the West Midlands or Worcestershire, but there may well be others out there who can help with a little bit of encouragement. One of the nicest articles we have printed in our newsletter was by the granddaughter of one of our 'founding fathers' (Herefordshire Group Newsletter 12 p6-8). These are the people we need to encourage. If two or more people from one county contact me, I will of course put them in touch with each other.

You don't know what you can achieve until you have a go!

Article by Martyn G Davies





 $\bigwedge$  s most of you will know, the Brown Hairstreak butterfly has

The egg found in the City of

Worcester (Simon Primrose)

been slowly but surely increasing its Worcestershire range over the last few decades. It has expanded in all directions, although faster in some than in others, and being most marked towards the north-east, in Redditch.

Its westward expansion has always been much slower, in part hindered by a rather large obstacle in the form of the M5 motorway. However, a couple of winters ago, evidence finally emerged of the butterfly having bridged that gap: a single egg was discovered at Lower Smite Farm, headquarters of the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Further egg finds in the

Exciting first in Worcestershire

Lower Smite area last winter resulted in another three 1 km arid squares being recorded to the west of the

This left the next major target in the west as Worcester City itself. Many searches have taken place there in recent years, most notably within the Worcester Woods Country Park, which contains plenty of nice Blackthorn habitat. Unfortunately none were successful and nor were a few others in various suitable-looking habitats in the extreme east of the city.

But then, out of the blue, we were contacted by the chairman of an organisation known as the Worcester Environmental Group (WEG), asking for advice on

Blackthorn management at one of the locations they manage: Aconbury Orchard, just north of

Worcester Hospital. Having gone along and seen the habitat first-hand, we thought it deserved a closer look and so a Thursday egg search was organised. Four of us undertook the search but, two hours later with nothing found and entering the final area to be inspected, expectations were running very low... when suddenly an egg was finally discovered!

This egg was indeed a very special one - not only the first to be found within the city but also the furthest west that we've ever recorded an egg in Worcestershire. Lots more potential habitat exists within the city so it remains our hope that the Brown Hairstreak will now colonise Worcester in the same remarkable way that it has colonised Redditch.

Article by Simon Primrose

Getting involved If you would like to help in this quest by joining one of our regular Thursday egg searches, please contact me (see page 27).



## **Event Calendar**

#### Branch AGM 2023 11am • Saturday 20 May

The Flyfords Hall in Grafton Flyford

**Guest Speakers** 

**Andrew Fusek Peters** 

Butterfly Safari - Photographing the UK's 59 species

#### Sam Macvie

Purple Emperors and the new Heart of England Forest purchase at Roundhill Wood

#### **Birmingham and Black Country**

#### **Scarlet Tiger Project Work Parties, Stourbridge**

Every 3rd Fri: 20 Jan, 17 Feb, 17 Mar Contact Joy Stevens: 01384 372397, joystevens@blueyonder.co.uk Meeting points and tasks to be determined



#### Herefordshire

#### **Ewyas Harold Meadow Work Parties**

Tue: 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@butterflyconservation.org, 07485 372199



#### **Ewyas Harold Reserve and Common Work Parties**

Every 3rd Sat: 21 Jan, 18 Feb, 18 Mar, 15 Apr

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: 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)

#### **Shropshire**

#### Comer Woods – White Admiral Survey and Picnic

Sun: 2 Jul

11am at the National Trust's Comer Woods car park, near Dudmaston, signposted off A442 Kidderminster-Bridgnorth road (SO743900). For Butterfly Conservation members and National Trust volunteers only, this event has been organised in memory of Adrian Miles (see Comma 113). Advance booking required. Contact Mike Williams: wmbutterflies@amail.com

#### **Prees Heath Common Work Parties**

Wed: 18 Jan, 15 Feb

10.30am on the access track opposite the Steel Heath turning off the A49 (SJ557363) Contact Natalie Norton: nnorton@butterflyconservation.org, 07485 372199

#### **Shropshire - The Upland Commons project**

The Upland Commons Project is a three-year, £3m, 25-partner project helping to secure the future of various upland commons, including three in the Shropshire Hills – Clee Liberty, Long Mynd and Stiperstones.



#### **Clee Liberty- rush cutting**

Details to be confirmed Contact Mike Williams (07802 274552 , wmbutterflies@gmail.com)

#### Long Mynd – raking cut bracken in the Batch Valley

Fri: 13 Jan, 20 Jan, 27 Jan 10am in the Batch Valley National Trust car park near All Stretton (SO455955) Contact Mike Williams (07802 274552 , wmbutterflies@gmail.com)

#### Telford Millennium Nature Reserve Work Parties

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

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







#### Worcestershire

#### **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@btopenworld.com

#### Grafton Wood Brown Hairstreak Egg Searches

Sat: 28 Jan (also Thursday afternoons – see page 14)10am at Grafton Flyford Church

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

#### **Monkwood Work Parties**

Sun: 8 Jan, 5 Feb, 5 Mar Thu: 19 Jan, 16 Feb, 16 Mar

10am in the reserve car park (SO803603),

usually finished by 3pm

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

#### **Penny Hill Landfill Site Work Parties**

Sun: 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)

#### **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!

#### **Trench Wood Work Parties**

Sun: 22 Jan, 26 Feb, 26 Mar 10am in the reserve car park (SO930588) Contact Matthew Bridger: 07801 568334, bridge 1805@btinternet.com

#### **Wyre Forest Work Parties**

Sun: 22 Jan

Wed: 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

Refreshments provided at Wednesday work parties Work is mainly removing ride-side coppice to benefit **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and sometimes

Wood White.

Contact Mike Williams: 07802 274552,

wmbutterflies@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





#### **UK Moth Recorders' Meeting**

Saturday, 28 January 2023 via Zoom https://butterfly-conservation.org/moths/ukmoth-recorders-meeting

Advance registration required

#### 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

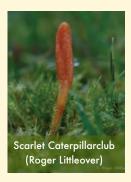
#### The Caterpillar Club

Sorry, but you can't join. Let me explain why: We go out regularly on nature walks in parts of South Shropshire and, at this time of year (late November), Catherine looks mainly for waxcaps while I look for leaf miners (and, of course, anything else of interest -County Recorders are always pleased to have records). On our latest trip, to Batch Valley in All Stretton (VC40), there were plenty of waxcaps and other fungi in the grass. As usual, we took several photos, including one of a species of fungus we had not seen before.

Back home, we searched and found in the book Fascinated by Fungi that our specimen was of Cordyceps militaris – the Scarlet Caterpillarclub fungus. For me, the fascinating thing is that this small fungus, bright orange in colour, is 'restricted to the very specific underground habitat where the larvae of moths are found'. How does it know? This fungus parasitises moth

We did not do so, but it appears that if you were to dig one up you would find it attached to a moth larva. Not a good way to collect moth records!

#### Article by Graham Wenman and Catherine Wellings





This photo of the fungus 'feeding' on a mummified moth larva was kindly supplied by the author of Fascinated by Fungi, Pat O'Reilly at First Nature: www.first-nature.com

# A rare visitor to Herefordshire Crimson Speckled moth

Crimson Speckled (Utetheisa pulchella) – I prefer the old name of Crimson-speckled Footman – has always been highly sought after by British entomologists and collectors both for its beauty and its rarity. It is listed as a rare immigrant to Britain from North Africa and the Mediterranean. My edition of the Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland suggests there have been only 100 records since 1900, although I know there have been more since that was published.

The second half of October and into November saw exceptional weather conditions with tropical air sweeping up from North Africa and south of the Canary Isles, across Europe and up to our shores. Often the wind strength was too strong for optimum moth trapping but on some nights it dropped enough to be good. At the start of this period I was fortunate enough to be on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly trapping at the most southwesterly point in the UK. On the night of 18 October, the highlight of my trip was to catch a Crimson Speckled; something I'd only hoped for, for many years, but never achieved. I didn't know then it was to be the first of the biggest movement of these moths ever. By the time I'd left Scilly on 22 October, I'd trapped two and several had been found by day, as is often the case with these distinctive insects.

I returned home to Bodenham, Herefordshire, full of hope that the continuing southerlies would deliver some good migrant moths to our inland county. Regular migrants like Vestal, Rusty Dot Pearls and Rush Veneers were much in evidence but nothing very special was arriving. On the Hereford and Worcestershire Moth Facebook group I was encouraging other moth recorders to get their traps out. I was hearing of ever-increasing numbers of Crimson Speckleds being found, mainly close to the south and east coasts. On 29 October, lan and Dilys Hart trapped a Diasemiopsis ramburialis, a small tropical black-and-white pyrale, in their west Herefordshire garden which was both new for Herefordshire and the West Midlands. I also heard of a Crimson Speckled in Gloucestershire. I was full of hope but not expectation. Before first light, I switched off my trap on 30 October and by torchlight I could see an immaculate Crimson Speckled sat on the outside of my trap. With a trembling hand I succeeded in persuading it into a pot, ready to share my trophy moth with others.

On checking the excellent westmidlandsmoths.co.uk, I found that there were three previous Herefordshire records, two from the Victorian era and one from The Doward in 2011.

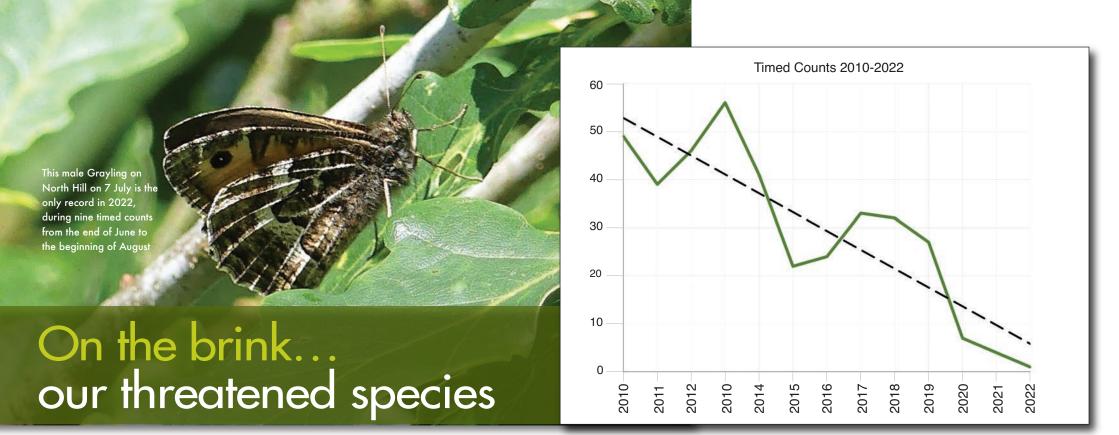
I don't know how many have been recorded since my first on St Agnes this year but I know it is an unprecedented number. For me and for most other moth recorders lucky enough to have seen one this year, it will be our moth of the vear.

Now the colder weather has set in and we can begin to look forward to what 2023 might deliver.

Article and photograph by Robin Hemming

#### Find out more

The Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland was written by Paul Waring and Martin Townsend, illustrated by Richard Lewington and published by British Wildlife Publishing (3rd edition ISBN 9781472964519).



Dutterfly Conservation has pledged to halve the Dnumber of the UK's threatened species of butterflies and moths by 2026, as well as improving the condition of 100 of the most important landscapes for butterflies and moths, and transforming 100,000 wild spaces in the UK for people, butterflies and moths. This is welcome but extremely ambitious.

#### Risk designations

Improvements are partly being achieved through recent reassessments of these species and changes to the risk of extinction status assigned to them. For example, the Pearl-bordered Fritillary (Boloria euphrosyne) is being reintroduced on to the Malvern Hills, following its extinction at the end of last century, in the face of a catastrophic decline of 95% population and 71% occurrence from 1976 to 2014 in the UK. However, more informed habitat management appears to be making a difference and it increased by 45% in population and 3% in occurrence from 2005 to 2014. This recent quasi stability has allowed its status to be

reduced from Endangered to Vulnerable, although its local populations have significantly declined at Ewyas Harold and Wyre Forest over the past two years and it may have been lost from Haugh Wood recently.

In contrast, Grayling (Hipparchia semele) is still considered a common species along parts of the UK's coast, especially in the west, but inland it has declined significantly. This decline was highlighted in 2022 by what may prove to be to its local extinction on the Malvern Hills - one of the most remote inland sites. Nationally, between 1976 and 2014 the population and occurrence have declined 65% and 58% respectively. So, Grayling has been designated as Endangered rather than Vulnerable.

But are these designations meaningful? Pearlbordered Fritillary does not respond to a change in its status, and no-one will deny that we have yet to find a solution to the paucity of its occurrence around the UK, while the success of its reintroduction on the Malvern Hills is uncertain. On the other hand, do we accept the probable extinction of Grayling on the Malvern Hills,

allied to its redesignation as Endangered, even though habitat management has been increased significantly in recent times? The current plan is to extend the area of habitat and wait at least five years before any hope of reintroducing the species.

#### Factors affecting interventions

The arguments for and against topping-up or reintroducing populations revolve around the science. Some are well understood, such as habitat management and the risks of introducing diseases or parasites from a donor population. Then there are the hypotheses and threats arising from climate change and extreme weather events. Other unknowns include nitrogen deposition encouraging growth of coarser grasses and scrub, and warmer winters disturbing diapause, emergence times and the synchronisation with nectar sources or larval host plants.

Funding is also important but, all too often, funding is available but unspent, perhaps in fear

of failure.

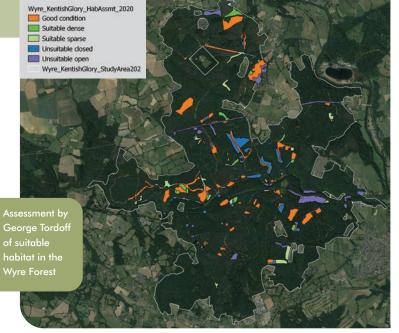
Let's hope Butterfly Conservation will achieve its ambition to halve the number of threatened species but, in the words of Natural England's Strategic Direction, this '... demands a change in mind set: away from a sometimes over-precautionary approach towards one that is prepared to take risks and sustain some losses in order to secure greater gains."

The International Union for Conservation of Nature has recently revised the Red List to show 24 species at risk of extinction, including Critically Endangered (none), Endangered (such as High Brown Fritillary and Grayling), Vulnerable (such as Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary) and 35 species not at risk of extinction including Near Threatened (such as Dark Green Fritillary) and Least Concern (such as Silverwashed Fritillary).

Article and photograph by Mel Mason



# A Return to the Glory Days





Deintroductions of lost species are not to be igwedgetaken lightly and are certainly not a quick fix. Properly researched and planned, however, they can help to restore species which have no chance of returning to former landscapes without a helping hand. We have seen in the past how the restoration of flagship species like the Large Blue and more recently Chequered Skipper can bring wider benefits to other species as well. While the conservation of extant populations must always remain the priority, we should not be shy of developing projects to bring back former species where we believe suitable habitats may exist and the opportunity

Around half of all our butterflies are declining and moths are also in trouble, with the snowstorm of moths in the headlights no longer a feature of our summer nights. Britain is considered one of the most naturedepleted countries in the world, so the need for action is urgent. Butterfly Conservation nationally has set itself the target of halving the number of threatened species of butterflies and moths over the next five years; this is an ambitious target but one that can best be achieved



through the national charity working closely with branches, building on existing work and developing new partnerships where appropriate.

#### Past alories

The Kentish Glory moth used to occur widely in the UK, being first recorded in Kent in 19th century. Its history is one of continual decline and, by the middle of the 20th century, in England it was pretty well confined to the Wyre Forest. It is day-flying and one of our larger and most attractive moths. The larvae feed on young birch trees growing in sunny and open conditions; its disappearance from many locations is almost certainly linked to the cessation of traditional woodland management and the replacement of broadleaved trees with dense conifer plantations. The last records for the Wyre Forest date back to around 1970, leaving the species now found only in a limited area of Scotland

Much has changed in the Wyre Forest over the past 50 years, generally for the better as far as Lepidoptera is concerned: over 1200 species of butterflies and moths have been recorded there. Butterfly Conservation has undertaken a series of projects over the past 20 years and established good working relationships with partner organisations. Most of these projects have been aimed at helping the fritillaries for which the Forest is famed but surveys have also been made into some of the rarer moths, particularly Common Fanfoot, Drab Looper and Argent & Sable.

A Landscape Partnership was established, which included Butterfly Conservation and culminated in an agreement between the Forestry Commission and Natural England, the two main landowners, to manage the whole forest as a single entity with a

Inspecting suitable habitat in Scotland.

Clearfell in Culbin Forest with Mike Southall and Tom Prescott, **Butterfly Conservation Scotland** 

shared vision and objectives. A new joint 10-year management plan was published in 2015 that included as one of the targets: 'To develop plans for the reintroduction of species lost to the forest in recent decades, potentially including the High Brown Fritillary butterfly and Kentish Glory moth.'

#### Identifying key issues

As with any reintroduction, fundamental questions have to be answered before planning a Kentish Glory project:

- Do we understand why the species disappeared?
- Are we satisfied there is sufficient habitat to sustain a population, now and in the future?
- Would we need to manage the habitat differently and, if so, how would this affect existing species?
- Where would we obtain breeding stock and how would we ensure that obtaining it does not affect donor populations?
- Who could help to breed stock for release?
- How much money might be needed to maximise our chances of success and where might this come

Over the past two years, the Branch has begun to answer these questions but there is still some way to go.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



#### Making a start

In 2020, we commissioned George Tordoff, a member of Butterfly Conservation's national moth team, to assess the amount of potential habitat in the Wyre Forest suitable for Kentish Glory. The result of this survey was very encouraging, with 84ha considered in Good Condition for this species and a further 11.3ha identified as Suitable with additional management. Much of the available habitat is associated with conifer clearfells, which will continue into the future as the Forest is converted back to broad-leaved trees and, in places, wood pasture. The Forest also has good access routes: rides and tracks are kept open to facilitate forestry operations and to benefit woodland fritillaries

The total habitat requirement for the Kentish Glory is as yet uncertain but, as we know the females are mainly sedentary, the proximity of habitat patches and good links between them will be important factors. The amount of open space within the Forest will increase over time, which should help, and birch, an early pioneer species, is likely to flourish in cleared areas. Nevertheless, it will be important to include the Kentish Glory's requirements in future management plans.

#### Taking stock

Another area of investigation is DNA. We hoped this might reveal how closely the old Wyre population was related to Scottish populations. We wondered whether, as with the Chequered Skipper, the former population might be more closely related to continental than Scottish populations. It was difficult to find old specimens that were definitely from the Wyre Forest but, after careful research, we tracked down some Kentish Glories collected before the Second World War by Les Evans from the Birmingham Naturalists' Society. He died some years ago but the specimens had been passed on to a fellow entomologist now residing in Lichfield. In May 2021 with England at last free of Covid restrictions, Tony Simpson, the Worcestershire County Recorder, and I were able to arrange a visit. We felt privileged to be able to examine labelled specimens dating back to the 1920s – a little bit of Wyre history in a tray!

The University of Worcester had already agreed to undertake DNA tests for us. With the help of Butterfly Conservation colleagues in Scotland, we obtained samples of specimens held by the Museum of Scotland – just a leg was required! Sadly, despite their best efforts, the university's staff could not extract viable DNA from the material provided and so the question of relatedness remains unanswered. However, as work on specimens from other European



countries shows that populations are very closely related climate and habitat may be more important considerations than DNA when sourcing stock.

#### A visit to Scotland

Wherever we eventually obtain our stock, we thought it useful to know more about the practicalities. How easy would it be to find Kentish Glory eggs or caterpillars in the wild? A visit to Scotland was one way to find out, so a small group of Branch members flew to Aberdeen in May 2022. We visited Speyside and also Culbin Forest, which is further north on the Firth of Forth. The visits were worthwhile both for finding eggs, which are laid along smaller branches of rather exposed birch trees, and for learning about the Kentish Glory's ecology, conservation efforts in Scotland and the habitats where the species occurs. Culbin Forest was particularly interesting, with similarities to parts of the Wyre Forest.

We were most grateful to everyone involved for so generously giving up their time and showing us around: Butterfly Conservation staff, representatives of partner organisations and local volunteers. It was especially good to see Dr Mark Young, who wrote the Foreword to our moth book and is a recognised authority on the Kentish Glory having published several papers, and Peter Hall, the Herefordshire Moth Recorder who now lives in Scotland

#### Developing new partnerships

One thing we've learned over the years is that Butterfly Conservation can often achieve more when it works with partners. A timely email received early in 2022 has led to the exciting prospect of working with Twycross Zoo on the Kentish Glory project. Known mainly for its primates, the zoo is keen to support local organisations with conservation projects. Discussions are still at an early stage but the hope is that zoo staff can use their experience and

scientific knowledge to help with a programme to breed Kentish Glories for release into the Wyre Forest. Finding people who have the time and ability to breed stock through the egg and caterpillar stages is a challenge in a project of this nature, so to have the zoo on board in this way would be terrific and, as far as I know, a first for Butterfly Conservation.

Suitable habitat (George Tordoff)

Eggs on a birch twig in Scotland

#### What next?

The Kentish Glory is a priority species in our region's Conservation Strategy and explicitly included in the Wyre Forest Management Plan. It is also on the long list of 71 species in the national Conservation Strategy for which systematic progress is needed in the short term. Butterfly Conservation recognises there is potential for Kentish Glory to form part of our wider work in the Wyre Forest, which already focuses on creating open habitats for Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, and is keen that any reintroduction project should be within the framework of making the Wyre Forest 'measurably better for a set of key species'. This is something that our Branch would support but that will require external funding; over the winter we plan to meet identified partners and locate potential sources for this. With determination and commitment from all parties, we hope to demonstrate that the Kentish Glory's disappearance from England need not be a permanent loss and that restoring the species to the Wyre Forest can act as a catalyst to benefit other key species at the same time - a return to the Glory Days indeed.

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



#### Butterflies

The butterfly list grew more slowly and came to 25 species for the trip. The weather had become very hot and dry, following a wet early spring. We saw many of our target species, including Two-tailed

Pasha which unexpectedly came to our fruit bowl during a lunchtime picnic. Many Marsh Fritillaries and a naturalised population of Monarchs were observed at Grande. Tortoiseshell was a highlight, as it was a new species for me. Small White was the commonest species, with regular sightings of Cleopatra, Clouded Yellow, Small Copper and Speckled Wood (in its orange southern Spanish form). Spanish and Southern Gatekeepers were seen, along with Lang's Shorttailed Blue and Long-tailed Blue. Spanish Argus and False Ilex Hairstreak were good to see, and Sage Skipper was found at a limestone gorge site.

# Checking our traps

#### Other species

A talk and subsequent boat trip from Tarifa saw us enter the choppy and busy Straits of Gibraltar, which took us nearer to the looming African

# Moth dreams come true in Southern Spain

In early June this year, nine of us set out for Southern Spain on a week's butterfly and moth holiday.

We stayed at the Huerta Grand Eco-lodge in Andalusia province close to the town of Tarifa. This is near the Straits of Gibraltar and only to us but often in a different form. 14 kilometres from Morocco, We were able to explore different habitats including coastal dunes and cork oak, laurel and pine forests. We were hosted by Dave Grundy, a regional moth expert and the did become slightly blasé about the founder of the Garden Moth

Tonkin and Niki Williamson from Inglorious Bustards, a bird and wildlife tour company.

#### Moths

We were soon looking at the moths caught in the traps set up by Dave at various locations and amassed an amazing total of 244 confirmed species. Some of these were familiar Moths that we dream of seeina because they are rare migrants were trapped in numbers. It was great to see the iconic Latin, Passenger and Jersey Emerald in the flesh. We Striped Hawk-moths we were Scheme. He was helped by Simon seeing, with up to eleven in one trap.

It was a joy to compare Bordered Scarce Bordered and Eastern Bordered Straw when found together.

I had taken my pheromone lures and was delighted to attract three clearwing species and a micro to them. The Red-tipped Clearwing. which came to its designated lure, was of particular interest – its nearest mapped distribution is 300 miles to the north, near Madrid.

The moth traps attracted a range of other interesting invertebrates, including mantis, dragonflies and spiders. Even Dave was surprised to find a Spanish vellow scorpion under one of his egg trays; luckily nobody was stung.





Striped Hawk-moths

coast of Morocco. We saw our target species of Long-finned Pilot Whales. Cory's and Balearic Shearwaters were added to the bird list and some of us saw Sunfish. Simon helped us to a trip total of 113 bird species. He took us to see Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Northern Bald Ibis, European Beeeaters and Collared Pratincoles. among many other species, plus the rare Portuguese Sundew plant.

Thanks to Dave, Simon, Niki and Mike Williams for organising this memorable trip.

Article and photographs by Michael Southall

(22) the Comma



As the time for surgery grew near, I turned my

common species, I wouldn't have believed it possible.

Along the way there were incredible moments. With

## beauty and movement sublime — they are pure Dr Martin Warren, former Chief Executive of Butterfly Conservation Heath Fritillary - confined now to Kent and south-west England, where it has been subject of successful conservation activity CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25 ▶ Large Heath - aberration cockaynei has my very own (for two days) colony of Scotch Argus at more extensive white marbling on the hindwing compared to the normal form Hearthstanes Estate in Scotland, I had a safari as good

and varied as any African experience and was so honoured when publisher Graffeg commissioned a coffee table book. One of the great highlights was heading out with the ever-helpful Branch members Craig Jones and David Williams to Fineshade Wood, where this year the Chequered Skipper project was made public and many years of conservation paid off. Hours of traipsing round finally led us to this tiny and strongly marked skipper. It was most obliging and I was able to capture a flight

sequence that showed its stunning underwings.

Through all my work, I would like to thank Butterfly Conservation West Midlands and Mike Williams for their support. I hope that my book, by showing the sheer beauty of our British species, can raise awareness and show what we could lose if we don't do our best to conserve these very local treasures.

Article and photographs by Andrew Fusek Peters

#### Branch contacts

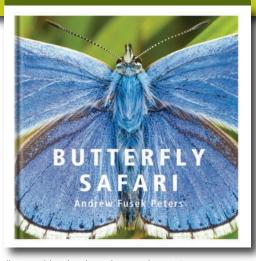
branch confacts			
Officers			
Chairman Vice Chair and Malvern Hills Secretary Treasurer Recording, Transects, Website Publicity, Marketing Conservation – Herefordshire Conservation – Worcestershire Moths – Birmingham, Black Country Moths – Herefordshire Moths – Worcestershire Brown Hairstreak Champion Herefordshire Newsletter Editor Social Media Manager Wider Countryside Butterfly Count Regional Conservation Manager (BC) Midlands Landscape Officer (BC)	Mike Southall* Mel Mason* Martin Harrison* Ian Duncan* John Tilt* Mike Williams* Ian Hart* Trevor Bucknall* David Jackson* Robin Hemming* Mike Southall* Simon Primrose* Martyn Davies* Craig Jones Philip Nunn Rhona Goddard Natalie Norton	michael_southall58@hotmail.co.uk mbg.records@btinternet.com martinh1236@yahoo.com erebia13@gmail.com john.tilt2@btopenworld.com wmbutterflies@gmail.com yellowrattle4@aol.com trevor.bucknall@outlook.com jacksongrus@talktalk.net robinhemming@btinternet.com michael_southall58@hotmail.co.uk simonjprimrose@aol.com martyn.davies808@gmail.com cfjmarlpool@gmail.com philip-nunn@hotmail.co.uk rgoddard@butterfly-conservation.org nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org	01299 251467 01684 565700 01743 351929 01684 891446 01386 792458 01299 824860 01981 510259 01905 755757 01902 344716 01568 797351 01299 251467 07952 260153 01432 266703 07970 808898 07931 488624 01746 762364 07485 372199
Reserve Managers			
Ewyas Harold Graffon Wood Monkwood Prees Heath Trench Wood	lan Hart* John Tilt* Phil Adams Natalie Norton Matthew Bridger	yellowrattle4@aol.com john.tilt2@btopenworld.com pdadamsrainbow@gmail.com nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org bridge1805@btinternet.com	01981 510259 01386 792458 07725 622342 07485 372199 07801 568334
County Records Coordinators – bu	tterflies		
Birmingham, Black Country Herefordshire Shropshire	Richard Southwell Bob Hall Jason Kernohan Peta Sams	richard_southwell@hotmail.co.uk randphall@gmail.com jasonkernohan@blueyonder.co.uk peta.sams@gmail.com	01384 397066 01432 850623 07856 276512
Staffordshire Worcestershire	John Bryan Mike Williams* Mel Mason*	johnpbryan 15@aol.com wmbutterflies@gmail.com meljmason@btinternet.com	01299 824860 01684 565700
County Moth Recorders			
Herefordshire Shropshire – macro Shropshire – micro Staffordshire Worcestershire	Peter Hall* Tony Jacques Mike Shurmer Graham Wenman David Emley Tony Simpson	peter.herefordcmr@gmail.com vc40tj@gmail.com mpshurmer@gmail.com gjwenman@yahoo.co.uk recorder@staffsmoths.org.uk tonysimpson.1945@hotmail.co.uk	01381 621470 07565 802480 07484 185039
Other committee members	юну энтірэсіт	ionyaimpaon. i 740@noimuii.co.uk	
Officer committee members	George Davis* Jenny Joy* Lucy Morton* Sarah Wager* Steven Williams*	georgeedavis@gmail.com jenny.joy17@outlook.com hlucymorton@yahoo.co.uk s.wager01@btinternet.com williams0yq@btinternet.com	01952 249325 07503 220191 07974 152081

westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com

<sup>\*</sup> Committee members

#### **Book** Review

#### **Butterfly Safari**



• ISBN: 9781802583700 • Author: Andrew Fusek Peters. • Publisher: Graffeg (Bird Eye Books) • Publication date: 14 March 2023 • Cost: £30

• Format: Hardback, 208 pages, 25x25cm

Deaders of this magazine will be familiar with Andrew's photographs, many of which he has generously shared with us in recent years. You can read about the background to this, his new book, on pages 24–26 of this issue, and more about his photographic techniques in issues 102, 103 and 108.

Butterfly Safari is a coffee table book commissioned by Graffeg for its new imprint, Bird Eye Books, which it says will publish 'high quality

illustrated books about the visual arts'. Featuring a couple of hundred stunning photographs taken over four years, this title certainly fits that description. Andrew says his aim was 'to show through sheer wonder what we could lose if we are not careful'.

The compositions include butterflies in the landscape (with a beautiful Green Hairstreak against a rising moon), flight sequences and extreme close-ups. The latter struck me most forcefully, from the wing scales featured on the cover of this issue (Lepidoptera means 'scaly winged') to the facial details shown on this page (taken on a cloudy day when the subject, an Orange-tip, wouldn't fly). Especially now my close vision is less good, it's a marvel to see something so small so clearly! For me, the inclusion of tattered specimens enhanced the overall effect.

The text describes Andrew's search for all the UK's butterfly species, peppered with snippets about them, their lifecycles and the places they were found. It touches on the people who discovered species and the stories behind the names they chose. This makes for the kind of book you can pick up, learn a few things and put down feeling the world's a brighter place than you realised.

Andrew acknowledges help from many sources, including Butterfly Conservation and several of our own Branch members – in particular his safari companions, Craig Jones and David Williams. A nice final touch is a visual index, where 59 thumbnails are used to locate species within the book.

Although this book is not designed to tell knowledgeable readers about butterflies, it's likely to show even an expert some species or characteristics they haven't managed to observe. It would definitely make a lovely gift for someone to whom you wanted to communicate your enthusiasm for butterflies.

#### Review by Marian Newell

Available to pre-order at graffeg.com/collections/artsculture/products/butterfly-safari Signed copies will be available at our AGM on 20 May 2023 (see Event Calendar)



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. Designed by morgancreative.carbonmade.com 01939 220776