

Herefordshire Newsletter

No. 17

March 2024

Mike Southall—Chairman

West Midlands Branch, Butterfly Conservation

Notes from our Chairman

This week I travelled to Nottingham to join a Branch Chairs Face-to-Face meeting. This was the first I had attended and indeed the first to be held face-to-face for some seven years. Julie Williams CEO, other members of the Senior Leadership Team-SLT, BC staff, and the Council Chair Martin Spray, were present. A series of talks were given followed by questions and answers. It was good to speak to other Chairs, many who had travelled much further than myself. Twenty-two of the regional thirty-two branches were represented. BC staff member Kate Barrett, Head of Volunteering, gave a talk on the new Assemble volunteers register. Volunteers are being asked to register now- with details on the National website. I am told this can be done over the phone if people prefer but is quite easy by computer. Amongst the benefits described were better data protection and insurance claim benefits. Apparently Assemble is used by other organisations like the RSPB and the NHS to register volunteers. I believe there will be a transition period allowed to overcome concerns about the new system. Russel Hobson the Director of Evidence and Policy – SLT, then gave a talk on the digital programme including the new Customer Relationship Membership CRM, - (Members details) from a branch perspective. Russel is due to visit the West Midlands branch next week and meet with committee members. The ambitious targets for the three BC goals were discussed and it was concluded that although the targets were unlikely to be met by the 2026 timespan, they were still worth working towards. Eleven butterfly species and forty-two moth species of the original seventy-one priority species had received work in 2023. Thirty Landscapes plans have begun or been completed from the one hundred targeted. Wild spaces have a new website, and projects are underway in Perth, Bristol, and Leeds.

The West Midlands Branch committee meeting held in early March dealt with more local matters. The approved budget considered the fact that we should not be holding too large a reserve, even though our present income is in line with expenditure. The budget was able to include funds for Herefordshire work at Ewyas Harold helping with a water supply and scrub clearance, and interpretation boards for Haugh Wood. Recording was highlighted by John Tilt. The number of butterfly records, and the number of recorders, continues to rise to unprecedented levels. John was also delighted to note that records had been received from virtually all squares and part squares in the region giving the best coverage to date. He commented that he was pleased that he did not have paper records to enter anymore. I was able to report that praise had been received for the West Midlands Moths online atlas.



Project updates included the Grayling Action Group, Kentish Glory project, Malvern Fritillaries, and the Purple Emperor. The increase in recent Worcestershire Purple Emperor records was illustrated and targeted searches are planned in locations where it appears to be increasing, probably from the Warwickshire release sites. Various techniques can be used to find the early stages of this butterfly including UV torches. In Herefordshire there are historical records for Eastnor Park and the Doward where it was regularly reported- (Butterflies of the West Midlands)- Maybe it will not be long before it reappears in the county!

Mike Southall

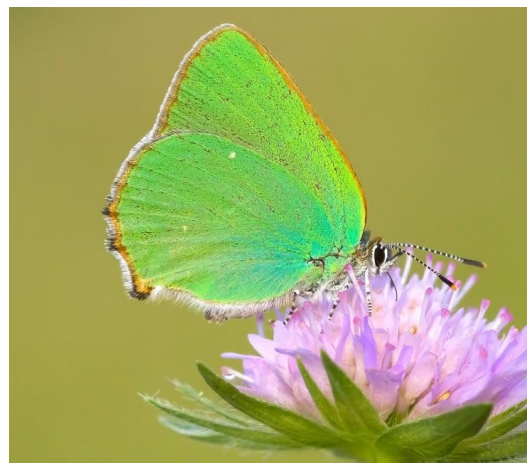
Editor's Ramblings

Not quite the start of another year but as close as I can get with publication dates we have for this newsletter, and too late to say I have just seen my first butterfly of the year - that happened back in January. When I saw a Red Admiral on a warm but windy day near Leominster. Back in the 1970's we were told that there were only Brimstones, Commas, Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks able to survive our British winters. Some people thought that Red Admirals might be able to but with more people watching and recording new winter records for them came in and now, probably as a result of this and global warming, it is now obvious that they can survive. So far I have also seen Small Tortoiseshell and Comma. If you have seen any, please either put your records onto i-record or pass them on to the county recorder. (*Address in the list of Officers.*)

Now we could do with some help through the Butterfly season looking out for certain species where there are concerns over their lack of records in recent years when they were once far more widespread. They are also some of our more interesting species and later in this issue I am hoping to have photographs and current distribution maps for the species along with some historical maps to illustrate the changes they have gone through. The species in question are Green Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and White Admiral. Along with the maps I will try to give you some hints and tips for finding them and when and where to look. Any records you get for any of these species please let us know straight away so that we can go and confirm them and search in any other similar, nearby sites. I would also draw your attention to the visit planned to Hantor Hill near Kington where we are hoping to see two of the species mentioned above, Green Hairstreak and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. (*See advert later in this newsletter.*)

As well as this Herefordshire effort Ian Duncan (Branch Treasurer) is co-ordinating a search for the Purple Emperor, the largest butterfly found in Britain, across our West Midlands area. Later in this newsletter is a short article written by Ian outlining this project. If you are interested please get in touch with Ian directly.

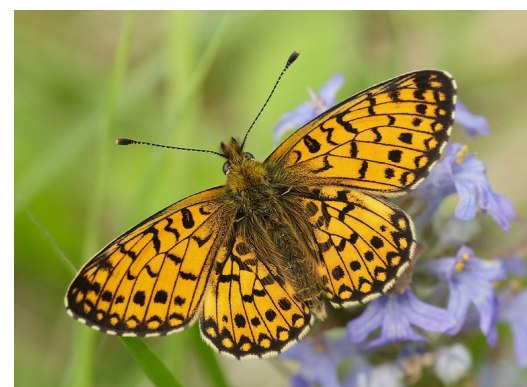
In the last issue I asked for help for our recorder with keeping up with all of the records that people are sending in. I am happy to record that we have arranged for two other people to join in and help, but there is room for more so if you



Green Hairstreak



White-letter Hairstreak



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

have some spare time and would like to help out we will welcome you into the "fold". Access to a computer and the internet is needed but training with the software will be given. If you are able to help please get in touch with Bob Hall or myself as soon as you are able.

More help needed! Kingsland Village are organizing a Family Afternoon on Saturday 29th June starting at 2.00pm. I am going to take the West Midlands display boards across and some sales materials. I would also like to take some activity sheets for children with me. If you could help man the stall I would be grateful. If you don't feel confident to answer the more difficult questions I will hopefully be able, but there are no guarantees!



White Admiral

Discussion has started with Forest Enterprise about the erection of a display board to be erected in Haugh Wood car park giving the General Public Information on the work being carried out by Forest England and Butterfly Conservation members to conserve the species still present in the wood. It is still an important site for the Wood White butterfly and still has colonies of White-letter Hair-streak within its boundaries. It also has very occasional records for White Admiral. It will be good to highlight these efforts for the benefit of both organisations.

I am always looking for "off-the-wall" bits about moths, butterflies and enthusiastic amateur lepidopterists so when the cartoon below appeared on facebook I couldn't resist saving it for this newsletter. In the past I have asked for and received pieces of art work, poetry and little personal notes of interest. If you come across anything of that nature there is always Newsletter 18 waiting for copy. Please don't be shy. Some personal sighting which triggered a response for you is always a welcome inclusion even anonymously!

At a National Committee meeting many years ago we discussed the necessity of raising our membership fees. The need for extra money to service the maintenance of reserves and the staff at head office, etc was great. The discussion went on for sometime during which someone reminded us
(Cont'd over)

Colin the caterpillar faces the sack after nude photographs appear on-line!



of President J. F Kennedy's words at his presidential inauguration "*Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country.*" If you feel you can help with any of the above or in any other way please, please get in touch.

Martyn G Davies

Your Local Officers and Work Party Organisers.

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The following two ladies are employed by Butterfly Conservation to work at least part time in the West Midlands

Regional Conservation Officer Rhona Goddard rgoddard@butterfly-conservation.org
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Midlands Landscape Officer Natalie Norton nnorton@butterfly-conservation.org
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These people are working to help the conservation of lepidoptera in Herefordshire - Thankyou

Early 2024 Records : Herefordshire

I have received these records so far for the early months of 2024 as mild conditions have led to early emergence.



Male Brimstone

Brimstone 15 records, Comma 6, Peacock 14, Red Admiral 12 and Small Tortoiseshell 5.

There has also been single records of Holly Blue on 21/03 from Mabley Wood, Speckled Wood on 24/03 from Hereford and even a sighting of an overwintering Humming-bird Hawk-moth in late February feeding on Daphne at Mansel Lacy.

All of these insects hibernate as adults, so are amongst the first butterflies to be seen in spring. Small Tortoiseshell are sometimes found indoors or in log sheds. Red Admiral used to be thought of as summer migrants, but, with milder winters, there is evidence that they can now survive our winters. Commas, with their jagged wing edges, resemble leaves, and probably gain some protection by this camouflage. The Holly Blue record is remarkably early, and the Humming bird Hawkmoth record is also significant.

Bob Hall

Ewyas Harold Meadows

These are a series of flower rich meadows gifted to BC by Ian Hart. The meadows are adjacent to Ewyas Harold Common a bracken and scrub covered heath. This is a stronghold for one of our declining species – Pearl-bordered Fritillary. There is also a small colony of Grizzled Skipper and Dark Green Fritillary.

The Reserve and Meadows are managed by the Midlands's Landscape Officer and a group of volunteers.



Ewyas Harold Meadows

Ewyas Harold Meadows

- Scrub and rose growth are a continuing management issue at Ewyas Harold Meadows. A contractor was employed to cut scrub and rose using a pedestrian flail mower in April 2023, following recommendations outlined in the Ewyas Harold Meadows management guide, produced by Sue Holland, following the Local Wildlife Site Assessment.
- It was discussed with the contractor for him to return in late summer 2023, to undertake further flailing of bramble, rose etc, and chemically treat invading scrub prior to the commencement of grazing in Autumn 2023.
- Unfortunately, the contractor was unable to carry out the planned works in late summer due to his machinery being stolen and weather conditions at the time making access difficult.
- We did not seek to employ an alternative contractor, as we wanted to ensure that we work with a recommended contractor and that we can trust to undertake works without supervision, if necessary.
- As a short-term interim measure, volunteers from Grafton Wood, Malvern Hills and Ewyas Harold Meadows supported an extra volunteer work party at Ewyas Harold Meadows on Friday 16th Feb, to clear key areas of scrub. It was a successful day, and all volunteer support was greatly appreciated.
- I have organised a meeting with a contractor at the beginning of March to plan and organise rose clearance and targeted chemical treatment of scrub which will take place mid/end of summer before the reserve gets too wet and in advance of the commencement of grazing.
- I have been working with two local graziers to ensure, where possible, that the site can be grazed. This includes ensuring the reserve is stock proof, through the installation of a new fence and, speaking with graziers about arranging additional water troughs.

Natalie Norton—Midlands Landscape Officer

Ewyas Harold Common is a beautiful spot and well worth a visit both for the butterflies and moths (Mother Shipton moth is worth seeing! (See below) and also the views over South West Herefordshire. If you go make sure you record the butterflies you see there on i-record or pass you records to the recorders.



Haugh Woods Winter 23/24

Wood White numbers in Haugh Woods have been worryingly low during 2022 and 2023. The dry summer of 2022 resulted in limited food plants for the caterpillars being seen, with the best areas being those on the north in the less open areas. Top this with the conifers that now are maturing along some of the ride sides and the future for Wood Whites and other species could be bleak. Drab Looper moths had a great early summer in Haugh in 2022, but during the later part of the summer of 2022 the Wood Spurge plants were also affected by the drought and this seems to have a knock on effect with less Drab Looper being seen during 2023.

Urgent action was needed so over this winter Forestry England secured extra funding from DEFRA to undertake large scale coppicing along rides and in 3 coupes, and have clear-felled conifers from alongside one of the rides in Haugh South and 3 rides in Haugh Woods north. The conifer brash has been raked up and this has now left the rides wide and open to the sun once again and we hope that the butterfly foodplants will be able to flourish. Unfortunately the wet winter has resulted in a problem extracting some of the timber, with lorries getting stuck, so some is still in situ on ride sides as I write.

The ongoing problem of large numbers of deer in the Woolhope Dome has resulted in any unprotected coppice or self sown trees being eaten off and killed. The extra funds has meant FE could install another deer exclusion fence in Haugh South. We can now safely coppice within this fence, creating more temporary open space so needed by so many of our invertebrates.

Dedicated volunteers have supplemented this work through monthly work parties through the winter. These work parties are advertised in the Comma and new volunteers are always welcomed. Forestry England are very grateful to the volunteers and contractors who have worked so hard in Haugh Woods this winter and I am hopeful that the work done will enable the Wood Whites and Drab Looper populations to recover.

Kate Wollen



Wood White showing the characteristic grey marbling on the underside of the wings.



The Drab Looper above and its larval foodplant Wood Spurge



Wood Spurge—*Euphorbia amygdaloides*

Transect Trends in Haugh Wood North 2014-2023

Skippers.

There is concern about the decline in numbers of Small Skipper with a total count of 7 in 2019 being the highest for 10 years. No records since 2020.

Large Skipper numbers are healthier, and Essex Skippers almost certainly present, but are difficult to detect by transect walkers.

Whites.

Orange Tip numbers peaked in 2017 with 20 records, but they have declined since then.

Wood White numbers were steady : 139 records in 2019 compared favourably with the long term average of 119 for the years 2006 – 2015. There has been a sharp decline since then.

Green Veined White and Small White also in slight decline.

Blues

Common Blue numbers peaked with 325 records in 2018, but have declined since then.

Small numbers of records for Holly Blue, Brown Argus and White-letter and Purple hairstreaks.

Nymphalidae

Peacock numbers seem to be steady. 2019 was a great year for Painted Ladies. Plenty of records for Red Admirals, which seem to be on the increase. Small Tortoiseshell numbers remain very low with no records since 2021. Pearl bordered Fritillary : no records since 2015. Silver Washed Fritillary : a steady population. Comma : present in small numbers.

Browns.

Numbers of Gatekeeper/ Meadow Brown and Ringlet remain healthy.

Summary.

There is concern for the following species : Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Small Skipper and Wood White.

This article is based on the Haugh Wood North transect records collated by Kate Wollen for the years 2014 – 2023.

My thanks to my fellow transect walkers and to Kate Wollen and Robin Hemming for coordinating the transect walks and the winter work parties.

Bob Hall

Haugh Wood North Butterfly Transect survey

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Species										
Small Skipper			2	0	2	7	5	0	0	0
Large Skipper	29	14	12	17	30	14	6	9	19	5
Small/ Essex Skipper	26	8	3	0	7	1	n/a	n/a	1	2
Wood White	212	71	80	108	121	139	56	73	21	26
Clouded Yellow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brimstone	2	11	7	3	0	5	1	4	6	5
Large White	6	11	14	9	34	4	4	15	14	2
Small White	1	10	4	7	19	15	7	10	3	6
Green Veined White	205	54	149	70	305	65	74	68	37	45
Orange Tip	17	3	13	20	10	8	1	1	7	5
Purple Hairstreak	0	0	0	0	5	1	2	5	2	1
White letter Hairstreak	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brown Argus	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Common Blue	86	93	33	59	325	91	14	2	9	6
Holly Blue	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	5

Haugh Wood North Butterfly Transect survey

Species	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Painted Lady	0	3	6	1	0	12	0	0	2	0
Small Tortoiseshell	7	9	6	0	1	1	1	2	0	0
Peacock	72	47	17	7	11	28	23	53	29	30
Comma	7	9	7	14	7	7	4	2	11	8
Pearl Bordered Fritillary	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Silver Washed Fritillary	12	27	14	10	29	26	8	8	10	13
Speckled Wood	93	61	86	57	84	56	29	61	31	53
Gatekeeper	153	132	88	107	121	174	111	143	72	114
Meadow Brown	121	52	95	99	72	159	43	77	31	44
Marbled White	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Ringlet	866	597	299	187	564	784	257	369	421	396
Small Copper									0	2
Total	1956			803	1767	1797	659	910	741	809

Covid -19
weeks missing

Transect Trends in Haugh Wood South 2015-2023

Skippers.

There is concern about the decline in numbers of Small Skipper with a maximum count of 24 in 2018. Large Skipper numbers are healthier, with a high count of 51 in 2018.

Whites.

Large White, Small White and Green Veined White numbers all seem fairly healthy

Orange Tips : A decline in numbers since a maximum of 49 in 2018.

Wood White numbers were good : 295 records in 2018 compared favourably with the long term average of 180 for the years 2015 – 2019, but are now in decline.

Brimstone : Numbers steady . Max 19 in 2018.

Blues

Common Blue : Max 79 in 2018, but in decline since.

Holly Blue. A record count of 31 in 2023, but populations are cyclical. Small Copper : only 1 record in last 5 years.

Purple Hairstreak numbers have increased, but this might be better recording. White-letter Hairstreak numbers remain low.

Nymphalidae

Peacock numbers have been steady with a high count of 197 in 2021.

Red Admiral had a wonderful 2023 with 175 counted.

Small Tortoiseshell numbers remain very low with a 5 year average of only 6 records.

Comma : Numbers steady. 5 Year average 22 records .

Pearl bordered Fritillary : Last record was in 2021. Silver Washed Fritillary : a steady population with a 5 year average of 39.

White Admiral : no records since 2021, but almost certainly present.

Browns.

Numbers of Gatekeeper/ Meadow Brown Ringlet and Speckled Wood remain healthy. Marbled White have increased.

Summary.

Concern for these species : Small Copper, Small Tortoiseshell , Small Skipper, White Admiral , White letter Hairstreak and Wood White.

Holly Blue, Red Admiral and Silver Washed Fritillary are on the increase.

This article is based on the Haugh Wood South transect records collated by Kate Wollen for the years 2015 – 2023

My thanks to my fellow transect walkers and to Kate Wollen and Robin Hemming for coordinating the transect walks and the winter work parties.

Bob Hall

Haugh Wood South Transect Summary 2015-2023

Species	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Small Skipper	2	5	1	24	6	7	9	see below	see below
Large Skipper	21	?	33	51	23	25	31	16	17
Small/ Essex Skipper	36	5	1	24	0	n/a	2	5	0
Wood White	214	90	104	295	198	152	125	80	64
Clouded Yellow	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brimstone	18	9	10	19	4	5	8	19	14
Large White	55	41	29	51	45	59	184	45	79
Small White	44	43	18	49	34	83	66	58	69
Green Veined White	86	106	76	384	65	105	43	118	104
Orange Tip	24	21	40	49	37	7	7	25	6
Purple Hairstreak		0	1	4	0	9	11	0	25
White letter Hairstreak		0	3	12	0	8	6	0	3
Small Copper	0	1	0	0	0	4	2	0	3
Common Blue	79	25	6	48	37	9	5	3	16
Holly Blue	7	1	7	10	7	7	5	7	31
White Admiral	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Red Admiral	18	24	43	10	63	37	84	71	175
Painted Lady	6	5	0	5	62	1	5	21	2
Small Tortoiseshell	14	5	4	4	3	12	15	0	3
Peacock	57	14	6	39	35	163	197	154	85
Comma	39	8	23	22	17	15	28	21	32
Pearl Bordered Fritillary	15	12	2	6	1	n/a	2	0	0
Silver Washed Fritillary	20	16	18	53	32	29	38	51	43
Speckled Wood	107	134	56	72	96	29	59	103	96
Gatekeeper	253	65	78	250	224	258	172	390	374
Meadow Brown	178	28	125	89	140	166	186	106	162
Marbled White	3	4	7	6	9	6	5	3	23
Ringlet	574	264	597	1011	718	346	477	174	519
Brown Argus				3		1	0	0	2
Total		937			1868	1565	1773	1519	1967

Covid-19
weeks missing

2024 Target Species

So we are asking you to look out for certain, uncommon or very rare locally species in particular, but what does that entail? Does a walk around Haugh Wood constitute looking for these rare species? Unfortunately, whilst a great place to walk, it doesn't really fit the bill! Large parts of Hereford are poorly recorded in some cases they are almost unrecorded. Despite some hardy souls getting off the beaten track and looking in these out of the way places some areas haven't seen a recorder in years. So what do we need to know about our chosen species before we start. The following is a guide to help.

When will they be on the wing? It is no good looking for some species when the adults are yet to emerge or they have laid their eggs and died. The flight season is shown below and although this can alter slightly from year to year, depending on the length of the winter and the warmth etc., of the spring, the diagrams below give you an indication of when to look for adults and the best times are the middle periods of the red zones on each of the diagrams. My experience has also told me that

Green Hairstreak	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Egg												
Larva												
Pupa												
Adult												

White-letter Hairstreak	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Egg												
Larva												
Pupa												
Adult												

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Egg												
Larva												
Pupa												
Adult												

White Admiral	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Egg												
Larva												
Pupa												
Adult												

following a period of rain the first dry sunny day is not the best day to look. Leave it 24 hours and then look if that is possible with work, etc.,

Where will you look? This depends very much on which species you are looking for, so prior knowledge of their habitat requirements is essential. There are a lot of very good books available and I have made much use of our own book Butterflies of the West Midlands for the diagrams and our Website for some of the maps (<https://westmidlandsbutterflyconservation.wordpress.com>). When using other butterfly guides some of the habitat information might be different slightly from the species requirements in the West Midlands as they can vary across the country.

Foodplants for the Larva So you have found what appears to be a suitable site, you search it diligently and have no luck. Before you did your searching had you checked to see if the plants that the larvae feed on are growing there and are there nectar sources for the adult butterflies. You can search lots of woodland rides hoping to find White Admirals but if there are no honeysuckle plants for the larvae to eat and no nectar sources for the adults you are not likely to find them.

Distribution Maps Look at the maps and see where they have been found already. You will possibly have more success looking in similar habitats nearby. We know that some species are widely distributed within the county, White-letter Hairstreaks could be found anywhere in the county where elm trees still grow. The problem is that people quite understandably want to see these less than common butterflies so they tend to go where they know they can see them instead of searching new areas. We as an organization tend to organise field visits to places where members can see these rarer species, hence, we go to Haugh Wood to see the White-letter Hairstreaks!

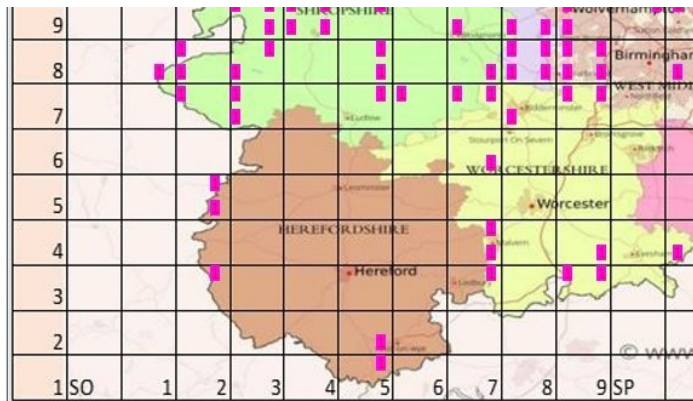
My wife and I have family in Switzerland and in recent times pre-covid we would drive there to visit them; having the car there meant that I could get out and about looking for suitable butterfly sites. park up and then investigate the sites. This enabled me to find a number of sites, one in particular which was within walking distance of my son's house and which yielded a number of species that I had not seen before. The trick here is to remember where these sites were for future reference when the target species is flying. Flowering Elm trees are obvious in spring but by the time the adults fly they look much like any other green trees.

So let's have a look at each of the four species in turn:

Green Hairstreak

Habitat: Found in a wide range of habitats reflecting the variety of foodplants it utilises. Heaths, moors, bogs, quarries, brownfield sites, scrubby grassland and woodland clearings are all possible sites for this species.

Caterpillar Foodplant: The main foodplants are Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Common Rock-rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*), Dyer's Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*). Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) are also used. This species has one of the largest list of caterpillar foodplants of any of the British Butterflies.



Distribution This butterfly is probably under-recorded in Herefordshire. I do not believe that these are the only sites where it is found. It is hard to find and your best chance is when it is down and feeding in the morning once the temperature has warmed up enough or mid afternoon when it needs to feed again having spent the middle part of the day looking for a mate or an egg-laying site.

noticeable green scales. The Green Hairstreak is a butterfly well worth seeking out, once seen it will not easily be forgotten. I once managed to get an adult to sit on my finger whilst on a field trip with some 13 year old students, they were mesmerized by it, most of them didn't believe you could have a green butterfly.

White-letter Hairstreak

Habitat: Elm trees *Ulmus* spp. in all suitable habitats, such as woodland edges, hedges and even solitary large elms in gardens, parks or playing fields. Elms, with an open, sunny, southern aspect are preferred.

Caterpillar Foodplant Whilst Wych Elm is the preferred foodplant it will happily use the other species of elm found in Britain. It will also lay on some of the introduced Dutch Elm Disease resistant varieties of elm such as Sapporo Autumn Gold.

Adult Nectar Sources include Hemp Agrimony, Creeping Thistle, Ragwort, Marjoram and Bramble, so there is plenty for it to choose from.



A male feeding on Hemp Agrimony

Prior to 1976 it was probably one of the most commonly under-recorded species in Herefordshire. However in that year Dutch Elm Disease swept through the county killing off approx. 90% of the mature elm trees which are its only caterpillar foodplant. Since

then there has been some searching for it, but now would be a good time to have another look. It spends much of the day flying amongst the upper branches of Elm trees, however, it does come down to feed so after 3.00pm is a good time to look in the afternoon. It is also a butterfly that can be detected at other times. One of the best methods is to look for leaves either growing on the tree or in autumn under the tree that have the characteristic holes chewed in them by the caterpillar. It appears that the caterpillar has chewed out a number of adjacent leaf panels.

It overwinters as an egg, which has the characteristic "Flying Saucer" shape. These are laid on the first "girdle scar" back along the twigs of Wych Elm

Cont'd below)



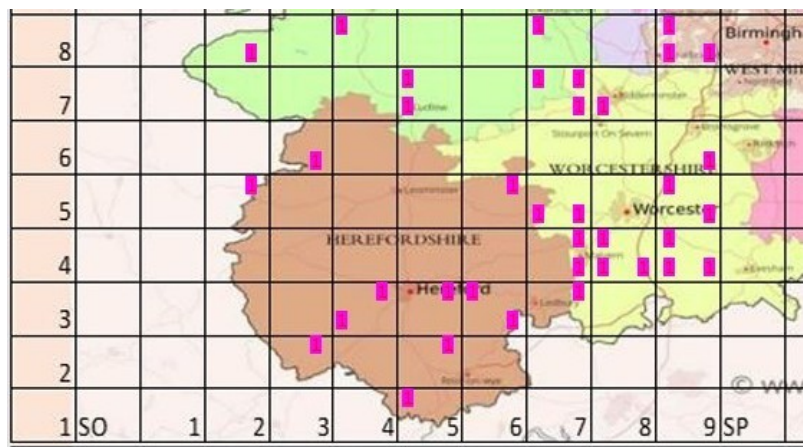
Egg shaped like a flying saucer.



The first girdle scar on a Wych Elm twig, eggs are often laid here remaining until spring.



The caterpillar below is responsible for the panels chewed out of the leaves above.



from the terminal bud. On Common Elm often found in hedgerows the eggs are on the internodes—the lengths of stem between buds'

The butterfly is found across the county and there are large areas with elm trees sufficiently mature to carry populations of the butterfly. So the distribution map probably shows where people have looked for the butterfly and not where it actually exists. Potential sites are most easily identified when the Elms are producing their flowers and seeds in April/ May and then the area searched later in the year for the adults.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Habitat: Found in a variety of habitats: coppice and ride-edges in ancient woodlands; bracken and grass mosaics; and wet meadows and moorlands. Flight Period: Late May to mid-July. Occasionally a second generation in early August, regularly in southern England, but none since 1995 in the West Midlands.

Caterpillar Foodplant The main foodplants are Common Dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*) and Marsh Violet (*Viola palustris*).

The adults fly close to the ground, stopping frequently to take nectar from flowers such as Bramble and thistles. They will also rest overnight in a communal roost, each resting on its own individual rush leaf but with other members of the species resting close by. This was a common site in Eastnor Park close to the obelisk in the 1980's and 1990's. Unfortunately not recorded there in recent years.

Because this is a rare species now it is important that we know where it still exists. Identification is thus very important and unfortunately there is another very similar species which is equally rare in this part of the country - the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. To make matters more complicated they sometimes fly together. So how can you tell them apart?

The Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary can be identified from the more numerous whitish pearls on the underside hind wings.

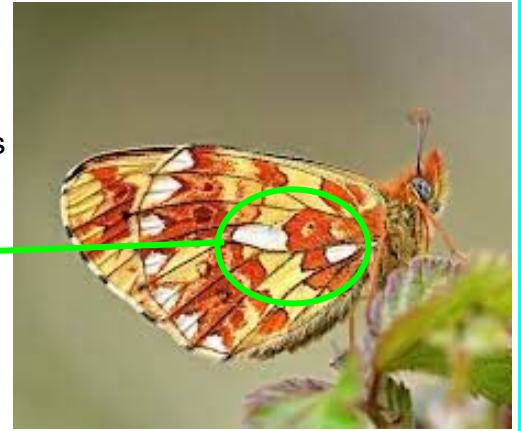


Small Pearl-bordered

Many white "pearls" in this area.

Pearl-bordered

Only two-white Pearls

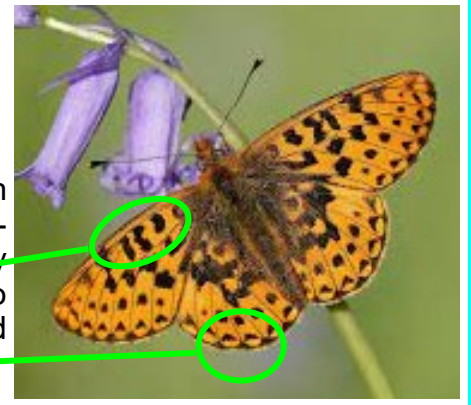
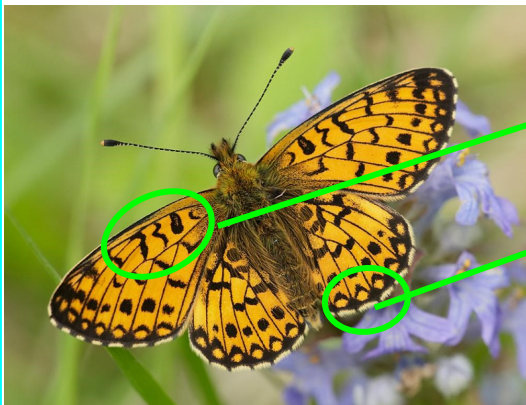


Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Small Pearl-bordered

Look for the numbers "730" on the leading edge of the left fore-wing, although not always totally obvious. Also darker edge to hind wing the more pronounced "chevrons".

Pearl-bordered



Markings indistinct and paler and less pronounced chevrons on border.

When out looking for these two species it is worth trying to get a photograph of any seen, Mobile phones will usually provide a photograph from which an experienced recorder can confirm the actual species if you are uncertain.

White Admiral

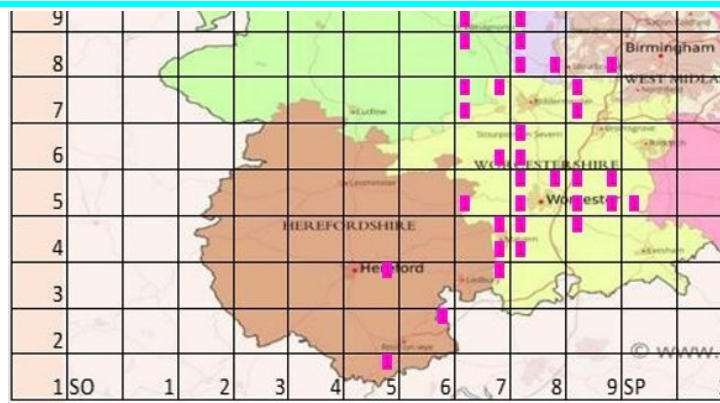
In the 1980's this butterfly was widespread throughout Haugh Wood but since then it has declined and is rarely seen now. This does not mean it is not there or in other woods on the Hereford / Gloucester and Hereford / Worcester Borders. Unless the adults are down and feeding on flowers such as Hemp Agrimony and Thistles you are unlikely to see them as they fly around trees. Its flight is very distinctive almost lazily gliding through the air and changing direction with hardly any movement of its wings. Once seen, never forgotten! It is the largest of the four butterflies in question and although the upperside is distinctively marked in Black and White, the underside is in my opinion far more attractively and distinctively marked.

Habitat: Wide woodland rides with dappled sunlight. The lovely wide sunny rides loved by most species are less favoured by White Admirals which prefer slightly darker rides, but not overgrown. They come down to feed on ride side plants and also to seek water and minerals from forest roads and tracks.



Flight Period: Typically single-brooded on the wing mid-June to mid-August.
The caterpillar foodplant is honeysuckle.

Distribution Large woodlands with a range of rides suitably mature but not overgrown with ride edge nectar sources such as Hemp Agrimony, various thistles. It is known to fly in the South east area of the county but it should be found in other woods. Conifer plantations are not suitable habitats usually.



Summary

We need your help with these species to find out where in the county they exist. If you are able to visit a local site which you think may be suitable, and are able to do so on a number of occasions over the flight period, please do so and let us know. We would like to know even if you are unsuccessful with your chosen target species. If you would like someone to look with you we may be able to help. Negative results are useful as it enables us to cross them off our list of potential sites and visit others as time allows. Please have a go you could find a new colony of one or more of the target species, it is quite possible in this beautiful but under-recorded county.

Martyn G Davies

Since putting the above article together I have received the following notes from Dr Ian Duncan who spent time with Matthew Oates an expert on the Purple Emperor. As a result of this meeting Ian wrote the following and I include them to add a fifth species to our target group for this summer. The Purple Emperor appears to be spreading and the South East area of the county could well be a possible area to search whilst also looking for White Admiral and White-letter Hairstreak

Where to find the Purple Emperor

Recent articles in the Comma "Has the West Midlands joined the Purple Empire" by Mike Williams in edition 110 and "In search of the Purple Emperor" by Sam Macvie in edition 117 have documented the spread of the Purple Emperor into our area and how to look for them. The purpose of this article is to highlight sites where they have been recorded recently and found historically.

Where better to start looking for Purple Emperors than at sites where they have been seen previously. This will provide a focus rather than looking randomly for this elusive and notoriously difficult to find butterfly, spread thinly over a wide area.

The red diamonds on the map show where verified records of Purple Emperor, on the BC database, have been recorded since 2020. Not surprisingly, most of the records come from the most visited sites at Grafton Wood and Tiddesley Wood. So far, larvae have been found only at Tiddesley in 2022. Additional sightings are shown as blue dots on the map. The records are surprisingly numerous over a wide area.

It is also interesting to look at the historical sightings which show records recurring at some sites over a long time period. Examples are around Malvern in Worcestershire and at Eastnor and the Doward in Herefordshire. We really need to look closely again at these areas. Personally, I am aware of some very suitable habitat at the Gullet and the adjoining Castlemorton Common.

It would also be good to check all areas with plentiful Sallow (*Salix caprea*) regardless of previous Purple Emperor sightings. Interestingly, with the loss of Ash trees, Sallow is becoming the dominant tree on wet, heavy soils providing opportunities for the spread of this species.

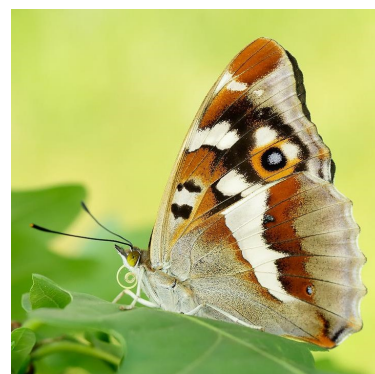
Let's start looking in earnest for this butterfly in our area.

A group of us have established a Purple Emperor Action Group to coordinate recording and to encourage and train volunteers.

If you are interested in becoming involved please contact
Ian Duncan at erebia13@gmail.com

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Egg												
Caterpillar												
Chrysalis												
Adult												

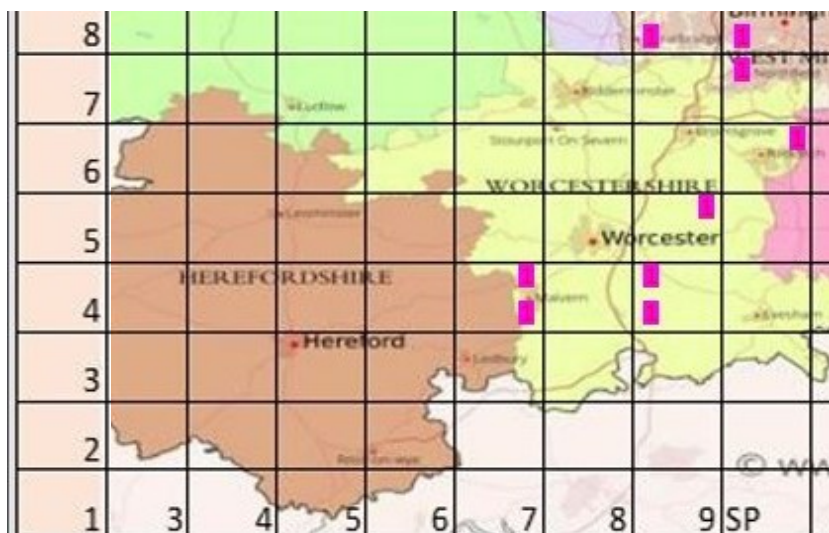
2022	23/07/2022	SO97075654	Grafton Wood
2022	19/07/2022	SO97305632	Grafton Wood
2022	16/07/2022	SO94418009	Walton Hill. Clent
2022	16/07/2022	SP183758	Stripes Hill
2022	08/07/2022	SO971565	Grafton Wood - S7
2022	08/07/2022	SO972563	Grafton Wood - S6
2022	08/07/2022	SO929459	Tiddesley Wood
2022	08/07/2022	SO928458	Tiddesley Wood
2022	30/06/2022	SO971565	Grafton Wood - S7
2022	27/06/2022	SO972561	Grafton Wood
2023	07/07/2023	SO97105590	Grafton Wood
2023	09/07/2023	SJ996567	Leek
2023	07/07/2023	SO929454	Tiddesley Wood,
2023	09/07/2023	SK04611444	SK04611442
2023	10/07/2023	SK04611445	SK04611445
2023	07/07/2023	SO928458	Tiddesley Wood
2023	07/07/2023	SP20547610	Temple Balsall
2023	02/07/2023	SP04438172	Bournville
2023	28/06/2023	SP05966716	Arrow Valley Lake
2023	24/06/2023	SO92944584	Tiddesley Wood



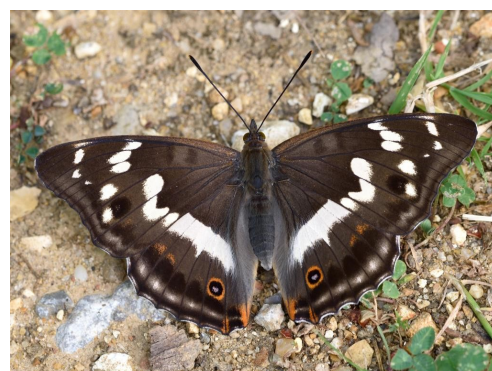
Purple Emperor Underside



Purple Emperor Male (above)



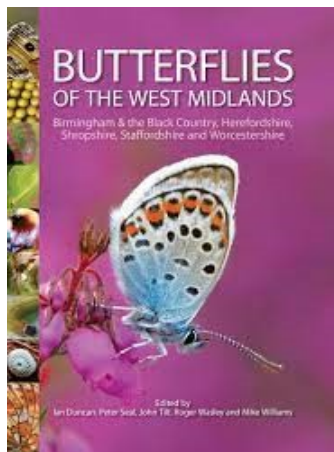
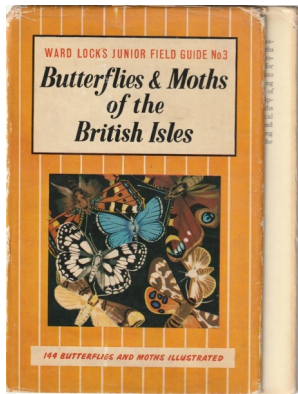
Recent distribution



Purple Emperor Female (above)

Help with Identification

I was about 10-12 when I first started to get interested in Butterflies, even built a small cage (hutch like) to keep them in!!! One of the first books I ever bought after Thomas the Tank Engine was "Butterflies and Moths of the British Isles ." Not the best of books by modern standards but I still have it. If you do not have an identification book of your own there are lots available either new or online on sites such as Ebay which cover either the whole of the UK or even the whole of Europe. There are specialist sites dealing with antique and other more recent books as well. However, if you want one that deals with the West Midlands Butterflies then the book produced by our own branch is brilliant. (See the advert later in this newsletter.)



"Butterfly Book for the Pocket" Edmund Sandra's. One of my favourite books, the colour plates are superb. Some editions have the butterflies silver marks printed with a silver ink. Worth finding one of those versions if you are looking for a copy to buy. My edition is the 1955 third version and has the silver inks, but not all editions do have those inks. The illustrations of the Silver-washed Fritillary are taken from that book.

In the modern world where many, if not most, people have mobile phones there is an App linked direct to iRecord, which will not only help you to identify the butterfly you are looking at but can record it for you directly onto i-record. Many people use it successfully whilst they are out in the field but to add records yourself later at home you will need to go into i-record. Add a photo to any record you submit if you can as that helps the verifier confirm what you have seen, especially if you are not certain. We can all make mistakes even after 50+ years of studying butterflies. It was only whilst photographing a number of White-letter Hairstreaks and then looking at the photographs when I got home that I realized that one of them was a Purple Hair-streak!

The app is called **iRecord Butterflies** and it can be downloaded to your device through your usual app store.

The other method is to use the web-sites below

Butterfly Conservation

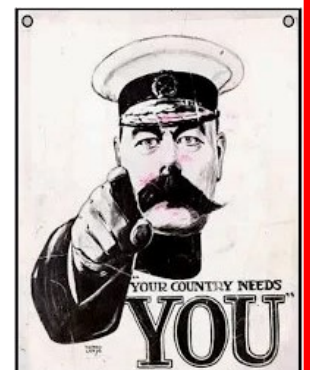
West Midlands Branch's own website. Both obviously have lots of information on the different species you may see in our area.

"Right now, we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale. The twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss are pushing much of the natural world to the brink – including many of our most treasured species. In the UK, the majority of our butterfly and moth species are in worrying decline.

These beautiful and fascinating creatures are not just important in their own right, but are also indicators of a healthy environment for all wildlife. Over the next five years, Butterfly Conservation is committed to delivering the biggest possible impact for nature, playing a leading role within the conservation sector, with our new, ambitious strategy."

Chris Packham

Your records will help us with that target!



Hawk-moths

Amongst the most spectacular and strikingly coloured moths found in Britain are the Hawk-moths, the UK Moths website has entries for 26 species some of which are extremely rare migrants others are common throughout Herefordshire. This short article is intended to introduce the family to people living in our county who have not yet started their interest in moths but like butterflies. I have been running my moth trap seriously for the last 8 years during that time I have visits from 7 species out of the 11 that will feature here. I have included a short table giving some basic information but you will find much more in our superb book "Moths of the West Midlands" or on the excellent "West Midlands Moths" website. *It is important to realize that some species have come into Britain in the past but not made it into Herefordshire and that at least one species hasn't been recorded for over 100 years.*

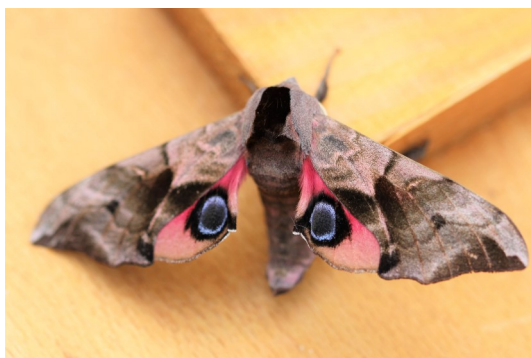
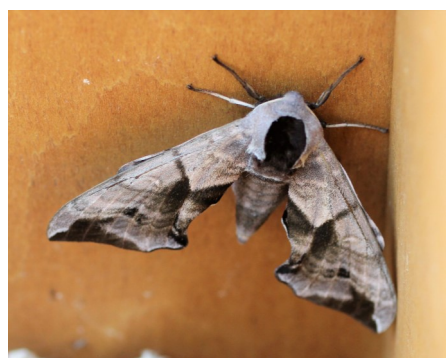
The number in the table is the "new" decimal-style checklist number, corresponding to "A checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles" by Agassiz, D.J.L., Beavan, S.D. & Heckford R.J. 2013, usually referred to as the "2013 checklist".

Lime Hawkmoth	May - Jul	Fairly Common Resident	69.001
Eyed Hawkmoth	May - Jul	Common Resident	69.002
Poplar Hawkmoth	May - Sep	Fairly Common Resident	69.003
Convolvulus Hawk-moth	Jun - Dec	Rare Immigrant	69.004
Privet Hawk-moth	Jun - Jul	Uncommon Resident	69.006
Pine Hawk-moth	May - Aug	Rare Resident	69.007
Bedstraw Hawk-moth	May - Aug	Very rare immigrant	69.014
Humming-bird Hawk-moth	Apr - Dec (Aug - Sep peak time)	Varies from year to year but could turn up anywhere	69.010
Striped Hawk-moth	Apr - Oct	Very rare immigrant	69.015
Elephant Hawk-Moth	May - Aug	Widespread	69.016
Small Elephant Hawk-moth	May - Jul	Widespread	69.017



Lime Hawk-moth

The two main colour forms green and brown, both photographed in Hereford



Eyed Hawk-moth

On the left is the moth in its normal resting position relying on camouflage for protection. On the right is a moth showing the eyespots which it uses to ward off predators, and which it exposes when threatened.



Poplar Hawk-moth

Convolvulus Hawk-moth

The Poplar Hawk-moth is a regular visitor to my trap each year, however, I have never recorded the Convolvulus Hawk-moth and there has only been a total of 9 records in 2021 and 2022 combined.



Privet Hawk-moth

The specimen on the left was bred and released by Ray Birchenough, the one on the right was undoubtedly the longest moth I have ever trapped in this country.



Pine Hawk-moth

Bedstraw Hawk-moth

10 records for the Pine Hawk-moth in Herefordshire in 2021-2022. However only 5 records for the Bedstraw Hawk-moth this century



Humming-bird Hawk-moth

Humming-bird Hawk-moths appear in the garden most years flitting and feeding whilst hovering in front of their chosen flowers



Striped Hawk-moth

There have only been 7 records in this century for this moth.



**Elephant
Hawk-moth**

**Small Elephant
Hawk-moth**

These two species are certainly amongst the most colourful of our county Hawk-moths and in the case of the larger Elephant Hawk-moths, quite common. Over the last 5 years I have had



over 440 individual Elephant Hawk-moths in my garden trap and I shall be trapping again this year (if It ever stops raining!!)

Hawk-moths are amongst the larger of our native moths and immigrant species and although they often rely on camouflage for protection from predators some do show colourful patterns which you certainly can't miss.

Martyn Davies

Special Offer!



£15



£20

I have a few copies of both books available to callers to collect - save the postage next time you are in Hereford. All money direct to Conservation work

martyn.davies808@gmail.com

Collection Only
01432 266703

Less Common Moths recorded in Herefordshire in 2023 and 2024

Tawny Pinion (right) - 4 records showing for 2022 but at least 1 for 2024 inside the city boundary! (In the trap in my garden 21/3/24.)

L-album Wainscot (below) as with the Tawny Pinion it is not a rare moth but is not frequently trapped in Herefordshire' This one was in my garden trap on the 8th October 2023. The white hockey stick or lower case "l" is the key identification mark. There were 8 records in 2022.



L-album Wainscot



Tawny Pinion

**Not yet discovered the world of Moths? Visit the web site
West Midlands Moths and be prepared to be amazed!**

Hergest Ridge and Hanter Hill

Sunday 2nd June 2024

10.00 a.m.

Hergest Croft Gardens Car Park

Ridgebourne Road, Kington HR5 3EG

OS GR : 28534 56744

The car park is 450m up Ridgebourne Road on R.H.S. Follow signs to Hergest Croft off A 44.



Green Hairstreak
and
Small Pearl-
bordered Fritillary



This will be a gentle walk along Hergest Ridge of approx 3-4 hours, and will include a detour to Hanter Hill. Some uphill.

Bring a packed lunch or just a snack.

Tea at Hergest Croft afterwards is available.

Leaders : Bob Hall and Martyn Davies.

To book a place contact Bob

Bob Hall : randphall@gmail.com or phone 01432-850623