

No.92 Autumn 2015

the **Comma**

Regional Magazine of West Midlands
Butterfly Conservation



Butterfly Book:
Amazing Response

Wyre Forest:
Major Initiative

Bringing *butterflies and moths* back to Britain • www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk



Cover story

This photograph of a **Striped Hawk-moth** was taken by **Robin Hemming** in Herefordshire. You can find out why it caused him a big surprise on page 5. You never know what you may find in your moth trap.

Contributions

Please send articles and images to the editor at: phwarden@fiscali.co.uk. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the West Midlands Branch or Butterfly Conservation.

Copy deadline

The deadline for contributions to the Winter edition of *The Comma* is **10th January 2016**.

The Branch in focus



Peter Seal

A warm welcome to our new editor **Stephen Lewis**. Stephen is well known as Prees Heath Warden, a role which he will continue to undertake on a voluntary basis – a significant dual commitment. The Committee also extends a welcome to **Lucy Lewis**, who has been co-opted to take on the role of Treasurer. I would like to take the opportunity to thank their predecessors for key contributions in making the Branch what it is today. **Roger Wasley** is bowing out after six years due to competing interests in other related fields. Many of you will know that **Ron Hatton** has been involved from the early days - indeed he once told me he had been Chairman for 16 years – and he plans to continue his involvement with the Bill Smyllie Reserve near Cheltenham.



Wall Brown (Lucy Lewis)

Highlights of the Summer

My summer activities have centred round visits to sites to be featured in the planned book and reintroduction plans. Highlights of the summer were finding **Large Heath** (in spite of the drizzle) and **Wall Brown** in exactly the spots described in the coming walks section of the book. It was also rewarding to find **Grizzled Skippers** at Honeybourne in Worcestershire after efforts to renew our involvement at this disused railway site.

Amazing response

We are on course to publish "*Butterflies of the West Midlands*" - the pre-publication flier for advanced orders will be included with the spring edition of *The Comma*. This will be a landmark publication for the Branch, and we hope it will get many more people recording butterflies. The response with walks, species accounts and photographs has

been amazing and this will ensure a strong local flavour. We have also been blessed with generous sponsorships, from both individuals and organisations. These pledges of money have enabled us to put forward the necessary advance and commit to an agreement with our publisher without delay. We shall also be able to cope with unforeseen expenses. All sale proceeds will go into Branch Funds, and no one is being paid for work contributed. The editorial board at the outset stated to potential sponsors that "All the monies raised by the sale of the book will be spent on butterfly conservation work in the West Midlands." If at the end not all the sponsorship money is spent on production, the Branch will identify schemes to benefit butterflies and moths including reintroductions.



Wood White (Stephen Lewis)

We are on course to publish "*Butterflies of the West Midlands*" next spring

Consistent approach

We have found that we have much more material than will fit in the space agreed with our publisher. This and the need to adopt a consistent approach to style and spelling will result in a considerable amount of editing, so you may find your efforts have been revised or shortened - indeed several of the things I have written have already suffered the same fate in order to achieve balance and allow room for photos.

Wood White project

Perhaps the other major initiative

(leaving aside the ongoing management of our reserves and all the recording activity) is the **Wood White** programme. This is led by **Jenny Joy** and **Rhona Goddard**, and aims to improve the habitat in existing Wood White sites and connectivity between them, engage with local communities in recording and practical conservation work, and carry out reintroductions to former sites assessed as having suitable habitat. The Branch is supporting a Heritage Lottery Funding bid to secure a Project Officer next year. Based on four landscapes in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire a number of people have been carrying out habitat assessments in woodland where owners, including the Forestry Commission and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, have expressed interest. These assessments focus

on the presence of foodplants and light and shade. From what I have seen of the habitat in eight of these sites, conditions are already good enough in some cases for reintroduction work to commence in 2016 subject to the necessary approval.

Butterflies at risk

We have lost in our region a number of species and others are at others at risk, for instance the **Grayling** population on the Malvern Hills. So the issue is – do we intervene in every situation, or do we conclude that some sites may not be saved? Malvern Hills Conservators are working with Rhona on another funding bid to continue their scrub clearance programme in a sustained effort to make sure this does not happen to the Grayling.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 ▶

A Change of Editor

Sadly, it's a case of 'Roger – Over and Out!' For the past few years **Roger Wasley** has been the Editor of *The Comma*, and I am sure you will all agree that he has done a wonderful job in editing such an impressive publication. Roger has now decided it is time for him to stand down, and I have taken up the reins, but not without making it my first task to convey a huge vote of thanks to Roger for all the work he has put in. Publication of *The Comma* is a team effort, so many thanks are also due to **Trish Connolly Morgan** who is continuing her role as Designer, to **Carol Wood**, who ensures you receive a copy in the post, and to everyone who contributes material.

This is YOUR newsletter

I would love to hear about anything and everything even remotely connected with butterflies and moths which you would like to share – sightings, places, people, photographs, photographs of artwork, poems, publications, work parties, walks, events, gardens, holidays, days out, children and butterflies, projects, ideas for projects, suggestions for presents, comments etc etc. What each issue contains depends entirely on the material I receive.

Above and beyond

The Comma covers Birmingham and the Black Country along with the four counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire, and I hope that it will fairly reflect all that is going on across the region, and sometimes beyond. A large number of photographs are usually included in each edition, and I would especially welcome your photographic efforts, in as high a resolution as possible.

So please get in touch – you can contact me on 07900 886809 or at phwarden@tiscali.co.uk – I look forward to hearing from you.

Stephen Lewis, Editor



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Conservation

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Local work group

Another butterfly year is nearly over (apart from the work parties). Speaking of work parties, do look at our programme of events – we hope we can tempt you to consider joining your local work group.

My first experience of Butterfly Conservation was to join a work party at Trench Wood 20 years ago and I had always wanted to become more involved but family and work commitments made this impossible until I retired. However even going to a work party once a month enabled me to meet knowledgeable people and become acquainted with a key site. Once I retired I had the time to do much more and it considerably helped me to adjust to leaving paid employment. If you are facing the same transition in life and looking for an interest, look no further – there is a work party near you.

Records Coordinator needed

Or, can you help us with recording? We are still seeking a Records Coordinator – someone to help in this area. An immense amount of material is collected by transect and casual recorders which has helped considerably with our book. Someone with an overview of this information and how we can use it would be a great asset to the Branch.

Local Champions

And one other plea is for Local Champions to help with local, perhaps county, interest groups so that we can improve our contact network for the benefit of our members.

Peter Seal,
Chairman



The rare striped hawkmoth

When you open a moth trap you could be in for a big surprise....

Robin Hemming certainly got a big surprise when he opened a moth trap this summer and found a **Striped Hawk-moth**. As he explained to the Hereford Times: "...to say that I was gobsnacked by the find is an understatement." It's an immigrant, unable to survive our winters, and it is mainly seen in southern England.



Striped Hawk-moth (Robin Hemming)



The thin white stripes along the veins on the forewings are a distinguishing feature (Robin Hemming)



Gorgeous Work in the Gorge

Chris Littlewood describes a community project in Ironbridge that will benefit butterflies and moths.

Ten years ago a group of neighbours got together to save Lodge Field in the Ironbridge Gorge. The Lodge Field Group's aim was to make it an amenity for the Ironbridge community and a home for wildlife, and that is just what it has become

Last year the Ironbridge Meadows and Pasture group secured Beeches Field, which is next to the Lodge

Small Skipper with an orange tip to the underside of its antenna.
(Lucy Lewis)



Field. This has created an extensive green corridor. You can now walk through Lloyds Coppice, up Orchard Lane, on to Beeches Field, Lodge Field and then through to Rough Park. This connected area of varied habitat benefits not only people but wildlife. Most of all I hope it will benefit butterflies.

Good results

I have recorded the butterflies on these two fields for the last few years with good results, and over the last two winters the volunteers, who manage and maintain them, have embarked on an ambitious programme of scrub and bramble clearance. They have created areas of bare ground along south facing slopes, ideal for basking butterflies.

I am especially hoping to entice the **Dingy Skipper**.



Essex Skipper showing the black undersides to the tips of its antennae (Lucy Lewis)

There are colonies in other places nearby so I am hoping they will extend their range; the habitat they enjoy has certainly been provided.

Last year I recorded 22 different species of butterfly. **Tony Jacques**, who held several moth nights, found the **Ghost Moth**. The Invertebrates Survey team found **Essex Skippers**. This horrified me – I had been recording them all as **Small Skippers**! I immediately started to catch them and take a good look to distinguish one from the other, and found that the Essex Skipper is predominate.

So a lot has been going on, and more is planned. For the butterflies the sky's the limit.

By Chris Littlewood

Confused....



The Confused (Dave Grundy)

Graham Wenman has devised a cryptic quiz to activate your little grey cells. The answers, which are all either a butterfly or a moth, will appear in the next edition of *The Comma*. Clues are cryptic and include word plays and anagrams. There are no prizes apart from the satisfaction of getting it all right. It's not easy, and Graham can be contacted on gjwenman@yahoo.co.uk if you want some hints. Good luck!

- 1 Rotten citrus dump (2 words)
- 2 De-aspirated hippopotamus - Job 40.15 (2 words)
- 3 Could it cause cholera?
- 4 Beth, nun or sin (2 words)
- 5 Spooner knew her as the Lab. drooper (2 words)
- 6 Fish "polaroids" (2 words)
- 7 Flying fish?
- 8 Sounds like a sneeze
- 9 Serving captain!
- 10 Ella Mae Ricks Bailey (3 words)
- 11 Fag in prison
- 12 Call to hire
- 13 Fyodor Ushakov for example (2 words)
- 14 Hedge trimmers
- 15 Fragrant tea with unknown in it. (2 words)
- 16 Either of these could be sliced! (2 words)
- 17 Where naughty people drink?
- 18 What you can get if you 'dial green'?
- 19 What goes round a waterfall
- 20 Polish end (hyphen)

Uncertain....



Uncertain (Dave Grundy)

You will be!

Valezinas spreading

This photo of the Valezina form of a female **Silver-washed Fritillary** was taken by **David Milner** in Trench Wood in Worcestershire in July. The form used to be seen only in southern England, but over the last 10 years it has been regularly reported in the West Midlands. **Editor**





Richard Southwell delights in garden butterflies and moths, with a little help from his grandson.

Our wildlife garden has really given us some treats this year with two **Hummingbird Hawk-moths**, nectaring on Valerian and Buddleia, and a number of **Painted Ladies**. However, the star has been the colony of **Six-spot Burnets** which have successfully

been breeding on the Bird's-foot Trefoil that is allowed to grow through our patio slabs.

'stuck together'

Our two-and-a-half year old grandson was down with us at the time and delightfully told us two were 'stuck'. Since then, we have been reporting to mum on a daily basis about what had been taking place. The picture, taken in June, was of **Oliver** being introduced to 'his' small field that is no more than

a 100 yards from home, which is in the tiny hamlet of Dilhorne in North Staffs. We were counting seven species of butterfly and moth at the time, including 42 **Chimney Sweeper**. To me this gives a huge message as to why good habitat is essential to the future well-being of this country. **Kirsty**, Oliver's mum, did not tick off grandad for her son's wet shoes on this occasion!

By **Richard Southwell**



Do you know what sort of Tortoiseshell this is?

Andrew Tullo took this photo in his Oswestry garden in September 2011. He wonders if it could be the **Scarce Tortoiseshell**, also known as the **Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell**, which has not been recorded in the UK between 1953 and 2014? Or is it an aberration of the much more common **Small Tortoiseshell**. Or is it something else?

Comments to the editor please.

Mortimer Forest in a Nutshell

A new full colour guide to this area on the Shropshire/Herefordshire border has been produced

A guide to the history and wildlife of Mortimer Forest has been published by West Midlands Butterfly Conservation. *"The Life and Times of Mortimer Forest – in a nutshell"* which is in full colour has been produced as part of the Heritage Lottery funded Spotlight on the **Wood White** project. The project, which started last year, has been very successful in involving and training local people in survey work within the Forest and learning about its wildlife, habitats and history.

An in depth overview

The booklet provides an in depth overview of the history of the Forest from prehistoric times and shows how this has influenced the character and wealth of wildlife found today. The modern Forest is still producing valuable timber but is also managed to promote the wildlife that occurs there, including almost thirty species of butterfly which are described in the guide, together with information on mammals, birds, other insects, reptiles and plants that can be found.

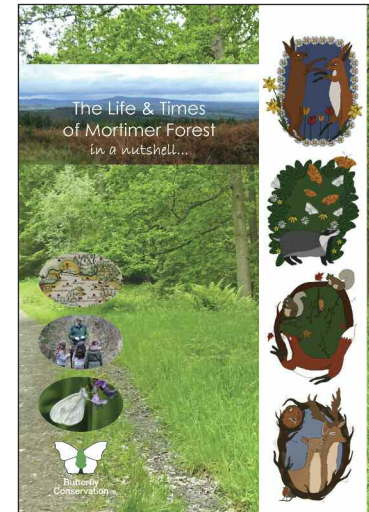
Wealth of wildlife

Julia Walling, who designed and edited the guide on behalf of West Midlands Butterfly Conservation said: "We are hoping that the new guide will help people to discover this fantastic area of forest on their doorstep. Mortimer Forest contains a wealth of wildlife including a number of nationally rare species such as the Wood White butterfly and there is so much more still to find. The production of the guide has been a true community effort and we are

grateful to the many volunteers and local experts who have contributed so much time and effort to its production".

Looking for more volunteers

Mike Williams, Publicity & Marketing Officer of West Midlands Butterfly Conservation, said "We are extremely grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting the production of this guide. Regionally, Butterfly Conservation is working very closely with the Forestry Commission to conserve rare butterflies and moths and we are keen to engage more volunteers in undertaking vital survey and monitoring work. We are confident that this booklet will stimulate greater interest in Mortimer Forest and our project has already led to the establishment of a new community group to take forward this work. By working in partnership in this way we can achieve so much more."



New website

Although Lottery funding ended last May, the work of the Mortimer Forest Heritage Project will continue. Following butterfly survey days during the summer, other exciting plans are in the pipeline. **For further information contact Julia Walling on 01584 874636 or 07796 596451 or by email Julia@mortimerforestproject.org.uk**

By **Mike Williams**

Copies of the guide can be obtained from Ludlow Library and Museum Resource Centre or can be ordered via the West Midlands Butterfly Conservation website www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk



Common Blue
(Lucy Lewis)



Silver Y Moth
(Stephen Lewis)

Successful time

The focal point of the reserve is a wonderful visitor centre with large glass windows looking across to the lake with bird feeders in the foreground. The reserve also boasts a lakeside bird hide where we watched Lapwings, Coots, a Heron, Common Tern and a Shoveler duck, amongst others. The reserve has a number of wild-flower meadows and is great for butterflies – swathes of Knapweed, Birds-foot Trefoil and nectar-rich thistles. Most numerous were **Meadow Brown** and **Gatekeeper**, but there were a few **Skippers** on the wing together with **Six-spot Burnet** moths. Then I also saw **Silver Y**, **Latticed Heath**, **Shaded Broad-Bar**, **Speckled Wood** and a couple of freshly emerged second generation **Common Blues**, contrasting with one of the last **Ringlets**.

.....
By Joy Stevens

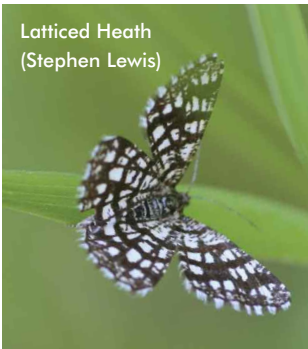
The booklet "Butterflies and Moths of the Sandwell Valley" published by the Sandwell Valley Naturalists Club is available priced at £10 plus £1.75 p&p from: Mr A. Wood, 12 Wigginsmill Road, Wednesbury, West Midlands, WS10 7NH. Cheques should be made payable to SVNC.

Fun Day for all at Sandwell Valley

Joy Stevens enjoys a Family Fun day in August at Sandwell Valley. A day packed full of all sorts of nature activities.

Living on the edge of the Black Country, close to Worcestershire and Shropshire, I do not tend to head towards Birmingham to see

butterflies. Thus I am ashamed to admit that I had never visited Sandwell Valley until recently. What a mistake! The RSPB had organised a fun day with all sorts of nature activities aimed at families, including bird spotting competitions, mini-beast hunting and camp fires. The RSPB provided magnifying glasses, mini nets and information sheets, all supported by staff and volunteers. Hats off to the RSPB for their organisation and helpfulness, and the crowds turned out in good numbers. It was lovely to see children excited by the sight of newts and tiny frogs.



Latticed Heath
(Stephen Lewis)

John Reeve

A Tribute by Mike Williams

Earlier this year we heard the sad news of the passing of John Reeve. John was a great enthusiast for butterflies, moths and other insects. He not only enjoyed seeing them but also photographing and painting them.

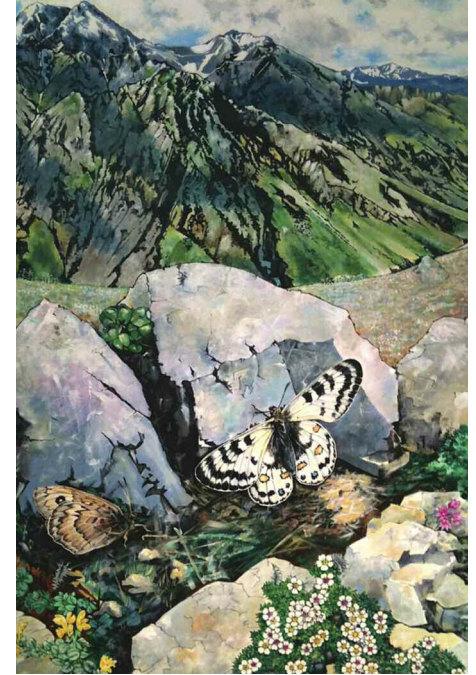


The West Midlands Branch 30th anniversary logo designed by John

I first got to know John in the early 1980s when he became a member of the then fledgling West Midlands branch of Butterfly Conservation. John started coming along to various events so we quickly latched on to his talents as a silkscreen printer and he became involved in producing display and other printed material. This continued over many years and when the branch celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2009, it was John we turned to for the design of a special logo.

Larger than life character

Those who knew John will remember his larger than life character and his great sense of humour. He will be particularly remembered by some for his participation in some of our overseas excursions. In 1989, a group of us, including John, went on a camping trip to France to see butterflies – well, a camping trip for most of us but John, always a lover of home comforts when they were available, stayed in local hotels! As a result of this trip, John clearly developed a taste for adventure and came on a number of subsequent

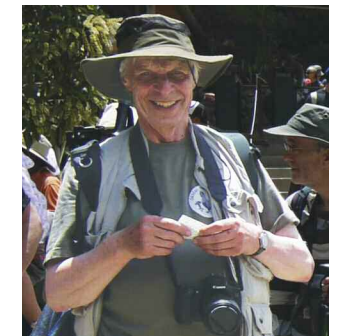


A painting by John

butterfly trips that were organised to various exotic destinations like Trinidad & Tobago, Ecuador, Kazakhstan and Peru. He was incredibly observant, always spotting things the rest of us had walked by.

Great sense of fun

There are some great memories of John from these trips – looking distinctly queasy in a dug-out canoe in the Amazon jungle, riding a horse in Kazakhstan and looking like Genghis Khan, careering downhill on the back of a porter on the Inca trail in Peru. What came through most of all, however, was John's great sense of fun and his determination to succeed sometimes against the odds. On the second day on the Inca Trail, which was really hard going crossing the rather scarily named Dead Woman's Pass, John and his porter lagged further and further behind. When we stopped for our lunch break there



John at Machu Picchu, Peru (Stephen Lewis)

was no sign of John. The general conclusion amongst the group was that John had had to turn back but no, an hour or so later he and his porter came into view.

John's lasting legacy is, of course, his art and his photography and these will continue to remind us all of his passion and commitment to the natural world.

.....
By Mike Williams

The Great Butterfly Cake-off

Mel Mason describes a day-out spotting Grayling at The Bog in South Shropshire, and eating some of the delicious home-made cakes at the excellent visitor centre.

It's midsummer... but with black cloud and drizzle our first impressions of The Bog seem unpromising, even though there is much cheer in the Visitor Centre where big slices of excellent carrot cake are served with large mugs of tea. However, this site is very special. Surrounding the café and nearby car park is a well-drained, stony landscape suffused with fine leaved grasses, mainly bents and fescues, judging by the presence of **Small Heath** seen flying around – any boggy ground disappeared when the lead mines were active over 100 years ago.

Leaning butterflies

Hidden amongst the many tussocks and wild flowers are too many butterflies to count - mostly the majestic **Grayling**. As the precipitation disappears and patches of blue sky appear in the distance, these butterflies lean

Hanging on to a grass stem (Mel Mason)



The Grayling likes stony ground, and the car park at The Bog is perfect for it (Mel Mason)

over to expose the maximum surface of their closed wings to the slightest increase in warmth of the sun. The ambient temperature is only 17°C but the stony surface is 21°C and rising. In a brief spell of sunshine a few males zip across the patchwork vegetation to defend territory, search for a source of nectar or – if lucky – find a receptive female. One male lands on the yellow flower of a hawkbit and probes for nectar, while a nearby female bends her abdomen 180° to deposit an egg on a small tuft of bristle bent that looks just about alive with some green shoots amongst a swathe of brown stalks. The egg is almost impossible to find without keeping in sight the exact spot of laying.

Perfectly camouflaged

Resting Grayling are perfectly camouflaged in this landscape but as the day warms more Grayling rise from the ground and fly in every direction despite the prevailing north wind. Now seems the perfect time for Grayling to show their affections and a couple of mating pairs display their more colourful forewings while attached to a tall

spike of grass. The male is easily distinguished from the female by its more contrasting grey and black bands on the hindwing, while the orange forewing of the female is lighter with more significant white centres in two black spots. The desire to mate is overwhelming and disturbed couples cling to each other as they fly to a less intrusive location.

Marvellous panorama

As the clouds lift, the higher serrated ridge of the Stiperstones appears with the more rounded grassy hills of the Long Mynd to the east. The Grayling are unconcerned with this marvellous panorama, content to spend their lives next to the 'Somme', an old mine excavated during the First World War, and the spoil heaps from many centuries of extracting lead ore in the area. The soil remains heavily polluted with some of the less common toxic elements of the Periodic Table including cadmium and arsenic.

Enthusiastic volunteers

Grazing is not an option, and what seems like a self-sustaining landscape is actually managed by enthusiastic volunteers and – occasionally – commercial contractors. The scrub is held back and constantly kept in check to allow the finer grasses to dominate and to encourage this butterfly, which is becoming increasingly rare on inland sites, to prosper. Rabbits help to some extent as is evident from the droppings scattered all over the site. Coincidentally, the local transect recorder passes by with a count of 79 Grayling and two enthusiastic children, one of whom shouts out 'there's another over there' and the count is now 80. The sheer number of this butterfly is hugely encouraging on this unique site in Shropshire and the West Midlands.



Grayling nectaring on Hawkbit (Mel Mason)

Resting Grayling are perfectly camouflaged in this landscape but as the day warms more Grayling rise

Although Grayling are common on many coastal sites, another significant inland site in the West Midlands is the Malvern Hills. However, the landscape here is very different. These Grayling prefer the steep rocky ridges surrounded by finer grasses between 400 – 1100ft on the eastern side of North Hill. Malvern Hills Conservators and a group of volunteers manage this difficult terrain. Tree, scrub and bracken overwhelm much of the habitat, but timed counts over three nearby rocky ridges reached 45 last year and 21 to date this year - and records go back as far as 1853.

But back at The Bog I feel spoiled by the abundance and visibility of so many Grayling, without having to climb more than a few feet from the car park. Many thanks to **Rhona Goddard** (WMBC Regional Officer) and **Dave Green** (Consultant Ecologist) for their organisation, expertise and guidance, and to **Mike Bradley, Mike Shaw, Dave Lewis, Ceri Meehan** and my wife **Liz** for their company.

by Mel Mason

White-letter Hairstreak:
Caterpillars feed
on Elm
(Paul Meers)



Brown Hairstreak:
Caterpillars feed
on Blackthorn
(Mike Williams)



My First White-letter Hairstreak

We can all remember some of the special moments of some of our butterfly first sightings. Paul Meers, Warden at WWT's Feckenham Wylde Moor reserve, describes his first White-letter Hairstreak sighting.

On a very hot Tuesday I had planned to go to Middleton Lakes with a friend to do some bird watching but unfortunately they had to do some long overdue gardening. So, I decided to go to Upton Warren instead.

Good decision, because while in the Water Rail hide a photographer came in with a very nice shot of a butterfly which he could not ID. He thought that it might be a **Purple Hairstreak** but on looking more closely it was a **White-letter Hairstreak** which was confirmed by one of the wardens. I was completely unaware that they were at Upton Warren so I asked where they were and walked to the spot.

Flying erratically

About half a dozen of them were flying erratically above a stand of Blackthorn, and so with a number of other photographers who had congregated I waited for one to settle. Eventually one or two did settle but they were typically behind leaves or at the very top of the bush and really at the extent of my 50x bridge camera zoom. However after about half an hour in the baking heat I managed to get some shots, albeit not brilliant, but a record of a butterfly that I had not seen before, and had it not been for my friends urgent gardening needs would have certainly missed and maybe never seen them. I'm a **Brown Hairstreak** fan really but I could be persuaded to venture further afield to try to see other Hairstreak species.

By Paul Meers

Purple Hairstreak:
Caterpillars feed
on Oak
(Lucy Lewis)



Small Pearl-bordered
Fritillary (Stephen Lewis)

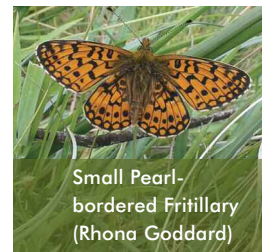


Chasing the Butterflies in Staffordshire



Rhona Goddard, Butterfly Conservation's West Midlands Regional Officer, recalls the summer workshops she led on and around Cannock Chase.

One Saturday morning in May I stood, a little nervous, in front of a keen group of individuals, about to lead my first Butterfly Conservation butterfly training day of the summer. When I finally stopped talking, we headed out to the arena area of Cannock Chase. Although it was mid-May, we still managed to record 11 different lepidoptera species, including our two target species for the day - **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak**. The beautiful, iridescent Green Hairstreaks were seen perching amongst the bilberry, just where I'd hoped to find them.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
(Rhona Goddard)

Sherbrook Valley

Our next workshop was in June. As the group searched Sherbrook Valley in dull but warm conditions we found our first **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** of the afternoon, perfectly positioned in the undergrowth to give everyone

the opportunity to see the brown and orange wing pattern of a newly emerged pristine specimen, as well as the 'pearls' on the underside of the hindwing. Although the group only spent a couple of hours searching one area, we still saw 30 plus Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and a few **Clouded Buffs**.

Penkridge Bank

We had a beautiful day in mid-July for the third and final workshop. Penkridge Bank was awash with **Meadow Browns**, **Ringlets** and **Gatekeepers**, giving

everyone the opportunity to compare all three. We saw so many that I stopped counting.

Cannock Chase

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty very kindly funded another training day for AONB volunteers, which was held at Chasewater in August. We visited Norton Bog and again saw a number of late summer butterflies including Gatekeepers and **Skippers**. The group also had the opportunity to compare the black ink-dipped antennae of the **Essex Skipper** with the orange-tipped antennae of the **Small Skipper**.

Thanks to **Emma Beaman** (Cannock Chase AONB) for the funding via the Sustainable Development Fund for the training days. I'd also like to thank all those who helped with the workshops, **Vicky Worrall**, **Sue Sheppard**, **Rob Davies**, **Baz** (for driving), **Rob Winstanley**, **Pete Johnson**, **Dave Jackson** and **Vicki Liu**. Thanks also to those who attended and made my first summer with Butterfly Conservation so enjoyable.

By Rhona Goddard



Volunteers on a Butterfly ID day in Staffordshire in July (Rhona Goddard)

Rhona will be leading a work party on Cannock Chase on Wednesday 18th November to benefit the Dingy Skipper. If you want to come along or to be involved in helping butterflies on the Chase, please contact Rhona at rgoddard@butterfly-conservation.org

Butterflies in a Limestone Landscape



Grizzled Skipper: the caterpillars feed on Wild Strawberry which is plentiful in the limestone grassland (Stephen Lewis)

Simon Spencer describes an important project for butterflies on the Welsh border in Offa's Dyke country

Landscape scale conservation is very popular nowadays because it works. Compared to managing small patches of species rich grassland lost in a green desert of intensive dairy or intensive arable, attempting to conserve butterflies in a landscape that is rich in such habitat is always more likely to succeed. The Oswestry Hills are special because so much of the area is relatively unimproved limestone grassland or abandoned limestone quarries. Butterfly people will immediately pick up on the word limestone because limestone

habitats are always favoured by butterflies. So although the project area is really only one 10km square it has a butterfly fauna much richer than any for miles around.

Wide range

The limestone is crucial. It was quarried for centuries and provided building lime, that was carried by canal and, more recently, ground limestone for improving agriculture and making the naturally acid soils of the surrounding countryside more alkaline. Abandoned or even working quarries support a wide range of butterfly species and most of our sites have **Grizzled Skipper** and many have **Dingy Skipper**. Llanymynech Rocks is the most famous of the abandoned quarries and has long

been a mecca for lepidopterists, but other limestone quarries in the vicinity also have good butterflies.

Good chance

The geology favours steep slopes and the presence of the quarries provided employment for local people. The result is a patchwork of smallholdings that somehow got spared the mania for government subsidised ploughing and re-seeding in the second half of the twentieth century. There are patches of maize and new leys of perennial ryegrass, but a butterfly leaving one patch of habitat has a good chance of finding another not far away. We can therefore

talk about a metapopulation of many occupied sites loosely connected together. As patches are lost to scrub development, clearance work provides new habitat nearby. As quarrying ceases in parts of the working quarry at Llyncllys, new habitat is provided at an early successional stage.

Appropriate management

Shropshire Wildlife Trust whose project this is, owns or leases some of the sites. Apart from the English part of Llanymynech Rocks, they include Llyncllys Common, Dolgoch Quarry and Jones's Rough. The project is not only about nature reserves it is

An aerial view of Llanymynech showing the old quarries and the golf course on top of the hill (Photographer unknown)



Hebridean sheep graze Llanymynech to help to suppress the scrub and thus enable plants such as Common Dog-violet to flourish (Simon Spencer)



Pearl-bordered Fritillary: a UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species which is declining nationally (Stephen Lewis)



Green Hairstreak: the only green butterfly in the UK (Stephen Lewis)

also about getting appropriate management for privately owned sites as well. Many of the owners of smallholdings no longer keep stock, so their steep fields soon revert to brambles and scrub. We not only want to clear this but we need to facilitate grazing the site. This may involve fencing and gates for which we have a budget. Grazing is essential.

Llanymynech Rocks was grazed until about 1979 and looked then very different from how it looks now. Grazing by Hebridean sheep was introduced about 10 years ago and has helped enormously with the management of the site. Some of the sites receive Higher Level Stewardship funding.

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Holly Blue: one of the first butterflies to emerge in the spring shortly after the Orange-tip, with a second generation in late summer (Stephen Lewis)



Silver-washed Fritillary: Often to be seen in late summer nectaring on bramble (Lucy Lewis)



Brown Argus (Gert Corfield)



Butterfly Walk

Brown Hairstreak (Gert Corfield)



at Upper Hollowfields

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17 ►

Fritillary Haven

The area has two colonies of **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**: one at Llanymynech Rocks, which were reintroduced after being lost, and one in the Nantmawr area. For the latter the SWT reserve at Jones's Rough is the best place to see them. Both areas have **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** which also occurs at Llyncllys Common. **Grayling** was found last year after an absence of several years on Llanymynech Rocks by **Jayne Richards** who walks a regular transect there. It is one of our main target species, as is **White-letter Hairstreak** which is known from the area but is probably often overlooked. **Dark Green Fritillary** and **Silver Washed Fritillary** are common, and in spring **Brimstone** occurs though it is rare further west in Wales. Most of the common butterflies are abundant but **Green Hairstreak**, **Wall** and **Holly Blue**

are also often numerous. These low altitude rocky sites are often south facing and can get very warm.

With so many sites to survey and the usual problems with the weather, gathering butterfly records is no

easy task. Though we are training some keen local volunteers and we have very valuable contributions from a few local experts, there are still discoveries to be made.

By **Simon Spencer**

Bracken bruising to increase the diversity of the limestone grassland at Llyncllys Common (Stephen Lewis)



Gareth Egarr from the Shropshire Wildlife Trust is the project officer - he can be contacted at gareth@ShropshireWildlifeTrust.org.uk. I help with the butterfly surveys, and can be contacted at cerisyi@btinternet.com. Do get in touch if you would like to help.

Simon Primrose visits a wildlife friendly farm.

On Saturday 15th August our friends **Jan** and **Jo Terry** at Upper Hollowfields, near Feckenham in Worcestershire, held a butterfly walk around their superb wildlife friendly farm. Plenty of butterflies were seen (on the only sunny day for some time!), but the real highlight was a male **Brown Hairstreak**, seen feeding on nectar from thistles along Hollowfields Road. Everyone on the walk was able to see the butterfly, and it made the perfect centrepiece to a great afternoon's butterfly watching.

Kind Donation

A small charge was made for this event, which was led by **Gert Corfield**, and Jan and Jo have very kindly donated the £85 proceeds to West Midlands Butterfly Conservation.

By **Simon Primrose**

Small Copper (Gert Corfield)



A Big Thank You

West Midlands Butterfly Conservation would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Terrys for their generosity and for their continuing incredible support for the conservation of the Brown Hairstreak on their farm, which constitutes an important hotspot for the butterfly within east Worcestershire.



Simon accepts the kind donation from Jo (Jan Terry)

Mariposas de La Gomera

Geranium Bronze
(Joena Scott)

Joena Scott celebrates a birthday with winter butterflies on a Spanish island off the coast of north-west Africa.

My idea of heaven is to be surrounded by beautiful butterflies in the wild (which would likely satisfy my craving for sunshine, too!). For a special birthday treat and an escape from the cold and grey British winter in February, I hoped to fulfil my dream without it costing an exotic, long-haul fortune, or requiring disease protection!

Online research

The Canary Islands are a sure bet for winter sunshine, easy to get to, and only took a 4 ½ hour flight for us to reach. A little online research turned up the gem of La Gomera Island, west of Tenerife. Not only is this island quieter in terms of tourists, but tucked away at the centre is La Garajonay National Park World Heritage Site; one of the last remaining examples of Laurisilva Forest and home to over one hundred endemic species of flora and fauna.

It would have been fantastic to have been able to contribute to some conservation or survey work whilst on the island but it wasn't possible this time. Butterfly Conservation Europe helpfully gave me a journal paper by **Martin Wiemers**¹ which covers all the known butterfly species on La Gomera and my appetite was

well and truly whetted by the lovely pictures on their social media. I got in touch with our accommodation host, **Jonay**, who kindly recommended where to find the butterflies which are on the wing in February. I would have loved to have discovered the **Canary Large White** but I think our trip was too short and too cold to even give us a small chance.

Garajonay National Park

In our first day out we headed to the very interesting Garajonay National Park Visitor Centre at around 750metres above sea level. They have a small botanical garden but we weren't anticipating any butterflies as the weather was cool and overcast, yet we were delighted by a **Canary Speckled Wood** which appeared during a brief break in the clouds and posed on a Bird of Paradise flower. What a great start! We set off home via a footpath into the valley and soon spotted a **Canary (Indian) Red Admiral** some distance away. This can be distinguished from the **Red Admiral** we are used to in the UK by the black blobs in the wider red band on its forewings.

The next day we took another walk down in the valley and saw our first **Small White**, which turned out to be the most common species during our visit. Very near to this, a Canary Speckled Wood climbed out of the vegetation to warm up. We realised that the weather wasn't going to warm up enough to see many butterflies at our altitude (approx. 730m.) because of the clouds that persisted around us, so we went looking

for coastal species that prefer the more consistent mild temperatures and would hopefully be easier to find.

Valle Gran Rey

Jonay recommended we visit Valle Gran Rey on the west coast as it would have better weather due to the shelter from the Trade Winds. I'd also seen a Lizard Sanctuary marked on our guide map² so was keen to see what was there. The sanctuary is part of a conservation area of vegetated dunes and salt marshes at the Charco del Cieno Site of Scientific Interest. There were plenty of lizards darting into hiding places when they caught sight of us catching sight of them basking on the rocks!

A couple of large, pale butterflies kept their distance over the thick scrub so I was unable to identify them (possibly **African Migrant**) and just as I was getting downhearted about the lack of species despite the glorious sunshine, I saw a tiny **Geranium Bronze** climbing over some cultivated geranium plants right in front of where we parked the car. I'd not expected to see this as it was not listed as being on La Gomera in any of the resources I'd looked at. Perhaps it has popped over from Fuerteventura or is recently settled on La Gomera, as we saw it in more than one location and geraniums are its larval foodplant.

El Cedro

Next we tried El Cedro, a beautiful valley filled with buttercup oxalis flowers. As we drove down, the sun came out and the temperature rose from around 11°C to 17°C. It was all very promising, until the clouds closed in and then it started raining and raining! It was a beautiful walk up into the Garajonay National Park where we saw lovely streams, waterfalls and fabulous forest, but we eventually retreated - a bit bedraggled! I'm sure this would be a super place for butterflies in the right weather.

I thought the small town park close to Barranco de Santiago at Playa Santiago was a promising place to try with its planted borders and landscaped gardens at around 150m We arrived as the temperature was



Canary Speckled Wood (Joena Scott)



African Grass Blue male (Joena Scott)



African Grass Blue female (Joena Scott)



Bath White (Joena Scott)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ►



Monarch (Joena Scott)



Canary Speckled Wood (Joena Scott)



Bath White (Joena Scott)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21 ►

creeping up to 15°C and the sun was peeping through the clouds so I felt confident. I was warm enough to take my hat and coat off and unzip one fleece, so I was sure the butterflies would be warm enough to come out too! I stalked around the gardens and saw a handful of **Small Whites** and a larger pale butterfly flying some way off, which may have been an African Migrant. But it wasn't until a cricket caught my eye on a stone-paved area that I then noticed one well camouflaged **Bath White** and four or five tiny **African Grass Blues** coming out to warm themselves nearby; the males with more blue on the upper sides. I skipped about carefully to try and get some pictures and was delighted to get my first real butterfly 'fix' on a February Day.

My mariposas species count was up to six and after scouring the bougainvillea hoping to find something, I returned towards the carpark and spotted a **Small Copper** on a rough, almost bare area of ground. It was really fresh and I was able to see its beautiful rich colour catch the sun as it hopped between short stalks.

La Trinchera

On our journey home we stopped off to check out a grassy rough area near La Trinchera south of the island airport, also at about 150m. Again, there was Bath White (this one rather aged and faded) and Small Copper but the clouds quickly closed in and the breeze cooled so they disappeared swiftly. With this lower altitude success, we decided to try another coastal location to give us the best chance of good weather. As we parked in San Sebastian at a lovely sunshiney 20°C, an African Grass Blue landed on a manhole cover close by. Irritatingly, my camera ran out of charge so I was left to try and take footage with a small camcorder. This was tricky but I did get a good picture of a Geranium Bronze camouflaging itself on Date Palm roots at the beach after sunning itself on geraniums nearby.

We stopped and walked a little in the Enchereda area on our way home, on the southern side of the Majona National Park. There was the occasional butterfly that whizzed past in the afternoon heat; too fast to snap a picture, so it would be a good place to try earlier in the day when they are just warming up and somewhat slower!

El Cepo

Jonay had suggested we visit El Cepo, north east of Las

Rosas, for the stunning scenery. Our afternoon trip there turned out to be very sunny and very rewarding for butterflies as well. **Canary Brimstones** were travelling up and down the steep scree slopes too fast for me to get a focussed picture. We also soon saw a **Painted Lady** and then after a lovely walk along the ridge, Canary Red Admirals were battling at the summit before the clouds closed in and they dropped to the ground, snapped their wings shut, and disappeared against the gravelled surface.

Hermigua

What a treat on our last day! We popped to Hermigua for some souvenir shopping followed by ice-creams in the town park. It was overcast but around 16°C so I thought it unlikely we'd see any butterflies, even though I'd seen flowering bushes when driving past previously. I scanned around and noticed a denuded shrub in the border of the play area. It seemed out of place in the well-tended town park and on taking a closer look, I saw a stunning caterpillar! Striped with 'tails' at both ends, and well developed; I felt sure this could mean butterflies nearby. No sooner had I thought this, than out wafted a **Monarch** from a nearby leafy bush. We followed it until it settled long enough for some pictures – excellent! Then, perusing around the park some more, we found another denuded shrub, several **Monarch caterpillars**, one in the pupating position, alongside a beautiful chrysalis. Wow! What a fantastic end to our trip.

A total species count of ten: it was a dream come true to see wild butterflies in February and the island of La Gomera is just stunning for its scenery and vegetation. If we visit La Gomera again at a different time of year, we could see the endemic **Gomera Grayling**, **Canary Blue**, **Canary Lulworth Skipper**, **Long-Tailed Blue**, **Cardinal**, and many more species of mariposas. Hmmm, whose birthday can we go on holiday for next?!

By Joena Scott

Notes: 1. The butterflies of the Canary Islands A survey on their distribution, biology and ecology (Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea and Hesperioidea) M Wiemers, 1995, *Linneana belgica* 15 (2-3), 63-84, 87-118

2. La Gomera Tour & Trail 1:35,000 Scale Map, 6th Edition 2013, ©David Brawn, published by Discovery Walking Guides Ltd

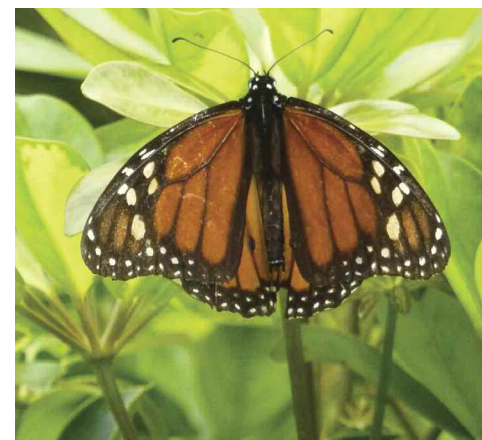
Useful websites:

<http://www.butterflyguide.co.uk/regions/canaries/index.htm>

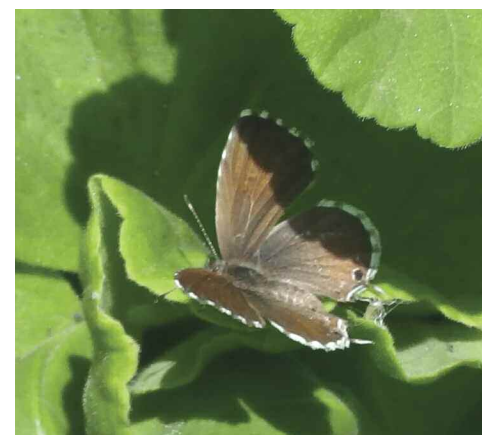
<http://www.focusonnature.com/ButterfliesCanaryIslandsSpain.htm>



Monarch caterpillar and chrysalis (Joena Scott)



Monarch (Joena Scott)



Geranium Bronze (Joena Scott)



Cryptic Wood Whites
(Mel Mason)

Cryptic Solutions and Marsh-less Fritillaries

Mel Mason describes a trip to Craigavon and County Down in Northern Ireland in late May 2015.

The weather was looking bleak as Liz and I arrived at Belfast City Airport - aka George Best. The two receptionists at the car hire were intrigued to find out that we had come in search of butterflies, especially when we told them about the **Cryptic Wood White (CWW)**, a British butterfly exclusive to Northern Ireland, only distinguishable from its mainland counterpart, the **Wood White**, by genital examination.

Craigavon Lakes

After checking in at our B&B in Moira, we rushed over to Craigavon lakes where large numbers of CWW have been seen in recent years. The Water Sports Centre car park on the southern edge gave the impression of a well-manicured park and lake criss-crossed with hard tarmacked paths that seemed to lack sufficient wild flower areas to attract many butterflies. Fortunately, on further investigation, the surrounding reserve proved to cover a very large area including large wild grasslands suffused with

purple flowering vetch - perfect habitat for the CWW. However, that morning was dull, cold and drizzling with no hope of finding even the hardiest of moths.

Murlagh Sands

And so we drove south to Murlough Sands in the hope of finding a few sunny intervals in south-west County Down. By 1.30pm, we were sitting in the middle of high rolling sand dunes eating ham & lettuce sandwiches while we scanned the scene for the distinctive low flying character of a newly emerged **Marsh Fritillary (MF)**. At last, the clouds parted and the sun shone lighting up beautiful expanses of flowering pansies and bluebells interspersed with big patches of devil's bit scabious, not yet in flower, the food plant of the MF larvae. Crouching down with my camera to capture this carpet of colour, a thorny dwarf burnet rose bush pricked my kneecaps. Heather also grew here in abundance, yet to flower. Numbers of **Lattice Heath** moths teased us into pursuit

Their flight was weaker than most other butterflies, reminiscent of the Wood Whites

by flying low over the vegetation, but there was no sign of the MF.

Tempted again by Craigavon

On our way back to the B&B later in the afternoon, we were tempted to call in again at Craigavon, this time looking on the south side of the railway line that bisects the two lakes. For a few moments, in a brief sunny interval, a small white butterfly emerged from the long grasses and crossed over gorse and bramble to be lost from sight. We waited for the next cloud to reveal the sun once more - this time two more white butterflies rose up from nowhere to fly for several minutes and then to rest on the knee-high vegetation. These were definitely Cryptic Wood Whites - their wings closed discreetly whilst their abdomens seemed contorted, curled up under their wings. Their flight was weaker than most other butterflies, reminiscent of the Wood Whites I had seen in Haugh Wood, Herefordshire, but this Irish flier went further and faster than its mainland cousin. The terrain was also different - no woods nearby, just a few scattered trees, long grass and purple vetch. I was, however, not able to check for the other notable difference between the two species - the famous distinctive genital endowments - due to a severe lack of skill and the specialist equipment! Incidentally, who thought of the name CWW when surely a more appropriate and poetic name would be the Irish Wood White?

Tannaghmore Gardens

The following day started like the first but, undeterred by the unpromising skies, we decided to search around Tannaghmore Gardens on the west side of the north lake at Craigavon. According to the NIBC online website, 110 CWW had been seen here a few days earlier (**Ian Rippey**: 23rd May). As we pulled into park, the car thermometer showed 11.5°C. However, after about half an hour, the cloud began to lift and the sun emerged. My wife **Liz** held out the digital thermometer to record a rising temperature: - 15°C, 16°C, 17°C.... magic! Over there! - a beautiful male **Orange Tip** alighted on some lady's Smock. Over here! - a CWW rose out of the hidden depths and flew across the grasses where another emerged. Suddenly, there were 4 flying. Then, in another larger and more open area where we had



Marsh Fritillary
(Mel Mason)

seen none a few minutes before, we now saw 10 or more flying, feeding and finally a pair courting - the male using both its antennae and proboscis to woo the female while both faced each other on a grass stalk. The female fluttered on occasions while the male only moved its head and antennae. Liz filmed this unexpected spectacle while I took photographs. Unfortunately - perhaps too many paparazzi - the male gave up after several minutes and flew away to leave the female wondering what all the fuss was about. This was the highlight of our visit and we would have returned home quite happy with these precious sightings - but more treats were in store.

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Marsh Fritillary (Mel Mason)

Murlough Dunes

We returned to Murlough Dunes at lunchtime following news of the first sighting of two MF at the RAF Hollow in the central reserve six days previously (Ian Rippey and Stephen Craig 20th May). The reserve's car park assistant pointed us in the right direction and we followed the coastal path to our destination, with magnificent views across Dundrum Bay and the impressive Mourne Mountains looming high above us to the south. I was tempted to climb to the top of Slieve Donard, at 2796 feet, instead of pursuing what seemed to be a fruitless search.

An ocean of flowering bluebells

But back in the central reserve, once again amongst an ocean of flowering bluebells and rosettes of scabious leaves, we were sitting eating a sandwich, when local Steve turned up on his fritillary transect. He had seen one near the car park, but so far no more. He confirmed we were sitting in the ideal spot and left us to our lunch to go and check on a nearby chrysalis he was monitoring. The sun was shining by the time he returned and this was the cue for one of those magic moments... one after another MF appeared from the low vegetation and the situation changed instantly from a desperate search to an expectation of seeing one wherever you turned. I was so preoccupied with recording the evidence with my camera that I failed to count every sighting – at least 20 and probably 30 or more. This attractive reserve was made doubly so by the presence of this bright and colourful butterfly. Several years ago, I joined the WMBC group on a trip to Islay where the MF thrived in a totally different habitat more reflective of its name. There its home was deep marshland where, if you put a foot wrong, you could be up to your knees in water. Murlough Dunes could not have been more different, with its dry sandy soil and efficient drainage. The only common feature of these two habitats was the presence of the larval food plant and the adaptable MF itself. Paradoxically, after we returned to the now sunny reserve café for tea and cakes, as if to suggest our

search of the Dunes had been unnecessary, a single MF landed on a grassy bank nearby. I wanted to spread the good news and walk over to the nearby Royal County Down Golf course, where Rory McIlroy was teeing off in practice for the following day's international competition and large crowds were already gathering, but I guess not everyone is ready to appreciate and enjoy a MF wandering onto their carefully manicured fairways.

Cryptic Wood White (Mel Mason)



...this was the cue for one of those magic moments... one after another MF appeared....

This was my first visit to Northern Ireland and I hope not my last. I love the scenery and the wildlife, while Moira is a friendly place with good food and even better Guinness.

Highlight of the day

Back on home turf in the Midlands, I was invited the following week to a field day at Haugh Wood with Rhona Goddard (WMBC Regional Officer) and our reliable and entertaining guide and expert, Dave Green – a consultant ecologist. The sun shone most of the time and there were reasonable numbers of WWV to enjoy. The highlight of the day was the courting display of a male waving its head and antennae over the antennae of the female – similar to the CWV. Once again, I managed to film this and was rewarded with observing the fluttering wings of both sexes, which distinguishes the behaviour of the English WWV from that of its cryptic Irish cousin.

By Mel Mason

The Start of a New Chapter for the Wyre Forest

Jenny Joy, BC's Senior Regional Officer for the West Midlands, and Mike Williams of the West Midlands Branch describe a major initiative in a key site for butterflies in our region.



Grizzled Skipper (Mike Williams)

In March 2015 we completed our SITA Trust funded Reconnecting the Wyre project which started in 2012. The main aims of this project were to 1) restore economically viable coppice which in the long term would provide sustainable breeding habitat for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and 2) improve connectivity across the forest to encourage dispersal and increase the chances of butterflies colonising new areas of habitat. During the course of this project, 42 hectares

(ha) of management work were completed by contractors carrying out work to our specification, with an additional 9 ha achieved in other ways such as by volunteer work parties or by Natural England acquiring funding for the work from other sources. A large proportion of this management work (32 ha) was coppice respacing, with other work including 3ha of ride widening and over 3ha of stump grinding. As a result of this work, respaced coppice coupes can now be seen

in many places as you walk around the forest, so look out for them next time you visit.

Volunteers

Another important aspect of this project was to work closely with West Midlands Butterfly Conservation and involve local volunteers in all aspects of this work. This was hugely successful with over 28 volunteers involved in this project right from the start (see Table 1 over the page) and a huge effort in terms of the number of monitoring visits made in the final year.

As a result of this volunteer effort, Pearl-bordered Fritillary colony size estimates were made for 58 sites in the Wyre Forest monitored by timed counts or peak flight counts in 2014. Of these 58 sites, 44 supported small-sized Pearl-bordered Fritillary colonies, 12 medium colonies and 2 large colonies (Colony size estimates based on Oates (2003): large = peak season counts of 50 or more,



Coppice respacing project work (Mike Williams)

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Thanks to the many volunteers who have helped with practical management and recording, and to our many partners for their ongoing support. We are very grateful to SITA Trust for funding the Reconnecting the Wyre project, and to Natural England and Forestry Commission England for funding specific pieces of work.

Pearl-bordered Fritillaries
(Dave Williams)

Wider range

The continued high levels of monitoring effort has also increased our knowledge of the abundance and distribution of a much wider range of butterflies and moths in the Wyre Forest. This has included species like **Dingy Skipper**, **Grizzled Skipper**, **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and **Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth**.

Shared vision

So where do we go from here? In 2013 the Wyre Forest Landscape Partnership (WFLP) was established under the chairmanship of Professor



Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth
(Roger Wasley)

Chris Baines on which Butterfly Conservation is represented. The first step has been to produce a jointly agreed strategic management plan for the whole Forest which all partners will sign up to. This plan will be completed by the end of 2015 and is supported by a delivery plan which translates the strategy into a five year programme. This will mean for the first time that the key public bodies, notably Natural England and Forestry Commission England, together with partners including Butterfly Conservation, will work across the whole Forest estate with a shared operational plan and vision.

Additional funding

This is the beginning of a new phase for the Wyre Forest and a way forward that simply could not have been envisaged five years ago. Butterfly Conservation will continue to play a very active role here and has recently, with the full support of partners, obtained additional funding under the new Countryside Stewardship scheme. This new funding will enable us to focus our efforts on the wider Wyre, and to encourage areas of land in private ownership to sign up and help deliver this new plan and vision. Part of this new phase will be continuing the Reconnecting the Wyre coppice work by encouraging more landowners to undertake coppicing as well as looking at ways in which we can help to make this work more sustainable.

Report by **Jenny Joy** and **Mike Williams**

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medium = 21-49, small = 20 or less). While these results are a marked reduction from a 2011 peak, they do reflect a substantial increase in our knowledge of the distribution of this butterfly across the forest. For example, in 2003 we were only able to monitor 14 sites, of which 13 were small colonies and 1 was a medium colony. Similar results were then obtained up until 2007 when there was evidence of the number of medium sized colonies starting to increase. So far, with some of the results yet to come in, we predict 2015 will be similar to 2014 for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary at the Wyre Forest. We are already aware of it having colonised a number of new sites but feel these will not reach the 12 new sites identified in 2014.

Summary statistic/Year	2012	2013	2014
Total number of volunteers involved	28	32	28
Total number of survey and count monitoring visits	78	75	155
Number of butterfly transects	4	4	4
Number of transect visits	85	94	94
Total number of volunteer visits	163	169	249
Total number of volunteer work parties	7	8	6

Table 1. Summary statistics for volunteer monitoring effort at the Wyre Forest through the Reconnecting the Wyre Project

Dates for your diary

To ensure that Branch members and newcomers know what is happening in our region, event and work party organisers should e-mail full details of upcoming events to the editor of *The Comma* at phwarden@tiscali.co.uk and to web-master David Green at greend@ormail.co.uk

Brown Hairstreak Egg Hunts

Saturday 21st November, Saturday 2nd January, Saturday 23rd January. Meet at 10.00am, at Grafton Flyford church. In addition the Thursday Streakers will meet most Thursdays usually at the same venue from the beginning of November until the end of March, but check if you are planning to attend in case of last minute changes to arrangements.
Contact Simon Primrose on 07952 260153 or at simonprimrose@aol.com

Cannock Chase Work Party

Wednesday 18th November, meet at 10am, Marquis Drive, Cannock Chase. Habitat management works to benefit the Dingy Skipper. Booking essential.
Contact Rhona Goddard for further details or to book a place on 01746 762364 or at rgoddard@butterfly-conservation.org

Ewyas Harold Work Parties

Saturdays: 17th October, 21st November, 12th December, 23rd January 2016, 20th February, 19th March, 16th April. Meet at 10.00am, at the northern Cwm Hill end of Ewyas Harold Common adjacent to the top cattle grid (GR SO382302). Approach from Abbey Dore off the B4347 at GR SO384306. **Contact Ian Hart on 01981 510259 or at yellowrattle4@aol.com.**

Grafton Wood Work Parties

Wednesdays: October 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th. November 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th. December 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th. Sundays: October 11th, November 8th, December 13th. Meet at 10.00am, at Grafton Flyford church. These will continue every Wednesday and on the second Sunday of the month until April 2016.
Contact John Tilt on 01386 792458 or at john.tilt2@btopenworld.com



Students from Stafford College hand-harvesting Bell Heather seed at Prees Heath (Stephen Lewis)

Monkwood Work Parties

Sundays: November 1st, December 6th, January 3rd, February 7th, March 6th. Meet 10.00am, at Monkwood reserve car park (GR SO803603) off the Sinton Green to Monkwood Green Road.
Contact George Groves on 01905 620721 or at george_groves@btopenworld.com

A new Monkwood Work Party will **meet on the third Thursday of the month**, starting on **Thursday 22nd October**, and the next two dates will be **19th November and 17th December**. Cakes will be provided! **Meet at 10.00am** at the car park.
Contact Peter Scriven on 07720 698053 or at pjandjes@icloud.com
Grateful if anyone interested could confirm attendance beforehand, but no worries if not possible. All help most welcome.

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A volunteer at Prees Heath removing birch saplings on the heathland SSSI with a Tree-popper, a large lever that grips the stem of a small tree and pulls it up by the roots.

Mortimer Forest Work Party

Sunday, January 31st, meet 10.00am, Vinnalls car park (GR SO474733) to be confirmed. Habitat management work to benefit the Wood White. **Contact Julia Walling on 01584 874636 or at julia.walling@btinternet.com or Mike Williams on 01299 824860 or at mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk**

Penny Hill Quarry Work Parties

Sunday 28th February and Sunday, 6th March, meet both days at 10.00am, at the entrance off Pudford Lane, Hillside, Martley (GR SO752613) to be confirmed. Habitat management to benefit Dingy Skipper at its best site in Worcestershire. **Contact Mike Williams on 01299 824860 or at mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk**

Prees Heath Work Parties

Wednesdays: 14th October, 4th November, 16th December. Meet at 10.30am on the access track opposite the Steel Heath turning off the A49. **Contact Stephen Lewis on 07900 886809 or at phwarden@tiscali.co.uk**

Siege Wood Work Party

Wednesday 25th November at Siege Wood in Herefordshire close to the village of Woolhope. Come and learn from Mark and Liz about the work they plan to do both in Siege Wood and elsewhere on their land. This is currently a great site for the Wood White butterfly and has lots more potential. **Meet at 10.30am**, Siege Wood car park (GR SO605343). **Contact Jenny Joy if you plan to come on 01952 249325 or at jjoy@butterfly-conservation.org**

Trench Wood Work Parties

Meet every Thursday at 9.30am and on the fourth Sunday of the month at 10.00am in the reserve car park (GR SO930588). **Contact John Holder on 01905 794854 or at johnholder@tiscali.co.uk**

Wyre Forest Work Parties

Wednesday 28th October at Hurst Coppice. **Sunday 15th November** at Pound Green Coppice /Blackgraves Copse. **Sunday 17th January** at Dead End Road. For the above three work parties meet at the Earnwood Copse car park (GR SO744784) at **10.00am** **Wednesday 4th November** – coppice respacing in the NNR. **Sunday 20th December** – coppice respacing. **Wednesday 27th January** – ride management. **Wednesday, 9th March** – conifer removal. For the above four work parties meet at Dry Mill Lane car park (GR SO77764) at **10.00 am** **Contact Mike Williams on 01299 824860 or at mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk**

Wyre Forest Fayre

Saturday, 24th October 10.00am – 4.00pm, Wyre Forest Discovery Centre, Callow Hill nr Bewdley. Guided Walks, Children's Activities, Forestry, Green Woodworking, Stalls, Bushcraft, Fire Making, Chainsaw Carving, Charcoal Burning, Bike Riding, Food & Drink. **Free Entry.** West Midlands Butterfly Conservation information stall.

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Volunteers on the egg hunt. L to R: Roger Joy with Bella the dog, Carol Wood, Ann Hadfield, Tony Simpson, Catherine Wellings, Graham Wenman, Margaret Badlan, Mary Munley, Rhona Goddard, Jenny Joy and Lucy Lewis. (Stephen Lewis)

Rallying call brings out volunteers

The Woodpecker Car Rally took place in early September in and around the Mortimer Forest in North Herefordshire and South Shropshire



Wood White: a nationally threatened species (Lucy Lewis)

A Wood White egg found by Lucy Lewis (Tony Simpson)

To ensure the safety of drivers and spectators the Forestry Commission mows certain grassy areas on the side of the forest tracks prior to the event, areas which provide breeding habitat for the **Wood White** butterfly in one of its best sites. North Herefordshire and South Shropshire is a national stronghold for this threatened species.

to the mowing. A good response saw 12 people turn out to do the searching, with Jenny and Rhona training them first in what to look for and where to look. The female Wood Whites lay their eggs on Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil, Meadow Vetchling and other vetches. It was the time of year when the eggs are due to hatch into tiny caterpillars.



Designated patches

Jenny Joy and **Rhona Goddard** liaised with the Forestry Commission to ensure that as many areas as possible were left untouched, and then a call went out for volunteers to help search for Wood White eggs in designated patches on Saturday 29th August so that they could be removed prior

Diligently

Were any eggs found and thus saved from the mower? The volunteers searched diligently in the grassy verges, and various tiny critters were found, and then Lucy Lewis spotted a tiny egg on a piece of Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil. Hand lenses and magnifying glasses were produced and much discussion ensued – it certainly

looked like the right thing – the correct shape, with ribs along its length - but could we be sure? Photographs were taken, and and we were all delighted when its identity was confirmed. A job well done!

By **The Editor**

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