Dear member

A thought for the Spring – can we feature the Green Hairstreak as a target species? The notion came to me when I was thinking about neighbouring Radnorshire, where this butterfly was – at least in the past - quite plentiful in places such as Hergest Ridge and Radnor Forest areas. I’ve seen it more recently on the Painscastle moors – so Bilberry and Gorse are probably key food plants. On the other side of Herefordshire it is found extensively, though now sadly in small numbers, up and down the Malvern Hills and lower slopes. I think of it as being unusual in using many different plants, being the country’s most widespread Hairstreak yet hard to find. Our book notes it as “scarce in Herefordshire” but is this the case? When I first walked round Haugh Wood – maybe 25 years ago- one of the display boards in the northern half mentioned the Green Hairstreak. I remember because I searched for it without success. Perhaps moors, woodland edges, quarries and scrubby open areas are worth a look in May?

We celebrate the national organisation’s 50th Anniversary and plan to mark this with a number of events round the West Midlands, starting with the Day of Action on March 10 at a number of our Reserves, including Ewyas Harold. Reserves Open Days are also being planned and Head Office are promoting the concept with an International Symposium in April, a national radio appeal in May and an Exhibition and online auction in September.

Our Branch exists on the commitment of its active members – it always amazes me how much volunteering and recording is accomplished by a voluntary organisation of our modest size – but spare a thought for those who put so much time in to convening work parties. This winter a combined assault by snow and rain had forced the cancellation of a number of work parties, which dictates a re-jig in the winter programme.

Since last writing the Branch has launched its new website and apart from some difficulties in transferring data relating to moths, the new version has incorporated the chief features of the old site and expanded a number of sections. Anyone can now download the Comma, and in the run up to going live John Tilt spent a considerable amount of time building a butterfly species list with local information. We would aim to do the same for moths and although progress is slow our ambition is to create a database for each County.
When we were doing background research for our book (still on sale) we considered the inclusion of 50 walks. Shortage of space in the end set the limit at 25, but the website offers an opportunity to expand information about walks and other sites of interest. You will see we have already added about 20 but only three of these are in Herefordshire and we could do with more. Please send John Tilt or me a short account, plus OS reference, photos, a map if possible and a link to any related website.

To round off I’m looking forward to seeing the first Wood White of the season at Monkwood, my nearest site and I hope it prospers in your County as well.

Peter Seal - Chairman, West Midlands Branch Butterfly Conservation

Editorial

Welcome to Newsletter 5. As I write this we are nearing the end of January, it is 2.45 in the afternoon, and I need to put the lights on to see what I am doing. May Spring soon arrive! Although, to be fair, we have had records for both Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell within the first few days of 2018 and I hope that Comma, Brimstone and Peacock will also be seen soon, especially the latter which has given concern because of the paucity of records in recent years.

A big “Thankyou” to our local officers and volunteers for all of their work through the winter with work parties and entering data, etc. and a big ”Thankyou” to the members who have answered my appeal for articles for this newsletter. Newsletter 6 is due out in October so your contributions for that will be very welcome.

As ever there are a number of ways that you can become involved in helping to conserve butterflies and these will be summarised on the last page. However, I would ask you to pay particular attention to the article by Ian Draycot on the next page. If you can help with any of these requests then please, please, please do so; the more people who help the better it is for our records, kudos and, obviously, and most importantly, the benefit of the butterflies we are striving to conserve.

Haugh Wood has long been a mecca for lepidopterists and it has been the recipient of the “Haugh Wood Crew” through the winter. So we have featured it in this newsletter, most of you will have been there at sometime in the past but if you haven’t it is well worth a visit. As well as Haugh Wood we have an article on the Comma referred to in the past as the “Herefordshire Butterfly”. As many of you know the summer brood exists in two forms, but perhaps you may not have been aware of the Herefordshire connection with the lighter form’s name f. Hutchinsoni.

We will continue to carry out work on our Ewyas Harold reserve, and so another “Thankyou” to Lucy and those who attended the work parties there. The Wood White project will also have some events or tasks for us and Rhona will let me have details to pass on to you.

As you can see from the logo below this year celebrates the 50th Anniversary of Butterfly Conservation. You will get to hear more about a number of special events organised nationally and in the West Midlands via the magazines “Butterfly” and the “Comma.” One event locally will be the “Day of Action” on our local reserve at Ewyas Harold Common. See details towards the end of this Newsletter.

Finally I hope you all find something of interest within these pages and I look forward to receiving your contribution to the next edition.

Martyn Davies
Recording wildlife for posterity and for science

Most counties in the UK have a good network of voluntary organisations that encourage the study of a particular interest area of natural history. This often focuses on the occurrence and distribution of species within their local area. Two Herefordshire examples are the Ornithological Club and the Fungus Survey Group both of which select an expert member who becomes the County Recorder with a role to collate and appropriately distribute information. Through Butterfly Conservation, Herefordshire now also has a county recorder for Butterflies, Bob Hall.

Several other branches of natural history also have a recorder for the county who are in effect appointed directly an expert national organisation. For example there is a Herefordshire bryophyte recorder (i.e. mosses and liverworts) responding to The British Bryological Society. This misses out the step of having a local group to set out and monitor the responsibilities of the county recorder.

The collection of such information is more officially called ‘biological recording’ and it is worth thinking about the value of doing this. Firstly, in developing a county list for each taxon group historical evidence is kept about what species occur in the county and how this fits with the distribution in the UK and indeed the rest of the world. This can be used to highlight rare species and monitor the expansion or contraction in the range of any species to help determine its status. In our county we should be able to see when and where the Essex Skipper first appeared, when the last High Brown Fritillary was seen (was it 1976 on the Doward?) and which sites have lost their Wood Whites or and Wall Browns. Secondly, it also gives site information about any scarce species that we have a statutory as well as moral responsibility to protect from inappropriate land use.

Biological Recording can give a measure of the population increase or decline of any species although dots on distribution maps will not give the full picture about what is happening to a common species such as the Small Tortoiseshell that may be in decline but is still marked as occurring in almost all 10km squares. To overcome this other survey methods are used such as the point counts used in the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme which are better at providing annual trends in populations. Comparing long term data will also show which years were good for irruptive species such as the Clouded Yellow.

We are all recorders if we contribute information about species occurrence into the public domain. Any biological record must have the species name, date of record, location of record and the name of the recorder. Any tricky identification also needs to be validated by a designated expert, often this is the county recorder.

This information will then form part of a National Recording Scheme which collates all the data from all counties. In the case of butterflies this is Butterflies-fortheNewMillennium.html and for moths is mothscount.org both run by Butterfly Conservation under the auspices of the Biological Records Centre www.brc.ac.uk. There is also an associated organisation called National Biodiversity Network nbn.org.uk/ whose main remit is to exchange non-sensitive information through its on-line NBN Atlas.

Currently there is much concern about the Peacock. Perhaps many people were so used to seeing them that they didn’t get recorded but numbers have been so low in recent years that all records are invaluable.

Records sent in to Bob Hall have confirmed that this species is becoming more widespread in Herefordshire.
At various stages information can also be picked up and aggregated by a Local Records Centre (that can cover either one or several counties) and they have an important role in providing biodiversity data about sites where land use change or building developments are proposed. In some areas Local Record Centres also act as a focal point to encourage and promote active recording and provide feedback or services to local groups. SEWBReC www.sewbrec.org.uk is a good example of this for south east Wales.

As things stand Herefordshire does not have many special interest groups that support biological recording particularly for invertebrates. However, there are experts and enthusiasts living here who respond directly to national societies and perhaps more should be done to bring people together.

A really good way to submit a record is by entering it on-line through through ‘irecord’ at https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/. This system was introduced by the Biological Records Centre to support all recording schemes and the West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation is encouraging its use for butterfly records. It also has several benefits to its users in that it helps you develop your own species lists, site lists and spatially maps where you can see where you have been actively recording. You can download your own records into a spreadsheet for further analysis and see what’s been going on by others near you.

So if you don’t do it already please contribute your records. It all helps with the big picture and should be fun as well.

Ian Draycott

Wood White Project update

First I’d like to thank all the volunteers who have attended our winter work parties. We’ve almost finished all the habitat improvement works planned for Siege Wood, which is great news. None of this, however, would have been possible without BC volunteers, the Ledbury Naturalist group and site owners, thank you. I can’t wait to see how the Wood White population responds.

Fantastic to see all the practical works started at Haugh Wood, with more woodland scallops planned for Wigmore Rolls. This habitat works will hopefully benefit not only Wood White but other key species too, we will just have to wait and see.

I visited a number of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust nature reserves this winter including Nupend, Wessington and Wood Pasture and Rudge End Quarry. At Rudge End we were lucky enough to be there when the Stinking hellebore was in flower! The quarry supports a number of rare limestone plant species, so working here this winter will hopefully benefit the quarry flora as well as the Wood White.

Thanks to BC volunteers we’ve received a number of Wood White records from new sites around the Woolhope Dome and Checkley area since the project began. It would be great to know a little more about some of these sites, especially in regards to the number of Wood White butterflies these sites support and if
they’re breeding. One way of doing this is to set up a Wood White timed count. A timed count is very easy to do, it involves walking a set route three or four times year between May and August and recording how many Wood Whites you see. It’s a great excuse to go for a walk on a sunny day (training provided if needed), if anyone is interested in helping with this please do get in touch.

Planed events for 2018 include guided walks at Mortimer Forest and Monkwood nature reserve, plus hopefully a walk in the Woolhope Dome area to look at Wood Whites.

**Never Rule Out the Unexpected**

On July 24th last summer I walked into our meadow adjacent to our Cottage to see if anything of wildlife interest was evident. My attention was immediately drawn to a small white butterfly fluttering weakly adjacent to a hedge and I walked over to investigate. Closer inspection quickly confirmed that this was not a Small White or a Green-veined White, species normally associated with the habitat, but a Wood White. It soon alighted on a vetch, straggling out of the hedge, which is the species foodplant.

The immediate question that came to mind was from where had the butterfly originated? There are some ancient woodlands in the area of western Herefordshire where they have been recorded, but the nearest is some two kilometres distant. But this woodland is a PAWS site, a Plantation on an Ancient Woodland site, which had been clear-felled in the 1960s and planted with conifers.

What is of particular interest with this record is that it is well known that the Wood White is a weak flyer, and not particularly adept at dispersal, certainly not over large distances. Of equal interest is that this was not the first time in over forty years of recording that we undertaken from our Cottage that we have recorded a Wood White on our patch. Trawling through my butterfly records I have a note that one was recorded in the garden on 31st May 1997 an another on 22nd June 2004.

The literature tells me that the Wood White is essentially a spring-time butterfly but has two distinct periods of emergence in any one year, the first (and main) emergence between mid-May and mid-June and a second partial brood in late July and early August, so it would appear our latest ‘find’ is from the later second brood.

The message conveyed here is that the natural world is full of unexpected surprises. Clearly the Wood White is able to disperse, despite its seemingly laborious and laboured flight, and has the ability to re-establish and re-colonise new areas should the habitat be suitable.

**A White Letter Day**

Today, the 20th June 2017 is the eve of Midsummer and it has been in the high twenties (thirty one degrees yesterday). I went out at ten o’ clock this morning before the sun was too strong. I walked across the fields to the edge of the woodland brook. I’d hoped to see a Speckled Wood, one of my favourites with rich brown wings patterned with cream lace. The lines are sharply defined with cream circled eye spots. A larger dark butterfly intruded, flapping across my view; a Peacock flashing its purple blue eye threatening any
passing predator.

My binoculars caught movement in the shadows, two blue Damselflies flying zigzag across the brook. A small butterfly flew in and rested on fresh green leaves of a coppiced Alder, with its brown wings tightly closed. It was similar in size to a female Small Copper. Each wing had a spidery white line running across it as if a frail hand had marked each one. The insect turned and I saw a bright orange and black band ending in a triangular flash of jet black tipped with white at the tail.

I wanted to shout out to someone, to share the moment. I'd been hoping to see this species and today I was in the right place at the right time.....it was a White-letter Hairstreak. I stared through the binoculars holding my breath enjoying the moment. It wasn't until it flew off that I remembered I had my camera in my pocket with its newly charged batteries at the ready! But the joy and privilege of sharing that moment will stay in my head far longer than any photograph.

The brook runs along the boundary of two of our fields and old woodland. In spring we've seen the flowers and disc-shaped fruits of a few elms amidst mature trees of Ash and Oak. I knew that an elm towered above this coppiced alder and this information completed the jigsaw puzzle.

As this sighting was on the twentieth of June I can only assume that this butterfly had hatched early, encouraged by the scorching heat of the last few days.

Third of July in 26 degree heat, I walked over the fields watching Ringlets, Meadow Browns and a Six spot Burnet moth weaving their ways through the flowers and grasses. I couldn’t resist taking another look at the elm tree.

After twenty minutes peering through my binoculars I caught a movement, a flutter and there stood a tiny White-letter Hairstreak. It took its time walking over the leaf then hiding underneath another. I’m wondering if this one was a female looking for the right place to lay its eggs. The books suggest that it is the males that spend time high in the tree tops feeding on the honeydew.

I tried another sighting on the fifth of July with no success. After an hour of patient scanning I saw no sign of that elusive butterfly. The only satisfaction was catching sight of 16 Small White butterflies fluttering their wings in deep footprints made by the sheep in the damp vegetation of our drought-stricken pool. A red Admiral and a bright orange Comma joined them. They reminded me of a scene from a Nature film on tropical rainforests. Today, the sixth day of intense heat, I've left the vacuum cleaner in situ, having only done half the job by 10 20 a.m. I wanted to see if there was any sign of the Hairstreak. I knew the best time would be between 10.30a.m and 11 30a.m because after that the sun has moved off the lower branches of the elm.

What with sun-hat, jacket and wellies, I was already hot when I reached the tree. But within five minutes I saw the little butterfly. It landed on a branch and wandered slowly along leaf tantalisingly in and out of sight. This was the same pattern as before. Then it flew to another branch. This happened three more times and each time I found the tiny butterfly following the same behaviour.

Something caught my edge of vision on this fifth sighting....a second White-letter Hairstreak flew across and landed on a shady branch. Quickly I scanned back to the first one. It was difficult to see, as it was 'end on' and had a very thin profile. Yes, there really were two. How lucky I felt, to be sharing a moment with two special butterflies.

One book said, 'all you need to see this butterfly are a folding chair, a pair of binoculars and a flask and ... ... wait.' I think I would add a load of patience and persistence to that list.

The first time I had ever seen a Hairstreak butterfly was in July 1994 on a butterfly walk led by Martyn Davies in Haugh Wood, Herefordshire. He knew its behaviour pattern and as if by magic one appeared on cue! Martyn stressed the reliance of this species on elm trees. Since the loss of our own elms in the late 60's
we have been noting down any survivors.


Christine d’Albert 6th July 2017

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**Some Herefordshire Moth Highlights from 2017**

Moth recording in my Bodenham garden continues to throw up some surprises. In 2017, the confirmed highlights include two species which are new to Herefordshire. A Yarrow Pug was only discovered by dissection and is a slightly surprising addition to our Herefordshire list. It may well have been an immigrant. Stathmopoda pedella, a micro moth that has recently occurred in Worcester, has also spread into Herefordshire. I trapped one in Bodenham on 14th June, another was beaten from alder by Aaron Woods at Wofferwood Common on 2nd July.

Obscure Wainscot was new for my garden and continues to appear in the county, following records in the previous two years. Other reed feeding species are spreading. Phyl King trapped the county’s first Brown-veined Wainscot in 2017. Calamotropha paludella has become a regular here. Another wetland species, Marsh Oblique-barred was trapped by Peter Hall at Brockhampton. This is another species which is new for our county list.

The lovely micro Metalampra italica showed up here in Bodenham twice, in June and July and now seems well established in the county, following the first records from Newton St Margaret’s and Colwall. There have been several in Hereford city this year (JW).

The first modern Herefordshire record of Homoeosoma nebulella occurred at Bodenham on 22nd August. Pammene spiniana occurred on the same night but was less surprising as it had been recorded in the previous two years in Bodenham.

Whilst it was not a classic year for migration there were spells in June when Silver Y’s, Diamond-backed moth, Rush Veneer and my garden’s 2nd record for Ni moth arrived. Another Ni moth was taken by John Walshe in Hereford city a few days later, along with a Small Marbled.

Hummingbird Hawk-moths were the only migrant hawk-moth reported to me. They were seen widely through the county. Late October produced a good wave of immigrants including 5 Vestals from Hereford (J W), 3 in Bodenham, 3 in Bringsty Common plus others elsewhere. Scarce Bordered Straw was seen in Bodenham and Hereford plus a Palpita vitrealis in Bodenham.

Scarlet Tiger moth has spread throughout the county and was widely reported. It was doing particularly well in Hereford city where John Walshe also found numbers of Small Ranunculus along with 2 Cypress Pugs, following his county first in 2016. Surprisingly, he also found 2 ancient woodland Elm feeders; Clouded Magpie and Blomer’s Rivulet in the city. Dwarf Cream Waves were also very unexpected from the city as previously only known to occur rarely in the south east of the county. Elsewhere on the Doward, Ian Draycott recorded Mompha divisella.
which is new for the county and what is probably the first modern record of Epinotia signatana and the Plume moth, Merrifieldia baliadactylus. Pyrausta nigrata continues to do well on White Rocks, along with Beech Green Carpet and Waved Carpet. Devon Carpet now seems to have spread throughout much of the county.

For me, the VC 36 Herefordshire record of the year goes to Peter Hall who trapped an Agrotera nemoralis, a presumed migrant, in Haugh Wood. Other good records from Haugh Wood include 5 Salebriopsis albicilla, following the county first in 2006 by Jeff Rush and the first recent Brown Scallops. A Double Line was recorded also.

Peter also found an example of Aproaerema anthyllidella at Bringsty Common, the first since the 19th century. The fifth county record for Dichomeris alacella, and second record for Brockhampton in as many years. Acleris logiana was at Bringsty, which is further evidence of this conifer specialist spreading from Scotland.

Peter was again successful in assembling male Emperor moths to his reared virgin females in the Spring at Bringsty. The distribution of this handsome species is very uncertain in Herefordshire. Some research with the newly available pheromone could pay big dividends. There were reports from Ceredigion in 2016 of male Emperors following a car as it left a site where lures had been left out, so it seems to work.

Whilst these records demonstrate some of the changes in the lepidoptera world, it doesn’t reflect the continuing dramatic decline in both numbers and diversity of our species. We must all work to conserve the little we have left.

**Robin Hemming**

*(The photographs in the main body of this article are the new finds or rediscoveries. Below are some of the other moths mentioned in his article chosen for their colour or form - Ed)*

- **Eurasian sunflower moth** - *Homoeosoma nebulella*
- **Beautiful Pearl** - *Agrotera nemoralis*
- **Aproaerema anthyllidella**
- **Beech Green Carpet** - *Colostygia olivata*
- **Clouded Magpie** - *Abraxas sylvata*
- **Blomer’s Rivulet** - *Venusia blomeri*
- **Devon Carpet** - *Lampropteryx otregiata*
- **Small Marbled** - *Eublemma parva*
- **Pyrausta nigrata**
- **Rush Veneer** - *Nomophila noctuella*
- **Vestal** - *Rhodometra sacraria*
Community Mothing in the Golden Valley

I have been an active moth enthusiast for nearly ten years but since moving to Herefordshire my garden space has shrunk considerably. My previous residence was a sumptuous garden full of cultivated and wild areas and a magnet for moths in a sub-urban area. On arriving in Peterchurch in the Golden Valley I found my garden to be not so impressive though the quality of moths arriving was. However, I couldn’t help thinking that if I set up a trap in better areas around the village my catch rate would be higher. So, I linked up with members of the Golden Valley Fish and Wildlife Association to set up a community moth trapping initiative to better understand the lepidopteran diversity. Members would open up their garden to a skinner trap marvel at the catch and then tally them all up in the morning. This also had the added benefit of allowing me and others to indulge in the wine and snacks that hosts kindly provided. It’s a social thing as much as anything else and someone staying with one of the hosts remarked ‘I can’t believe I have had so much fun tonight!’

To date we have had 8 community trapping nights alongside my own personal ones and this has currently amassed 283 species. I am sure a few micros got away and this is only the second year of the project. However we have made some interesting discoveries.

Of note are a good population of Garden Tiger (Arctia caja) around the valley. With numbers crashing over the last 50 years it is great to see them thriving in my local patch. Of course, it is the large moths that people are wowed by and we have a fair number of them. They included Elephant hawk moth (Deilephila elpenor), Red Underwing (Catocola nupta) and Swallowtail moth (Ourapteryx sambucaria). Even Brimstone moths (Opisthograptis luteolata) are unseen by many people and caused a stir. In fact they were the most commonly recorded moth over the period. I was particularly taken with the capture of a Gold-spot (Plusia festucae) as I had never seen one before, similarly I found a Leopard moth (Zeuzera pyrina) in my garden one morning. Another moth I have rarely seen is the Oak Eggar (Lasiocampa quercus) which flew into the trap between sips of wine. It even laid its beautiful eggs in the pot. Instead of placing them on some oak I was careful to put them on a heather bush as they do not feed on oak at all! The name comes from the egg-like cocoon they produce.

Probably one of the rarer moths we found was the Cloaked Carpet (Euphyia biangulata) which although common in Herefordshire, is localised in the UK as a whole. Another species of local rarity is the Alder Kitten (Furcula bicuspis), not unlikely to turn up as I live fairly close to the River Dore. Although not rare who can claim to have seen the lobster moth (Stauropus fagi) caterpillar? I still haven’t but had an adult to the trap at least. Another of my favourites showed up; the Old Lady (Mormo maura). At around the same time two people had emailed me to say that they had a huge moth in their kitchen and was this species – obviously the time for it! Other BAP research species to turn up included Ear Moth (Amphipoea oculea), Sallow (Cirrhia icteritia) and Green Brindled Crescent (Allophyes oxyacanthae).

During the course of 2017 I even decided to hold a moth breakfast under the aegis of my community interest company Cultivating Learning and Nature CIC.
To my utter amazement around 50 people showed up and we even ran out of bacon twice for the butties that were being sold! There were of course lots of nice moths as well and Ray Birchenough who has been trapping for about 80 years brought along some lovely Privet Hawkmoths (Sphinx ligustri) he had bred.

Going into the autumn period I had some lovely typical species such as Frosted Orange (Gortyna flavago), Autumnal Rustic (Eugnorisma glareosa) and the Sallow (Cirrhia icteritia). But there was one moth I had been trying to catch for years. Even when I worked at a country park with amazing woodland, meadows, reed swamp and lake it wasn’t to be found. I had a hunch that the night of the 15th October would be just right, the temperature was warm, the night still. Creeping out on the next morning – which moth should I see first? Yes, there perched on a box outside the trap was the Merveille du jour (Dichonia aprilina). There was even another one within the trap. That’s the beauty of moth trapping – it always surprises and in 2018 we will be continuing our endeavours.

P.S. We did find some micros by the way – I just haven’t got any good pictures of them!

Tim Kaye is an ecologist and environmental educator (CLaN CIC) tim@clan-cic.org and member of the Golden Valley Fish and Wildlife Association

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Butterfly Monitoring and Butterfly Transects

Many of you will have heard of the monitoring process called Butterfly transects and in the next few pages of this newsletter you will find the results of two such transects carried out in Haugh Wood. The section below is an abridged account of how these transects are carried out and is taken UKBMS (United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme) website. There are 10 transects taking place in Herefordshire each year but it would be good if we had more or if more people could be involved.

If you are interested in getting involved please contact me (01432 266703, 11 Rowland Close, HEREFORD HR1 1XF or martyn.davies808@gmail.com)
**Fixed-route transects (Pollard Walks):**

These transects form the core of the UKBMS (United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme) with over 1,200 different transects walked in the first 30 years of the scheme (1976-2005). New transect sites are added annually with well over a thousand now recorded annually. Named after Ernie Pollard who helped design and pilot the methodology with colleagues, these transect walks provide the highest quality data within the UKBMS as they are walked weekly during a 26-week period between 1st April and 29th September each year. This allows calculation of robust measurements of changes in butterfly populations for over 50 species and production of site level trends when sufficient years of data have been collected. Additionally, it allows the generation of flight periods from which data from other simpler survey methods, can be compared and subsequently utilised when on their own they cannot.

The predominant type of monitoring employed is the ‘Pollard Walk’. In brief, this is a fixed-route walk (**transect**) which is established at a site on which butterflies are recorded along the route on a regular (**weekly**) basis under reasonable weather conditions for a number of years. Transect routes are chosen to sample evenly the habitat types and management activity on sites. Care is taken in choosing a transect route as it must then remain fixed to enable butterfly sightings to be compared from year to year. Transects are typically about 2-4km long, taking between 45 minutes and two hours to walk, and are divided into sections corresponding to different habitat or management units.

Butterflies are recorded in a fixed width band (typically 5m wide) along the transect each week from the beginning of April until the end of September yielding, ideally, 26 counts per year. Transect walks are undertaken between 10.45am and 3.45pm and only when weather conditions are suitable for butterfly activity. Weather conditions have a considerable effect on the numbers of butterflies seen. To ensure that the counts are standardised as much as possible:-

1. Transects are not walked when the temperature is below 13°C (in northern upland areas this may be reduced to 11°C)
2. Between 13-17°C, a transect may be walked providing there is at least 60% sun
3. Above 17°C, a transect may be walked in any conditions, providing it is not actually raining
4. When wind speeds are above 5 on the Beaufort scale, transects should not be walked

Due to the vagaries of the British and Irish weather, it is rare in practice to achieve a full set of 26 weekly counts. However, even with a small number of missing values they are extremely valuable.

**Haugh Wood**

This one of the premier sites in Herefordshire and indeed the West Midlands. Its size and the way that the planting has developed over the years means that there is a mix of habitats within the wood and also a rich diversity of animals and plants. It has been the subject of a number of management plans over the last forty years and it has been the recipient of conservation activity by both paid contractors and volunteers such as the Haugh Wood Crew, of whom more later. It is bisected by the minor road from Mordiford to Woolhope. At the top of the hill there is a car park and on the map above the red dotted line is the walk found in the “Butterflies of the West Midlands”.
Two major scientific studies at least have been carried out on butterfly populations within the wood over the past 35 years. In 2008/9 a study entitled “*Leptidea sinapis* (Wood White Butterfly) egg-laying habitat and adult dispersal studies in Herefordshire” carried out S.A. Clarke, D.G. Green, J. Joy, K. Wollen and I. Butler was completed and along with further studies in both Herefordshire and Shropshire has helped lead to the West Midlands “Wood White Project”. Before that during the three year period from 1984-6 a project was conducted on the “White-letter Hairstreak”. This projected investigated the lifespan and movement of individuals which were part of a large colony in the wood, we also investigated the distribution of the butterfly nationally and various other aspects of its life history. All of this resulted in the little book on the butterfly published by Butterfly Conservation in 1989.

Below you will find the transect results for Haugh Wood North and South with a summary written by our recorder, Bob Hall. A quick count of the species found on the list gives a total of 25 for 2017 but this a pale shadow of what has been recorded in the wood historically. If we add on the Dark Green Fritillary recorded last year for the first time in 30+ years and also the Brown Argus found about five years ago for the first time and the fact that we now have the Essex skipper in the wood then the list goes up to 27. I recorded the last High Brown Fritillary in 1984, whilst working on the White-letter Hairstreak, we also recorded Green Hairstreak at the same time. During 1983/4 Clouded Yellow were found in the wood and White Admiral were widespread especially on the South side. The Wall was a less common visitor but the Small Copper could be found on most of the rides at the appropriate time and I am fairly certain that there was a small colony of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries there as well as Grizzled Skipper on the Southern edge of the wood. Add all of these highly desirable species onto the current list and you reach a total of 35! Some we could get back perhaps after some additional clearance and with the encouragement of their foodplants such White Admiral, Small Copper and Green Hairstreak but others will at the best be rare visitors such as the Clouded Yellow and Wall. The two fritillaries I would imagine are lost for ever!

Whilst marking White-letter Hairstreak in Haugh Wood we found this aberration, and as a result a trip to the Natural History Museum to photograph the other aberrations of this butterfly followed. This aberration is known as *ab. albovirgata* which translates as “white striped”.

Other aberrations have been recorded in the wood from time to time. An all black White Admiral *ab. nigrina* flew for a time on the bottom edge of the wood close to where the “Crew” are scrub clearing currently. I have also seen an aberration of the Comma know as *ab. suffusa* where the distinct markings are absent and replaced by coloured blocks of colour of a plum pink and related shades.

Aberrations of some species are very rare other species produce many; they are thought to be produced by temperature fluctuations at some stage during the larva’s development, and so will not breed true as they are not genetically based.

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**Haugh Wood North: Butterfly Transect Trends 2006-2017**

**Skippers**

*Large Skipper* numbers have been steady in the last 4 years with a peak of 29 in 2014. The species has recovered well from low counts in 2008/09.
Essex Skippers are certainly present in Haugh Wood, as shown by the Skipper survey at nearby Wessington HWT reserve in 2016. The distinguishing features of Small and Essex Skippers are hard for transect walkers to discern when walking transects, so these two species are banded together for transect results. Combined numbers peaked in 2013 with 31, since when there has been a dramatic decline with no records in 2017. Is this a genuine decline or have we recorders simply missed them?

Whites.
The nationally rare Wood White has been found in consistent numbers in the north side of Haugh Wood with a maximum count of 212 in 2014. Since then numbers have declined slightly with an overall count of 108 in 2017. The average count for the 10 year period 2006-2015 was 119. Brimstone, Large White and Small White are generally found in small numbers, with maximum counts of 7 for Brimstone in 2016, 64 for Large Whites in 2010 and 60 for Small White in 2013. The ubiquitous Green Veined White achieved a maximum count of 205 in 2014 with smaller numbers since then. Orange Tips numbers peaked in 2011 with 55, but 2017 was a relatively good year with a count of 20.

Blues.
Purple Hairstreak have not been recorded on the north side of Haugh Wood since 2013, although almost certainly they are under-recorded here as elsewhere. A single White letter Hairstreak was seen in 2015, but that was the first record since 2008. Small Copper numbers peaked in 2010 with 14, since when numbers have declined rapidly. There have been no records since 2013. Common Blue numbers peaked in 2010 with 114 records. Also good numbers in the last couple of years with 33 in 2016 and 59 in 2017. It is significant that many of these records are found in transect 7, whose verges are full of Birds Foot Trefoil, the foodplant. Holly Blue are really garden butterflies, so it is no surprise that numbers of this species remain low.

Nymphalidae.
White Admirals have not been recorded in Haugh Wood north since a solitary record in 2010. Red Admirals had a good year in 2017 with a total count of 26, although this is almost certainly an underestimate. Painted Ladies last had a good year in 2009 when 37 were counted. Since then only very small numbers as predicted invasions of these migrants failed to materialise. Small Tortoiseshells peaked in 2011 with 16, since when they have gone into a depressing decline. Incredibly, there were no records for this once common insect
from all of the transect walks in 2017 in Haugh Wood North. Is this just the work of the parasitic wasp? *Peacocks* too seem to be in terminal decline, peaking in 2013 with 107. The last 4 years have seen counts of 72, 47, 17 and just 7 in 2017. The obvious question is why? *Commas* have fared better than these last two with a peak of 19 records in 2010. *The Pearl-bordered Fritillary* numbers peaked at 22 before it started raining in 2012. None have been seen since 2015. *Silver Washed Fritillary* numbers peaked in 2015 with 27, but they also had a good year in 2017. The total of 10 records for 2017 is possibly conservative.

**Browns.**
 *Speckled Wood* are consistent in numbers with a maximum of 93 in 2013 and 14. *Gatekeepers* peaked in 2008 with 212, since when their numbers seem in decline. *Meadow Brown* showed a maximum of 176 in 2013, with a count of 99 in 2017. *Marbled White* have not been recorded in the north since 2006, but *Ringlets* still rank as the most abundant butterfly overall. The max count was 866 in 2014.

**Summary**
Concern for these species: Pearl bordered Fritillary, Small/Essex Skipper, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. We must clearly continue monitor these species in 2018 and beyond, to see if these declines are permanent or just a temporary blip.

Acknowledgements.
Kate Wollen of Forestry Commission for organising the transect counts, Kate and Robin Hemming for organising the Butterfly Conservation winter work parties, and my fellow transect walkers.

**Haugh Wood South: Butterfly Transect Trends 2015-2017**

**Skippers.**
 *Large Skipper* numbers have been steady in the last 3 years with a good count of 33 in 2017. *Essex Skippers* are certainly present in Haugh Wood, as shown by the Skipper survey at nearby Wessington HWT reserve in 2016. The totals combined for Essex and Small Skippers for the South was 2 for 2017, thus seeming to confirm the decline shown in the north.

**Whites.**
The nationally rare *Wood White* has been found in consistent numbers in the south side of Haugh Wood with a maximum count of 212 in 2015. Since then numbers have declined slightly with an overall count of 104 in 2017.

*Brimstone, Large White* and *Small White* are generally found in reasonable numbers; Brimstones showed a maximum of 18 in 2015, Large White 55 in 2015 and Small White 44 records in 2015. The ubiquitous *Green Veined White* also showed reasonable numbers in 2017 with a maximum of 106 in 2016. *Orange Tips*: 2017 was a relatively good year with a count of 40.

**Blues.**
*Purple Hairstreak* found only in small numbers, but this butterfly is definitely under-recorded owing to its habit of appearing in late afternoon. *White letter hairstreaks* had a relatively good year in 2017, although numbers remain low.

*Common Blue* numbers have declined from 79 to 25 to just 6 in the last 3 years. This is an interesting comparison with north, where numbers are much healthier.
Nymphalidae.
*Red Admirals* had a good year in 2017 with a total count of 43, although this is almost certainly an underestimate. *Painted Ladies* being migrants, are very variable. There were no records in Haugh Wood South in 2017. *Small Tortoiseshells* produced only 4 records in 2017, marking a sharp decline. *Peacocks* too seem to be in terminal decline. The last 3 years have seen counts of 57, 14 and just 6. This decline is mirrored in the north. *Commas* have fared better than these last two. *The Pearl-bordered Fritillary* numbers have gone into steep decline, the last three years showing 15, 12 then just 2 in 2017. *Silver Washed Fritillary* numbers peaked in 2015 with 20, with 18 records in 2017, although this is almost certainly an underestimate.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Haugh Wood South Butterfly Annual Summary 2017</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
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<td>Small Skipper</td>
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<td>Small/Essex Skipper</td>
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<td>Wood White</td>
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<td>Large White</td>
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<td>Green-veined White</td>
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<td>Orange Tip</td>
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<td>Purple Hairstreak</td>
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<td>White-letter Hairstreak</td>
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<td>Common Blue</td>
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<td>Holly Blue</td>
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<td>Red Admiral</td>
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<td>Comma</td>
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<td>Pearl-bordered Fritillary</td>
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<td>Silver-washed Fritillary</td>
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<td>Speckled Wood</td>
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<td>Meadow Brown</td>
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<td>Ringlet</td>
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<td>Total (Summary)</td>
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Browns.
*Speckled Wood* also seem to be in decline with a maximum of 134 in 2016, followed by just 56 records in 2017. *Gatekeepers* peaked in 2015 with 253 records falling to just 78 records in 2017. *Meadow Brown* showed a maximum of 178 in 2015, with a count of 125 in 2017. *Marbled White* are present in small numbers but *Ringlets* still rank as the most abundant butterfly overall. The max count was 874 in 2015.

**Comment**
During 2017, a number of weeks were missed for a variety of reasons, weather in the second half of the season being an important factor. Clearly, the numbers recorded in 2017 particularly for those butterflies flying in July and August are below what they actually were.

**Summary**
Concern for these species: Pearl bordered Fritillary, Small/Essex Skipper, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. We must clearly continue to monitor these species in 2018 and beyond, to see if these declines are permanent or just a temporary blip.

**Acknowledgements.**
Kate Wollen of Forestry Commission for organising the transect counts, Kate and Robin Hemming for organising the Butterfly Conservation winter work parties, and my fellow transect walkers.

*Bob Hall*       January 2018
The Haugh Wood Crew

The Haugh wood crew have been continuing their winter work days on the South side of the wood. The work has been on the ride at the Southern edge of the wood from the intersection with the small pool. Continuing from last winter’s work days we have been clearing scrub that has been cut by Forest Enterprise contractors. We had more than fifteen members helping on the January 2018 day and were able to clear a substantial distance along the ride.

This management should be of benefit to Wood Whites that are found along this ride, but also should help with dispersal of species within the wood. This ride used to be one favoured by White Admiral but this management may not be suitable for them, although there are other adjacent rides that would be.

There are two further work days in Haugh wood, these are planned for February 3rd and March 3rd, meet at the car park for 10:00 am and then drive through the wood to the work site. If you have never been before and fancy joining us then please turn up before 10.00am.

Andy Nicholls

Ewyas Harold Meadows and Common Report Winter 2017

The snow that fell in December has caused quite a lot of damage on the reserve, with fences down under the weight, so a Conservation “Day of Action” is planned on Saturday 10th March to clear the fences ready for contractors to put in new fences. The Day of Action is all part of the 50th Anniversary celebrations and everyone is welcome to come and help!

We are very grateful to Lloyd Reed, a Commoner and adjacent landowner, for putting his 9 sheep into the reserve. Grazing the reserve is always a challenge so having such a local
grazier is great. Lloyd is hoping to increase his flock!

The winter work parties on the Common started in September, with tasks on 3rd Saturday and 1st Tuesday of each month. We had a good day in October (left) with Ian, Dilys, Sue Young and Arthur starting to clear small scrub from the Pearl-bordered Fritillary areas. The work parties on the Common have been curtailed somewhat by wet and snowy weather, but clearance work has still taken place, although snow fall did eventually stop play on 6th February!

Thanks especially to Richard Smith from South Wales branch for coming over on 2 occasions to help on the Common.

The transfer of the ownership of the Common from the current Lord of the Manor to a newly constituted Charitable Incorporated Organisation is progressing and will hopefully be completed by the end of March. More updates on this in the next newsletter.

Lucy Morton  Reserves Officer

Members Evening

Wednesday, 28th March 2018
7.00pm
Eignbrook URC,
Elgn Street,
Hereford.
HR4 0AP

Between the Horse and Groom and the Beer in Hand public houses on the Brecon Road out of Hereford.

Speakers include :
Peter Seal - Chairman West Midlands Branch “News from the West Midlands.”
Lucy Morton - Reserves Officer Butterfly Conservation “Her Work in the West Midlands & Ewyas Harold Common in Particular.”
Tim Kaye—Golden Valley Fish and Wildlife Assoc’n - “Organising a Community Mothing Project.”
The choice of the Comma as the symbol for the West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation was wholly appropriate. Throughout the 19th Century the butterfly was widespread throughout the southern half of the country, south of a line from the Mersey to The Wash. Its larval foodplants, which are Common Nettle - *Urtica dioica*, Wych Elm – *Ulmus glabra*, Hop – *Humulus lupulus* and Currants - *Ribes spp*, were all widely spread through this area and to a lesser extent further north. Then towards the end of the 19th century it started to disappear from large tracts of this area until by 1910 it had almost disappeared except for the area of the Wye valley and to a lesser extent the Severn valley – Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. One reason given for this decline was a change in the cultivation of hops in the other areas where they were grown which did not happen here. The other and perhaps more likely explanation is a period of localised cooling resulting in a withdrawal from the east of the country. Then from the 1930’s onwards it has spread out gain and can now be found over the whole of England and Wales, well into Scotland and it has been recorded both in the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland.

Emma Sarah Gill moved from Llyswen, Breconshire to Kimbolton when she was 12 in 1832 and remained there until she died in 1905. She married the rector of Kimbolton in 1847; his name was Rev Thomas Hutchinson and his aunt, Mary, had married the poet William Wordsworth. Emma’s husband was a keen botanist and it was probably whilst out walking with her husband and seeing butterflies that she started to become interested but when her 5 year old son Thomas captured a Swallowtail Moth – *Ourapteryx sambucaria* her interest really took off. Over the ensuing years she built up a collection of over 15,000 specimens which her daughter gave to the British Museum in 1937. She worked out the life-cycles for some Lepidoptera for the first time and bred many of them at home.

Perhaps she is best known for her observations on the our butterfly, the Comma. It was she who noticed that the 1st brood adults came in two different colour forms and that their emergence dates were different despite the fact that the eggs were all laid at roughly the same time. The pale form emerge first late June/early July, mate and lay their eggs which in turn all hatch out as the dark form (2nd Brood) in August/September and then survive the winter in hibernation. The other caterpillars from the first brood develop much more slowly taking 12-14 days longer to develop. When they hatch they are all of the dark form and they do not mate and lay eggs but feed ready to go into hibernation along with the 2rd brood adults. The darker form would probably warm up more quickly on those days when there is less sunlight or its angle of incidence to the earth is less, and thus they could fly earlier in the day and probably for longer an advantage in early spring when looking for nectar or a mate. In honour of her work with this butterfly the light form was named as *f. hutchinsoni*. The reason for the delayed emergence of some of the caterpillars in the 1st brood is not known for certain, but factors either known to have an impact or possibilities are day length, larval food plant and temperature.

Martyn G Davies
Your local officers

The following are officers of the West Midlands Branch and have specific responsibilities for Herefordshire. I would like to thank them for the work they are doing. Long may it continue!

Regional Officers Dr Jenny Joy* and Rhona Goddard*
County Leader Dean Fenton,
Conservation Officer (Herefs) Ian Hart,
Moth Officer Robin Hemming,
Ewyas Harold Reserve Manager Ian Hart,
West Midlands Reserve Officer Lucy Moreton *

* These ladies are all employees of Butterfly Conservation

Butterfly Conservation

50th Anniversary

Conservation - Day of Action

Ewyas Harold Meadows Reserve

Saturday 10th March

10am- 3pm

To help us celebrate 50 years of BC, come and join us for all or part of the day carrying out practical conservation work on our reserve. All tools provided. Please bring a packed lunch, a drink and gloves if you have them.

Meet 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.

There will be a 10 minute walk into the reserve.
We have been asked to run a “Butterfly Identification Day” for a local HWT group and we wondered if some of our own members would be interested in such a day?

It would be open to all members and free of charge (Non-members welcome £3.00 each?)

Martyn Davies:
martyn.davies808@gmail.com
01432266703 or
11 Rowland Close, HEREFORD. HR1 1XF

Let me know by Members Evening so that we can organise a venue for the morning and the weather for the afternoon.

Stop Press

I had just completed the Newsletter when I received this email from Robin Hemming - it was too important to leave out.

Hi Everyone

You are cordially invited to a meeting of Herefordshire’s active moth trappers and recorders at The Swan Inn, 171 Aylestone Hill, Hereford HR1 1JJ on Monday 26th February 2018 at 7:30pm.

This is your chance to meet Phyl King, our macro moth recorder and Peter Hall, our micro recorder and to discuss all aspects of developing and promoting future recording in Herefordshire (VC36). It is their chance to meet you and to discuss how we can most meet their needs in submitting and verifying records.

Butterfly Conservation West Midland branch is developing an atlas of Worcestershire and Herefordshire moth distribution for its website and we need to ensure its accuracy and continuity. Your records will be invaluable to this task.

It is also an opportunity for me to promote the Garden Moth Scheme (GMS) and to introduce John Walshe who is taking over from me as Herefordshire co-ordinator, if he is free to attend the meeting.

The Landlord of the White Swan has kindly said we can use space at the rear of the pub. It is a popular dining pub and if you wish to eat I suggest you arrive at 6:30pm and eat before the meeting.

Best wishes

Robin

PS If you know of any other Herefordshire recorders who I’ve not included please forward this email to them. I know there are others out there and the more complete coverage we can get the better it will be.

Butterfly Conservation is a charity registered in England and Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)