

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION – WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at Woolhope Village Hall, Herefordshire on Saturday 17 November 2017

Present:	Peter Seal (Chairman) Joy Stevens (Secretary) Plus 25 members
Apologies:	Dave Jackson, Ian Hart, Simon Primrose, Mike Southall, Dean Fenton, Jenny Joy, Rex Eckley, Ian Duncan

Minutes of last meeting and Matters Arising:

The Chairman presented a brief summary of the minutes of the previous AGM. It was pointed out that it was difficult to comment on the minutes when there were only limited print-outs available at the meeting. It was explained that only a few copies had been printed out in an effort to reduce waste and be more environmentally friendly. It was hoped to post future minutes on the revamped website. There were no matters arising.

Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts to 31 March 2017

Copies of the financial report were available at the meeting. The Treasurer reported that, looking ahead to 2018, it was anticipated that the branch would have £20-£30,000 in hand to meet known commitments, having spent over £17,000 in the previous year. Receipts from membership subscriptions cover newsletter expenses and general committee running costs, which means that all basic costs are covered.

Matters Arising

Nick Williams asked if the query had been resolved regarding funds generated from Grafton Wood, being taken over by Head Office. The Chairman explained that branch does not see the accounts for Grafton, as it is dealt with by Head Office. John Tilt explained that in the past he had worked to a budget but he no longer received this information. The Treasurer explained that, although she did not have details, it did appear that any money raised was spent at Grafton.

Lucy Morton explained that Worcs Wildlife Trust receives all the stewardship payments and tabled a copy of the accounts. She also promised to ensure that Lucy Lewis receive copies in future. Additionally, Mike Williams suggested that John Tilt be kept better informed. The Chairman said that he had raised a query but had not received a response.

It was pointed out that branch set aside funds for tooling. The Chair stressed the need for the branch to make its spending plans clear in order to ensure retention of funds raised within the West Midlands. As an example, within the "Butterflies of the West Midlands" book, it was clearly stated that proceeds from its sale would be used to cover expenditure in the West Midlands branch area. Funds were also raised from various branch activities. Proposals for projects which may benefit from financial support from the branch, were requested from the membership.

The Treasurer further explained that most of the £16,000 already generated from book sales, was allocated, plus there were funds ring-fenced for certain projects, leaving around £6,000 in general funds.

Mike Williams proposed that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. This was seconded by Nick Williams and agreed unanimously.

Chairman's Report

This was presented with the aid of slides, highlights included:

20th anniversary in 2017 for Grafton Wood with coverage included in the national magazine
2018 would mark the 50th anniversary of Butterfly Conservation - few details had been received to date but a day of action was planned for 10 March. Further events to be advised.

In 2019 West Midlands branch will be celebrating its 40th anniversary - suggestions on suitable events to mark the occasion to be considered by the committee during 2018

Mid-week work parties - the growing relevance of mid-week work parties was highlighted. Ewyas Harold had initiated monthly Tuesday work parties in addition to the regular Saturday monthly arrangement.

At Grafton, attendance had been down at the regular Wednesday events.

Work parties had been planned in January and February at Malvern Hills to benefit Graylings.

Wyre Forest work parties arranged for 2nd Sunday of month plus additional mid-week dates - full details in Comma and on the website.

Full programme of work parties had been arranged in connection with the Wood White project.

The new members' event in Worcs. had not been well supported despite good advertising.

Robin Hemming commented that events seemed to be more successful if run with other groups, e.g. wildlife trusts. This was borne out by comments from the floor.

Opportunities and Threats

Latest membership 1500, showing a slow but steady increase

Wood White project - the Chairman highlighted the work carried out by Rhona Goddard, referring to the detailed report in the Comma. In reply, Rhona thanked everyone for their support. Practical work to date had been worthwhile with more planned.

Specifically, Haugh Wood seemed to be struggling, for reasons not known. On the other hand, Monkwood had been particularly successful.

A potential threat included the proposal for a substantial housing development at Swynnerton army barracks, which is an important site in Staffs for Grizzled and Dingy Skipper. It was agreed that the situation needed to be monitored.

Finishing on a positive note, BBC Midlands Today had featured the work led by Mel Mason at Malvern Hills to improve conditions there for the population of Graylings.

Election of Committee

The Chairman pointed out that his 3 year tenure in the office was at an end but, in view of the fact that no one had agreed to take over the role, he was prepared to stand for a further year. This was proposed by Nick Williams, seconded by Bob Hall and passed unanimously.

The committee was re-elected en-bloc.

Website

John Tilt presented a slide show to illustrate the progress to date with the new website. It had not yet been possible to launch completely but much work had been carried out with a great deal of data input. It is designed to operate on i-phones and small tablets, clicking on tiles and drop down menus. Several volunteers were acting as proof readers but John requested notification of any errors spotted by users of the site.

A brief summary of the features of the website is given below:

Options included: Species, Reserves, News, Recording, Events, Sites, Site Mapping, Contacts, Comma, Shop, More (Inc links)

Information was being built up and details of sites were requested.

There were issues to resolve, e.g. it does not work with Windows XP.

Data was continually being updated to include latest distribution data.

John demonstrated how to access the contents by means of screen dumps.

The information on moths shown was not yet up to date. It was intended to follow the Staffs' moth website set up by Craig Slawton who was prepared to carry out a similar exercise for the rest of the region.

Peter Seal proposed a vote of thanks to John Tilt for all the work he had carried out on the new website, it appeared that this was much improved. He repeated the request for information on other sites including location, species and photos.

Matters Arising

So far it had proved impossible to iron out the problems for anyone with Windows XP. This was to be discussed in a further meeting with the website designers.

As far as moths were concerned, it was not possible to transport material from the old website. This also needs to be resolved. It was hoped to work towards better co-ordination with the various county moth recorders.

John Tilt confirmed that there was a link from the Head Office website.

iRecord

John Tilt reported on progress over the last year. All information had been downloaded in October but it was recognised that there was a backlog of data. At that time, Speckled Wood was the leading species. Nearly 27,000 records had been submitted by 588 individuals.

The report was illustrated with a slide show including a chart showing 10 km squares and number of species. Blanks indicated a lack of recording in that area.

John explained that he downloaded everything into a data base to allow further manipulation and analysis. Currently this was a very slow process. The aim was to use data analysis as a tool to improve site management.

Nigel Stone had offered to maintain a back up system. All information submitted to Head Office.

Overall results for 2017 were showing an improvement on 2016.

Analysis of results from 33 transects which had been operational for 5 years or more, showed an improvement, although not as good as hoped.

Species faring well over the year were Comma, Meadow Brown and Red Admiral. Peacock numbers had been worryingly low.

John requested help inputting records submitted by email or paper.

The meeting then adjourned for a short lunch break, after which the members were treated to a presentation by Simon Spencer on the subject "Recent work by BC's European Interest Group on Europe's Rare Butterflies".

Thanks were extended to Simon, to our hosts and also to Peter Seal, who provided refreshments. The meeting was then closed.