Day-flying moths: species to be seen in the Malverns

BioBlitz: Chris Packham visits Prees Heath
Chairman’s Address

Peter Seal

Butterfly of the Year 2018
I’ve heard people discussing which species will be Butterfly of the Year in 2018. Apart from the joys of a successful Wood White season, my favoured sightings were 13 White Admirals in Monkwood, and 11 Peacocks in Trench Wood (after seeing ones and twos for over a year). I wish Small Tortoiseshell were a candidate but, sadly, this species continues to struggle – maybe there are more where you live? Do send your nominations to wmbutterflies@gmail.com – winners (and losers) will be announced in the next Comma.

Wood White update
To expand on the Wood White story, the re-introductions have proved very successful. On the strength of this, the Branch is supporting a Head Office bid to extend the life of the Making a Stand for the Wood White project. If successful, this will enable Butterfly Conservation to further enhance known sites and bring neighbouring woods into suitable condition to help this frail butterfly to spread, either by natural colonisation or planned introductions. (I say ‘frail’ but it’s quite capable of flying in marginal conditions.)

I’d like to thank all the volunteers who’ve worked through the winter, and those who’ve participated in transect walks, casual record submissions and egg searches. Oh, and those who’ve posted such evocative photos on Facebook. The Wood White has responded to all this encouragement, providing hard evidence to support the bid for more money.

New magazine editor
Perhaps the main Branch news is that Marian Newell has taken over from Stephen Lewis as Magazine Editor. This is her first issue but she brings previous experience to the role. Our sincere thanks to Stephen for his stint, while continuing as warden of Pees Heath, and a warm welcome to Marian.

Save Mortimer Forest
An issue brought to our attention in early summer was the setting up of the Save Mortimer Forest campaign group in response to a plan to build up to 68 luxury chalets in the Forest – well known to us as a prime site for Wood Whites. More than 130,000 people have objected to the proposals and signed petitions against the scheme. The campaign has been broadened to link with other campaigns nationally.

In Parliament on 12 July, Philip Dunne, local MP and national Species Champion for the Wood White, raised the proposal with the Environment Minister, asking if she was satisfied with the arrangements between Forest Holidays and the Forestry Commission, which is a public body. In response, the Minister announced that the deal – which did not involve a tendering process – is to be investigated by her Department. The Branch will register its concern that any proposal must take fully into account the need to protect this historic and sensitive environment.

Online moth atlas
Another project that’s been bubbling away is an online moth atlas for the West Midlands. Progress is slow but sure. We’ve identified someone who can set up a database with an atlas for each county and a separate file for phenology. County recorders will then have to undertake the process of checking or entering verified records – a sizeable task. The atlas will eventually be linked to our own West Midlands website, with some introductory notes.

A future phase might involve a photo gallery and, eventually, species accounts with details of life stages, habitats, food plants and so on. However, we’ll have to decide whether this website is the best place for it.

Related to this, I read in the Butterfly magazine of a plan to publish next year a Macro moth Atlas for Great Britain and Ireland. You can pre-order it from www.naturebureau.co.uk/bookshop, saving at least 10 on the published price.

As this is also the publisher of our own Butterflies of the West Midlands, you can order a copy of that at the same time if you don’t yet have one.

Management strategies
I recently half-heard a debate about whether some reserves are managed for one species only, and butterflies were given as an example. This is an interesting issue and one that’s covered in a new book, The Nature of the Malverns (see page 32).

It is true that some work, say clearing scrub to benefit plants and insects, may not suit birds or dormice. However, I’d contend that, in most cases, work done for butterflies benefits other species. As an example, the Making a Stand for the Wood White project identifies secondary target species, not only other butterflies (White-letter Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper) but also Slow-worms, Grass Snakes and Lizards. That’s quite different from single-species strategies such as rearing Pheasants.

Also, as we tend to operate in partnership with other conservation bodies, clearance work and planting are scheduled within a broader management plan. An example that I know about is recently funded contractor work (and supporting volunteer activity) to clear trees, scrub and alien vegetation from a series of woodland rides: this not only indirectly benefits butterflies – its direct effect is to create lighter conditions in which plants grow more freely, thus increasing nectar sources for a range of insects.

Finally, what about urban butterflies and moths? If this topic interests you, I hope to see you at our Branch AGM on 24 November (see page 29). Dr Phil Sterling will talk about his role as Building Sites for Butterflies Programme Manager, engaging with relevant local planners to enhance the built environment.

Peter Seal Branch Chair

Cover story
Cover photograph of Buff-tipped moth caterpillars was taken by Lucy Lewis. You can read more about the moths to be seen by day in the Malvern Hills on pages 12–15.

Contributions
Please send articles and images to the Editor. Photographs should be as high-resolution as possible and sent as separate files (not embedded in a document).

Our copy deadlines are Spring - 28 February, Autumn - 31 August and Winter - 30 November (early submissions are welcome). Contact the Editor for more information.

Editor: Marian Newell, comma.editor@newellporter.co.uk

Publisher
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The Editor speaks
I have some experience of editing a magazine, as Peter has said, but I’m a butterfly novice and a moth non-starter so I hope you’ll forgive any early mistakes. I’ve inherited an established team and hope we’ll be able to go from strength to strength together. I’ll be looking for articles of around 500–750 words, supported by high-resolution images sent as separate files without editing or resizing. I’d like to reflect as wide a range of interests as possible, so please send suggestions to comma.editor@newellporter.co.uk.

An idea from me is for someone to write about identifying butterflies on the wing. I find this difficult for the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey. Marian Newell, Comma Editor
West Midlands Branch nears 40th anniversary

Celebrating our successes
Next year will mark our Branch’s 40th anniversary. The first regional branch of Butterfly Conservation to be established, back in 1979, we’re now one of the charity’s largest and most active branches.

With partner organisations, we’re responsible for managing five fantastic nature reserves which, largely thanks to our volunteers, are brilliant places to see butterflies and moths. Every year, we undertake practical conservation work at sites throughout our region to ensure the best possible habitats for our more vulnerable species.

We produce a regional magazine three times a year, which is highly valued by our members and has just passed its 100th issue. We’ve run and supported campaigns to secure better management of hedgerows, road verges and public open spaces, and encouraged other groups to consider the needs of butterflies and other insects through our Places for Pollinators initiative. Two years ago, we produced the first ever book on the butterflies of the West Midlands, which has sold very well and been extremely well received.

We can point to a number of conservation successes over the years (many documented in our book) where, as a result of a lot of effort often working alongside Butterfly Conservation’s regional staff and in partnership with other organisations, we’ve successfully stemmed the tide of loss and decline. We’ve been able to increase population and distribution in some cases, such as Brown Hairstreak in Worcestershire, Pearl-bordered Fritillary in the Wyre Forest, Silver-studded Blue in Shropshire and more recently Wood White.

Seeking your help
As we enter our 40th year, we’re keen to involve you all in our celebrations. We recognise, of course, that some butterfly and moth species are decreasing in both number and range, and we clearly need to maintain our efforts to arrest these declines. Nevertheless, we want to stress the positives and highlight how Butterfly Conservation, through its regional staff and its volunteers, can really make a difference.

Nationally, we sometimes sell ourselves short by giving the false impression that we’re only monitoring declines. Recording and survey work is important but, more important still, is the conservation action that follows. Always our Branch’s top priority, this is what attracts new members.

With this in mind, we’re planning a series of events during 2019 that will help to showcase our work and bring Butterfly Conservation to a wider audience. Look out for details in future issues of The Comma.

However, we’re also looking for help from our members. Could you perhaps hold a garden open day to highlight what people can do for pollinating insects by selecting good nectar-producing plants? Could you raise funds for our Branch through a sponsored walk, run, slim or cycle ride? How about setting yourself the challenge of seeing all 39 species of wood white in Worcestershire in November? Alternatively, you could promote our work in your local community by designing and displaying signs about butterfly habitat and management of hedgerows, road verges and public open spaces.

We’ve produced an anniversary badge featuring a Comma, free to Branch members. If you’d like one, send a stamped addressed envelope to BCWM, Annesbrook, 2 Dewberry Close, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 8TB.

Our anniversary calendar is now on sale and we hope all Branch members will want to buy one – it’s a great Christmas present for friends and family. It’s film-wrapped and includes some stunning images of butterflies and moths found in our region including Brown Argus, Clouded Yellow, Scarlet Tiger and Silver-washed Fritillary. Thanks to John Devries, who coordinated production, and to everyone who contributed photos. The calendar is priced at £8 including postage (£1.5 for two). To order, send a cheque made out to Butterfly Conservation West Midlands Branch, with your name and address, to BCWM, Annesbrook, 2 Dewberry Close, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 8TB. It’ll also be available at our AGM in Shrewsbury in November.

We have a range of other anniversary-branded goods (including a mug, T-shirt, tote bag and greeting card) on sale at www.butterflyartshopuk.com. Proceeds from sales of all commemorative items will support the conservation of butterflies and moths in our region.

By Mike Williams Publicity & Marketing Officer

John Tilt receives Wildlife Trust Award
We welcome news that John has been awarded the Worcestershire Wildlife Medal for ‘dedicated services to nature conservation’. The Trust’s statement pays tribute to his longstanding commitment to practical conservation and to recording. This includes John’s work as Butterfly Conservation Transect Coordinator and leading creator of the County’s Ancient Tree Recording scheme. It goes without saying that, with his 21 years as Grafton Wood Reserve Manager, time as Branch Chairman and involvement in our book, John fully deserves this award. He’s not bad with a camera either – this photo of a pair of Wood Whites taken by him reveals his more delicate side!

By Peter Seal Branch Chair

Anniversary commemorative items

FREE Membership
Finally, we’re continuing to promote one-year free membership of Butterfly Conservation using the promotional code FREERANCH (W). This is a great way of encouraging people to join.
In the last Comma, we announced plans to support 10 Places for Pollinators in the region over the next two years. Pollinating insects, including butterflies and moths, are in decline in Britain and need all the help they can get. The idea is to create a series of sites across our region which provide nectar and pollen but also, where possible, opportunities to breed and over-winter.

### Progress and plans

This summer has seen major progress and we are already over halfway towards our target. In addition to the new garden at Severn Valley Country Park (see opposite), we’ve successfully created another Pollinators Garden at Wychavon Civic Centre, worked with a community group in Telford on a wildflower seed-sowing project and supported the development of a new wildflower meadow at Little Lakes Golf Course outside Bewdley.

We’re grateful to all the volunteers, businesses and sponsors who have supported this project so far but, with your help, we can achieve still more. We’re now actively looking for new Places for Pollinators and we’d be pleased to hear your suggestions for locations.

To qualify and receive support from West Midlands Butterfly Conservation, including a Places for Pollinators information board, sites must be in a prominent position, be open to the public and have sufficient resources (volunteer or paid) to create and maintain the habitat.

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**Placing for Pollinators**

Our campaign to create new sources of nectar and pollen is off to a great start.

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**Volunteers**

Volunteers have been awarded £500 from Veolia’s Make a Difference Awards to create a Butterfly Garden at Severn Valley Country Park. A further £55 was donated by entomologist, Keith Fowler, of Shropshire Invertebrate Group and £55 from Mrs Shirley Fenwick, daughter of one of the volunteers. A bird-bath, donated by Tom and Joyce Roberts in memory of their little dog, Jenny, has been positioned in the garden to provide a source of water for birds, bees and butterflies.

Having chosen this project as one of those to celebrate 40 years of Butterfly Conservation in the West Midlands, our Branch has prepared an interpretation board to be put in the garden to highlight the importance of butterflies, moths and bees. The chosen site is in the car park, in front of the Visitor Centre.

During the Spring of 2018, an area of vegetation and scrub was cleared and some topsoil delivered and levelled. A range of plants known for their value to insects was planted, including Buddleia, Honeysuckle and Alder Buckthorn. In addition, Ashwood Nurseries of Kingswinford kindly donated native wildflowers, such as Ox-eye Daisy, Field Scabious, Cowslips, Red Campion, Bird’s-foot Trefoil and Meadow Cranesbill, which are vital to many butterflies. Pollinator-friendly herbaceous garden perennials, such as Hellebores, Hebes, Sedums, Marjoram, Thyme, Salvias and Erysimum were supplied by Cook’s Nursery of Stourport-on-Severn and Ashwood Nurseries.

Seeds of colourful annuals were sown to provide a spectacle of colour, as well as nectar for bees and butterflies.

Redundant railway sleepers were secured around the edge to contain the soil. Images of insects were engraved on the surface of the railway sleepers by the volunteers, and then painted by Shirley Fenwick using acrylic paints.

As the garden matures, more plants on which pollinators depend will be added in a bid to help these important insects to increase and thrive. As humans, we rely on them to pollinate many of our crops. They also play a vital role in the food chain, as prey for birds and other wildlife.

Those of us who enjoy the thrill of seeing these wonderful insects as they move from flower to flower, or as they bask in the sunshine, will derive much pleasure and satisfaction from being close to nature. If we care for them, they will care for us in return. You, too, can make a difference by doing something similar in your own garden.

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Article and photos by Mike Williams

If you know of somewhere suitable for a Pollinator board, contact wmbutterflies@gmail.com

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**Bee and Butterfly Bonanza**

Bill Watkins reports on a new Place for Pollinators at Severn Valley Country Park.

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**Information board**

Pollinator-friendly planting

Decorated railway sleepers

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*Article and photos by Bill Watkins*

Volunteer and Treasurer of Severn Valley Country Park Supporters Group
One of the exciting things about moving into a new house is to discover the wildlife in the garden. When I moved to Edgton, South Shropshire, I expected Kites, Redstarts and Flycatchers, but not Wall butterflies. What a lovely surprise! I then discovered several of my neighbours saw them too. It’s a very scattered community, so how do these insects travel from one garden to another?

Our aim
Most of us are keen gardeners and grow plants recommended as beneficial for pollinators, but can we enable bees, butterflies and other insects to travel between different nectar sources? Hedge banks and verges are natural ready-made routes, especially if we leave their trimming until later in the year. Not only is this useful to wildlife but, when carefully managed, it can be very attractive.

Our problem
In the Spring of 2017, the verges around the village looked splendid. I was especially pleased with the lane leading to my cottage. As I drove home in the evenings, my headlights illuminated many colourful moths, as in the ‘olden days’, but then, on 30 June, disaster! I arrived home to find all the flowers and foliage strewn across the lane and rotting. No chance for blooms to set seed and increase, instead nettles and hogweed would take over.

Fortunately many other residents, including the parish clerk, felt the same, believing verges were an asset that, if managed well, would still be safe for motorists and other road users.

A voluntary verge group was formed and many householders joined enthusiastically. Sister projects in neighbouring villages provided the opportunity to work in partnership and, with botanical experts, the group set off to survey the lanes. They were delighted with the number of species they found, proving that the verges were well worth preserving.

Our solution
A plan was formed. All verges would receive a late summer cut and the trimmings would be removed. This would encourage the spread of wild flowers, which support the pollinators that have dramatically declined in recent years.

There’s a lot of work still to do, and a lot to learn, but hopefully this will be the start of a flowery, buzzy revival.

Article by Carol Wood
The great news is that Wood Whites have been recorded in good numbers this summer at several sites where reintroductions were made as part of the Making a Stand for the Wood White project.

**Wood White at Monkwood (Dave Butler)**

**Monkwood**

At this Worcestershire reintroduction site, jointly managed by Butterfly Conservation and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, almost 300 individuals were seen in just one day, along with two peak transect counts of 93 and 70 on 28 May. It’s remarkable that the Wood White population has expanded from just 20 adults in 2016 (the year they were reintroduced) to almost 300 in 2018! Adults have also been seen in Little Monkwood, Monkwood Green and a local garden. Nearly 180 eggs were found at Monkwood during three egg-monitoring visits – thanks to all who helped with these essential searches (see page 19 for an account of one of these days).

Over 30 volunteers assisted with a number of ‘Melilot-pulling’ days at Monkwood this summer. Volunteer effort over the last three summers to control this plant has had a huge impact: ride edge habitat has improved considerably since 2016.

**Blakeridge Wood**

At this Shropshire reintroduction site managed by Forestry Commission, Wood White emergence also exceeded our expectations, with a peak transect count of 34 adults on 3 June and a total of 40 eggs found during two egg-monitoring visits.

Other butterfly species appear to be doing well at Blakeridge too. Dave Green saw six Dark Green Fritillaries, along with one egg-laying female, and a number of Silver-washed Fritillaries this summer. In late May, I was lucky enough to see a Wall, only my third individual in ten years!

During several site visits this summer, I’ve seen more Wood Whites using shady woodland rides than I expected. Rideside vegetation, especially under bracken, appeared to be in better condition than the parched plants adjacent to the tracks. Both may be results of the very hot summer we’ve just had. These are only observations but, if hot summers are to become more frequent, more variation within woodlands may be required in future to ensure the survival of Wood Whites and other key butterfly species.

**Other sites**

Wood Whites were again seen utilising areas of breeding habitat in the scallops created at both Wigmore Rolls and Bury Ditches in 2017. Although I haven’t seen Wood Whites using the new scallops created this winter, the clearance has really improved the adjacent rideside vegetation. In fact, over 30 Wood Whites were recorded in just half an hour at Bury Ditches.

I’ve been lucky enough to visit a few new sites this summer and, although I didn’t see any Wood Whites, I did find areas of suitable habitat, great flower-rich margins and hedgerows, along with planted pollinator mixes that were supporting a variety of butterfly species.

**In summary**

The initial Making a Stand for the Wood White project, which was made possible by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund along with contributions from partners and supporters, ends next March but this is by no means the end of our work to conserve the Wood White. Much has been achieved over the past three years and there’s a strong commitment on the part of our Branch to sustain and continue this work. Further funding bids are in the pipeline and, if successful, we hope to extend our work to cover more sites. I’d like to thank everyone for their support so far and remind people to submit all Wood White sightings using iRecord.

**I’d like to remind people to submit all Wood White sightings using iRecord**

Article by **Rhona Goddard** Wood White Project Officer

**Wood Whites have been recorded at:**

- **Six sites in South Shropshire,** including Walcot Wood (Forestry Commission) where a number of eggs and adults were found along with 25 Wall butterflies.
- **Twelve sites in Herefordshire,** including Haugh Wood where almost 200 Wood Whites were seen in just one survey day organised by Kate Wollen and others (thank you).
- **Four sites in Worcestershire,** one of which is a very recent reintroduction and I’m pleased to report that early observations are very encouraging – we’ll know more next year.

**Rhona Goddard reports some excellent numbers seen this summer, after several successful reintroductions.**

**Wood White thrives in new locations**

**Wood White pair at Blakeridge (Janet Turnbull)**

**Wall at Blakeridge (Janet Turnbull)**

**Wood White at Monkwood (Dave Butler)**

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Day-flying Larger Moths around the Malverns

Mel Mason advises on the species you may see, when and where.

There is no clear distinction between day- and night-flying moths. Many night-flying moths are also considered to be day-flying if they are easily disturbed from their roosting sites during the day. There are up to 100 local species of day-flying moths reported around the Malverns, compared with just 33 local species of butterflies, but most are typically under-recorded. They represent only a third of the casual sightings of butterflies and day-flying moths submitted to the Malvern Butterfly Group each year – and less than a tenth of the number of butterfly transect records.

Tigers on the Hills

In 1994, a Malvern Hills Trust report on an attractive day-flying moth [Simpson T. et al., Lepidoptera on the Malvern Hills] illustrates a distinct change over the last 25 years. Four Scarlet Tigers were recorded by English Nature’s Peter Holmes from his garden at Malvern Wells… the only other record for this spectacular moth was one swatted by a tennis racket and given to the late Jack Green in the 1960s. Today, this moth is locally common, seemingly associated with the spread of a new larval food plant, alkanet. This garden escape now covers significant areas alongside the paths of the lower slopes of the Hills, where large numbers of their caterpillars feed in spring. Ruby Tiger is also common, whereas Garden Tiger and Wood Tiger are now far less common than in the past.

In contrast, Drab Looper is a very rare moth, restricted to isolated colonies in southwest Britain. The local population is small and in some years no sightings are recorded, possibly due to variable weather conditions or insufficient monitoring. However, over recent years, there has been a determined effort to manage their known habitats in the Malverns. Removing excessive scrub and trees has encouraged wood spurge, the larval food plant, and other herbaceous plants to flourish on the western balcony overlooking Gullet Quarry, with a subsequent increase in sightings. The western slopes of Chase End Hill are another good site. Here regular habitat management produces a succession of spring flora, starting with wild daffodils, then wood anemone, dog violets, bluebells and, finally, bracken and wood spurge.

Spring moths

During March and April Orange Underwing flies high in the canopy of birch trees along the woodland edges of the hilly slopes, and occasionally comes down to drink from muddy puddles. They appear in good numbers at the same time as hibernating butterflies are just emerging and are sometimes mistakenly identified as Small Coppers. A little later in the spring,

Small Yellow Underwing occurs in more open grassy areas where Common and Field Mousehair thrive. In spring, day-flying moths sometimes outnumber butterflies on the Hills. Speckled Yellow, a distinctively patterned moth, is easily disturbed on the grassy slopes in May, with sightings every few metres. Like Speckled Yellow, Yellow Shell and the Brimstone Moth are attractive yellow moths commonly found around the Hills and easily mistaken for butterflies. More difficult to identify from a distance, and often overlooked, Brown Silver-line is easily disturbed from bracken, while Treble-bar and Lesser Treble-bar fly low over the grasses and scrub. Some nocturnal moths, such as Cream Wave, fly out frequently from the undergrowth to give the impression of even greater numbers of day-flying species.

While the darker male Muslin Moth is nocturnal, the more attractive female often flies in sunny weather on the scrub covered slopes during May. Its white dotted wings make it easy to see when resting in the undergrowth. The similar, though slightly larger, White Ermine and Buff Ermine are also common. The Ghost Moth is another eye-catching, cream-coloured moth worth searching for in open spaces, especially on the commons. Seldom recorded, but one of the largest and most spectacular spring moths must be the Emperor Moth. Its prominent wing eye-spots make it unmistakable. A pheromone lure readily attracts any males hiding in the surrounding scrubby vegetation.

Summer moths

Silver-ground Carpet, Garden Carpet and Common Carpet are common around the lower slopes, and similar in appearance in flight over low vegetation. While these three vary in shading and show a central dark band, the Blue-bordered Carpet is much lighter and more distinctive, but found in lower numbers. Lead Belle (mid-summer), a very common moth, is also worth searching for in scrubby areas. The smaller and very similar Scarce Copper, which has a very similar larval food plant, is a medium brown moth with a central dark band. Copper Underwing, a common species of the woodland and hedgerow, is also a medium brown moth, sometimes outnumbering butterflies.

The Silver Y and Ghost Pug are very common day-flying moths, often sought out for their distinctive eyespots. The Silver Y, a white moth with brown eyespots, is also an attractively patterned moth, sited in low vegetation around the edges of fields and woodland. The Ghost Pug is another small moth, with varied patterned eyespots on the underside of the wings, and a white underside to the wings. The Golden Y and Stoplight are very similar, with golden eyespots on the underside of the wings. The Golden Y is a large, cream-coloured moth, with golden eyespots on the underside of the wings. The Stoplight is a small, cream-coloured moth, with golden eyespots on the underside of the wings. The Silver Y and Ghost Pug are very common day-flying moths, often sought out for their distinctive eyespots.
Many moths use camouflage even more effectively than butterflies.

**Antler Moth** (Lucy Lewis)  
**Silver Y** (Lucy Lewis)  
**Mullein Caterpillars** (Lucy Lewis)  
**Straw Dot** (Roger Wasley)  
**Currant Clearwing** (Roger Wasley)

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13**

May to mid-June) and July Belle (mid-June onwards) prefer scrubby places, including the quarries. As both rest displaying deltax-shaped wings with brown-coloured cross-lines, they are best distinguished by the time of year when they are seen. Grass Rivulet is one of the most common moths seen in June. Pale and lightly patterned, it is found around the Malverns. This small moth is almost invisible with wings flattened on an exposed crog, where Grayling butterfly also can be found, both closely imitating the patterns of the surrounding igneous rocks on North Hill.

Many night-flying moths are often seen during the day or fluttering around a porch light, particularly Flame Shoulder. This small moth looks unremarkable from a distance but closer inspection reveals more intricate patterns and colours linked to its imaginative name. Orange Swift is a vibrant orange brown moth with whitish diagonal lines, often seen roosting during the day in houses and local gardens. Small Phoenix is an attractively patterned small moth, easily disturbed from the Willow Herbs that cover large areas of the Hills. While Buff-tip is occasionally found at rest by day, its large, yellow-black caterpillar is conspicuous when found on vegetation in the local quarries in late summer. (see front cover)

In July, Six-spot Burnets compete with Meadow Brown butterflies to be the most numerous species on the lower grasslands, such as Poolbrook Common. At the height of summer, the commons and grassy roadside verges burst with colourful displays of their greenish black and red wings. The papery cocoon of the pupa is also easy to spot on tall grass stems before the adult moth emerges in July. Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnets are seen in much lower numbers on the same sites.

Many moths use camouflage even more effectively than butterflies. During July and August, the Annulet is almost invisible with wings flattened on an exposed crog, where Grayling butterfly also can be found, both closely imitating the patterns of the surrounding igneous rocks on North Hill.

Late summer and autumn moths

Two nightflying noctuids are often seen during the day in late summer. Large Yellow Underwing flies out of vegetation to reveal the orange flash of its underwings. Red Underwing is a larger moth, sometimes seen resting on a tree trunk but more often noticed on the walls of houses sometimes just below the guttering, perfectly camouflaged until its eyecatching reddish-black underwings are displayed. Antler appears in the grassy commons in August. Seen feeding on the top of a thistle flower, its miniature ancient chieftain wearing a fur collar above the brown antler-patterned cloak of its wings.

Oak Eggar is a large brown and golden moth occasionally recorded on Castlefromton Common. The male flies very fast during the day but the female seems to fly more slowly and low over vegetation at dusk, perhaps heavy with her burden of eggs. The nine resident species of Hawkmoths include our largest moths but they are mainly nocturnal. However, the caterpillar of the Elephant Hawkmoth is regularly seen in local gardens feeding on Fuchsia or Rosebay Willowherb in late summer. Its large size and prominent eye markings make it very conspicuous.

The Vapourer moth flies in late summer and autumn. During an unusually warm period in November 2015, a flightless female was photographed high up in a tree on the western slopes of Worcestershire Beacon near Malvern, and reported by several males flying nearby, before one successfully mated. The female lays eggs on her recently evacuated cocoon. Attractive caterpillars with tufts of yellow-brown hairs emerge the following May, dispersing on silken threads, perhaps windblown, to nearby vegetation and trees.

Some species have not been reported in recent years. Grass Emerald is an attractive green moth that becomes grey with age, which might explain why few of this common moth are recorded during the day, even though its food plants of Gorse and Broom are plentiful. Six-belted Clearwing and Currant Clearwing are nationally scarce and difficult to find without luck and the use of a pheromone lure in the right location. They are both on the edge of the north-westerly range of the Malverns.

The day moths are as fascinating as the butterflies and it is not difficult to find the most common ones on and around the Malvern Hills. A casual stroll on the Hills, across a meadow, or into a quarry may disturb many of the species described.

**Article by Mel Mason**
Chris Packham’s UK BioBlitz Tour comes to Prees Heath

Stephen Lewis, Volunteer Warden, describes the visit.

Visiting 50 nature reserves in 10 days across the UK, wildlife broadcaster and writer Chris Packham and his support team certainly had their work cut out. On the last stop of Day 6, he arrived at Prees Heath at 5pm and stayed for two hours. He spotted a Silver-studded Blue, gave an inspiring speech to the assembled crowd, learned about the reserve and the restoration of former arable land back to heathland, spent time with everyone who wanted to meet him, talked to several children, did live interviews on BBC Midlands Today and posed for innumerable photographs. He was very generous with his time, interest and attention.

The BioBlitz project

The project, however, was not about some celebrity sideshow. Before he arrived we’d held a BioBlitz starting at 8am, the purpose of which was to record as many different species as possible from all groups on the reserve in one day. We had several county experts present to help with identifications, and we had some records that were not only firsts for the reserve, such as the plant Small Scabious (Scabiosa columbaria), but also probable firsts for the county, such as a Lacebug (Dictyonota fuliginosa). Over 500 species were recorded on a laptop in the marquee.

So much to do

In addition to all this effort, a number of guided walks and events were held, including opening moth and small mammal traps from the night before, a bird walk, a grasshopper and cricket walk, a look at life in the reserve’s large pond, and a butterfly and day-flying moth walk. All were well attended and great fun. Many thanks to all the walk leaders.

By Stephen Lewis, Volunteer Warden, Prees Heath Common Reserve

Main aims

So what was the point of all this? Chris had outlined two main aims of his whistle-stop tour. One was to acknowledge and praise all the work of people who spend hours and hours recording our often sadly diminishing wildlife. Without individuals going out and monitoring what lives in the countryside, we would not know what’s out there. His second theme, however, was that nature reserves themselves are not enough, as there is much to be concerned about in the wider countryside with the decline of many species and habitats. The BioBlitz tour was an attempt to highlight the need for new initiatives and action to halt and reverse these declines – a long-term, challenging but vital ambition.

A young recorder’s top work

By Stephen Lewis

Chris Packham inspires everyone to campaign for wildlife

Stephen Lewis, Volunteer Warden, describes the visit.

Not everyone gave Chris’s speech their full attention (©Mike Ashton www.macreative.co.uk)

Chris Packham (Clive Dyer)

Small Scabious (Janet Vernon)

Poplar Hawkmoth and Dave Grundy (Stephen Barlow)

Bank Vole (John Harding)

Grasshopper Walk (Clive Dyer)
S
o it was that your correspondent went to Monkwood near Hallow to join a Butterfly Conservation walk and survey on 14 June this year. The leader was Rhona Goddard and about a dozen eager volunteers attended.

The Wood White was reintroduced into Monkwood in 2016 and its progress in recolonisation has been closely monitored since. It is a nationally endangered species and we are lucky in the West Midlands in having several of the remaining colonies, including one in the Wyre Forest. At Monkwood, the Wood White has already colonised the adjacent Little Monkwood and we found further butterflies and eggs there.

What were we looking for?
The term ‘needle in a haystack’ applies very readily to looking for butterfly eggs. You are essentially looking for a bottle-shaped fleck of dust, although you do have some clues to go on. For a start, according to my book, the Wood White only lays its eggs on certain plants – yellow Meadow Vetchling, Bitter-vetch, Tufted Vetch, and Greater and Common Bird’s-foot Trefoil.

Complication – Monkwood has loads of similar plants, which the Wood White shuns!

Next, is the egg white or yellow? My understanding is that it’s white when laid, but then changes colour before the caterpillar emerges.

Where were we looking?
We spread out along the woodland ride and, avoiding dog muck, peered under the leaves of the larval food plant looking for and counting eggs. I found it easiest to watch for an egg-laying female then, having seen her ovipositing, quickly count the egg(s). As this method has the benefit of minimising disturbance to food plants and key areas of habitat, it is recommended by Rhona. It enabled me to count three of the 80 eggs found that day. Not too bad for a beginner, I suppose, although one young lady had microscopes for eyes – I was envious.

One of the great ironies was that two of the three butterflies seen most often that day were the rare Wood White and uncommon White Admiral. I’ve never seen so many of either.

As the Wood White has two broods a year, I booked immediately to go on another egg hunt a month later. And I made a note to take a magnifying glass and kneeler!

Article by Richard Woolley

Richard Woolley describes a search for Wood White eggs.

Roger Littleover records this stunning migrant on a reserve near Shrewsbury.

Venus Pool Nature Reserve is a hidden treasure just off the busy Bridgnorth to Shrewsbury road (A458) and is mostly frequented by birders equipped with binoculars and cameras who may hopefully ‘tick and click’ rare migrating waders or wildfowl passing through the Severn Valley Wildlife Corridor. One of my personal experiences last year was to see and photograph a migrating juvenile Osprey as it was passing through, which was a childhood dream come true.

**General sightings**
Shropshire Ornithological Society has acquired 28 acres surrounding the pool, including marshland and meadowland that attracts dragonflies and butterflies, often in good numbers. With the recent heatwave, Venus Pool Meadow has been a regular lateafternoon stop for me as I drive home from a busy day in Shrewsbury. Green-winged Orchids and emerging Orange-tips are always a delight to see in May.

During June and July, the meadow was alive with butterflies – Peacock and Comma nectaring on Black Knapweed; Large, Small and Green-veined Whites feasting on Purple Milk-vetch. There were record numbers of first-brood Brown Argus, with second broods of Common Blue and Brown Argus also doing very well.

**Big Butterfly Count**
Reports of Clouded Yellow being spotted this year on the reserve excited me to make a few more visits than I usually do, as it’d been three years since I’d last seen a Clouded Yellow in Shropshire. I decided to do my Big Butterfly Count on the meadow one Saturday morning.

The warmth from the early morning sun woke Painted Lady and Red Admiral to make a show, and Peacock and Common Blue were soon ticked off my list. Then, suddenly, a flash of gold and a Clouded Yellow settled close enough for me to photograph! I counted at least five more that day.

I was thrilled to see and photograph these stunning migrants and to record both male and female on the meadow. Now, we’ll wait and watch to see if they’ve mated. Hopefully, we’ll have some home-grown specimens on the wing.

**We’ve been on an egg hunt**

**Clouded Yellow**

**Roger Littleover records this stunning migrant on a reserve near Shrewsbury.**

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**Article and photos by Roger Littleover**

**Wood White egg**

(From the Editor: The second hunt found 120 eggs.)

Article by Richard Woolley
Mel Mason reviews butterfly sightings around the Malvern Hills in the Age of Queen Victoria.

Not surprisingly, when we look back over the past two centuries we find many more species in much greater numbers. Imagine finding a Camberwell Beauty in your garden, Purple Emperor in Park Wood, Mazarine Blue in West Malvern, Small Blue around the lime pits near Croft Farm, or Duke of Burgundy at the foot of Berrow.

PART 1

A Flutter in the Past

Mel Mason reviews butterfly sightings around the Malvern Hills in the Age of Queen Victoria.

PART 1

The prize collection of specimens at the Worcester Museum: although collected by local recorders, precise locations have often been lost with the labels over time. The species are, however, recorded in the historical references cited.
Thanks

Thanks to all past recorders, Malvern Hills Trust, Ian Duncan for collecting many of the historical reports, Worcester Museum and the Archive Collections, Malvern and Worcester Library Archive Publications.

References

1. Illustrations of the Natural History of Worcestershire – Rarer Lepidopterous Insects found in Worcestershire (1834) Charles Hastings
2. Transactions of the Malvern Field Club 1870 – List of Malvern Lepidoptera: the Arrangement from Guenée, Stainton and others
3. The Malvern Field Handbook of 1886 – Butterfly Calendar & Complete List of Local Butterflies
4. Victoria County History – A History of Worcestershire (1901)
5. The Butterflies and Moths of Malvern, W. Edwards and R.F. Tawnndraw, printed in 1899

Forests Awash with Frit’s?

John Bryan notes an increase in Silver-Washed Fritillary in Staffordshire.

It started with a trickle but now the flood gates have opened – in a summer from which water was conspicuously absent! The first recorded sighting of Silver-washed Fritillary in Staffordshire was in 1890 at Swynnerton Old Park, at the time of writing, the latest was on 6 August in the woodland around Keele University.

Last year two records from gardens in the Lichfield area and ‘several’ at Hall Dale in The Peak District gave an indication that something was happening. That’s been well and truly confirmed this year: Silver-washed Fritillary is on the move and, it seems, in significant numbers.

Most sightings were at the start of this species’ flight period, which coincided with probably the warmest period of this year’s heatwave, so they were forced to search for nectar sources that were in scarce supply, with Buddleia once again proving its worth.

Males were recorded at Sutton Park (Birmingham and Black Country), Eccleshall, Stone, Swynnerton Old Park (again), Keele University, Chasewater and Wolseley Bridge, and breeding was confirmed at Hall Dale. Two females were also recorded, one in a garden in Codsall and the other at the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research just outside Norbury.

Many others would have passed through unnoticed, and thus unrecorded, but the sightings raise a question as to the origin of this year’s travelling population. Dispersal of this kind can be a result of ‘stress’ being experienced in the butterflies’ present habitat. The summer heat scorched many larval food plants and nectar sources, with the latter probably being the catalyst.

Time will tell if the exodus will affect existing populations, but the forests and woods of Staffordshire could soon have burgeoning new populations of this magnificent butterfly.

And next season’s project? Get yourselves out and about, from late June to late August, find a good stand of bramble (a particular favourite of this species) and wait for them to come to you. You never know, if you go down to the woods next year, you may be in for a big surprise.

Article by John Bryan

The Malvern Field Handbook of 1886 lists 47 local species [R3–pp3–4]. All of these, except Chequered Skipper, are illustrated in a Butterfly Calendar [R3–pp1–2] of expected sightings, showing many familiar species along with those that are now extinct around the Malvern Hills:

January, February and March – None, except in hibernation

April – Small Copper, Wood Argus (Speckled Wood)

April and May – Large, Small and Green-veined Whites; Orange Tip, Holly or Azure Blue

May – Wood White, Bath White, Brimstone or Sulphur, Wall, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper

May and June – Black-veined White, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Greyish (Marsh) Fritillary, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Little or Bedford (Small) Blue, Small Heath

June – Green Hairstreak, Large Skipper

June and July – Silver-washed Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary, High Brown Fritillary, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, White Admiral, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, White-letter Hairstreak, Small Copper

July – Purple Emperor, Marbled White, Purple Hairstreak, Small Skipper, Grayling, Gatekeeper or Large Heath

July and August – Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Brimstone or Sulphur, Large Tortoiseshell, Camberwell Beauty, Peacock, Painted Lady, Wood Argus (Speckled Wood), Small Heath, Brown Hairstreak

August – Wood White, Bath White, Clouded Yellow, Pale Clouded Yellow, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Red Admiral, Wall, Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus, Holly or Azure Blue, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Large Skipper

August and September – Small White, Small Heath, Small Copper, Common Blue, Holly or Azure Blue

The Victoria County History also lists several interesting species recorded around the Malvern Hills including Camberwell Beauty, Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, Greasy (Marsh) Fritillary and Large Tortoiseshell [R4–pp123–124].

We tend to think that the loss of habitat and associated species is a modern phenomenon but the editor in 1870 reflects on these same concerns almost 150 years ago:

‘Next to the woods, flowery meadows, and clover fields in this neighbourhood, rough commons, heaths and marsh are dear to the entomologist, dearer alas! as greed or necessity yearly diminishes the number of our wild places; and thus our peculiar Flora and Fauna perish, and all the smaller distinctive features of our country are reduced to one dead level by the invading plough’ [R2–p174].

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The lepidopterists of the 19th century could not have foreseen that this problem would be greatly exacerbated during the 20th century by agricultural intensification and widespread use of fertilisers and insecticides.

The Malvern Calendar of expected sightings, showing many familiar species along with those that are now extinct around the Malvern Hills.

Article and photo by Mel Mason WMBC Malvern Representative Malvern Butterfly Group Recorder
Bob Hall shares highlights of his October 2017 trip.

Seven of us met at Heathrow. We had an overnight flight to Nairobi and a connecting flight to Tana (Antananarivo - the capital of Madagascar), where we were met by Bakoly, our Malagasy guide, and Safi, our Hungarian entomologist. We took an early morning flight to Antsiranana (Diego Suarez) in the extreme north of the country.

Our drivers then took us to Amber Mountain, where we stopped to look for butterflies in a bogggy area just outside the reserve. Spotted Sailers (*Neptis saclava*) were seen on wet mud, as well as *Strabena mandraka*, one of the 37 species of *Madagascar Satyrs*, while *Mocker Swallowtail* (*Papilio dardanus*), *Cream-lined Swallowtails* (*Papilio delalandei*) and *Banded Blue Swallowtail* (*Papilio oribazus*) appeared at times.

**Amber Mountain National Park**

We then went into the National Park. Mossy Leaf-Tailed Geckos were found, thanks to our local guides. The geckos are nocturnal and sleep on tree trunks during the day – they are wonderfully camouflaged. Some of the world’s smallest reptiles belong to the endemic genus Brookesia, the smallest less than 3 cm long. Our guides found the Montagne d’Ambre Leaf Chameleon (*Brookesia tuberculata*). This is uniformly brown and found only on Amber Mountain. At least five species of Leaf Chameleon occur there. Other highlights were a good sighting of the Madagascan Malachite Kingfisher, Madagascan Blue Pigeon, Forest Rock Thrush and Madagascan Crested Ibis. We saw our first lemurs, Sanford’s Brown Lemur, high in the forest canopy and also Crowned Lemur; both of these species are confined to the dry and humid forest of northern Madagascar. A tame Ring-tailed Vontsira appeared by the picnic table.

**Ankarana National Park**

Our overnight accommodation at Joffreville was delightful. Next morning our German host, Carlos, offered to show us his Giant Tortoise. The tortoise was originally from Aldabra, one of the Seychelles, and was estimated to be close to 200 years old. It had lived at Le Domaine de Fontenay at least since 1904, and had a good appetite for bananas! We travelled for four hours to Ankarana Lodge. Our driver spotted an Oustalet’s Chameleon in the scrub on the journey. In the nearby reserve, we saw Crowned Lemur close to. The next day was a wonderful day spent at Ankarana National Park. We walked through dry forest, admiring the Baobab trees, before we reached the Tsingy – sharp limestone pinnacles, the result of an eroded coral reef system laid down 250 million years ago. We spotted Sportive Lemurs resting in a tree cavity, as they are nocturnal.

**Back to the capital**

We returned to the capital for one night, where we visited a botanical park and lake. Thousands of birds greeted us in this green oasis. Egrets, Squacco Herons, Red-billed Terns and the Madagascan Malachite Kingfisher. There were plenty of fish, too, to feed all these hungry predators.

We were pleased to leave Pave Hotel for the second time, as we now headed east to Perinet, past markets, rice fields and brickworks. At a brief stop, we saw *Strabena mandraka* and *Barba ratter*, a Skipper. We stopped for longer at a wonderful reptile house, where we saw Geckos, Frogs, Chameleons, Snakes and even a Nile Crocodile. The butterflies included the **Madagascar Dotted Border** (*Mylothris phileris*), **Charaxes Anambolou** (one of nine species of Charaxes), the **Madagascan Brown Pansy** (*Junonia goudotii*), **Golden Mantella**, **Baron’s Mantella** and the aptly named **Tomato Frog**. A Giant Millipede dwarfed the Golden Mantella. Meanwhile, Tony and Ann had found a group of endangered Coquerel’s Sifaka just outside the museum. Predominantly white, these are among the biggest and best known of the island’s lemurs.

**Andasibe-Mantadia National Park**

Our accommodation for the next three nights was at Indri Lodge in Andasibe. On our way there, we passed much non-native woodland, mainly Eucalyptus, planted

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

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**Madagascar’s natural history treasures**

**Thousands of birds greeted us in this green oasis**
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

in place of the indigenous rainforest. On our first day, we explored a small part of Mantadia National Park. The roads were awful, it was raining and the temperature was low – welcome to the rainforest! We had views of Black and White Ruffed Lemur and a Grey Bamboo Lemur. The rainforest lived up to its name, as we trudged along tracks in steady rain, but we saw plenty of tree ferns, an astonishing view of the Giraffe-necked Weevil, Praying Mantis and then Acreas, a group of long-winged butterflies with red-and-orange markings and semi-transparent wings. Green Pillbugs, Satyrids, Ants’ nests and plenty of the ubiquitous Pandanus species of tree all added to the interest. After lunch, the sun appeared, as did Spotted Sailleirs (Neptis saclava), Acrea masamba and the Cream-lined Swallowtail (Papilio delalandei).

The next day, we took a short journey to the popular Andasibe National Park. The car park was jammed by ecotourists and their vehicles. At first we heard Indri, one of Madagascar’s iconic and best-known animals. We had views of Black and White Ruffed Lemur, the majestic Black and White Ruffed Lemur, Crowned Lemur and Brown Lemur. Some of these had been reintroduced, and so close-up views were guaranteed. Before we left the idyllic Palmarium, we walked a short distance to a pineapple plantation serenaded by a descending series of hoots from the Madagascar Coucal. We then retraced our steps to Manombato to join our minibus and driver, who drove us to Hotel Neptune in Tomasia, a large, bustling sea port on the Indian Ocean.

**Palmarium Reserve**

We left Indri Lodge after two memorable days and travelled east: three hours in a minibus, then a transfer to a 4WD for a bumpy 30 minutes, then a boat for 1.5 hours on an inland lake to reach Palmarium, close to the Indian Ocean. On the boat trip, we saw Black Kite, Madagascar Pratincole, Frances’ Sparrowhawk and Madagascar Kestrel. Some of us took a walk along the beach to see a grove of Pitcher plants. Later, at night, we crossed the lake to a special site where a coconut had been put in the fork of a tree. There was the legendary Aye-Aye, an endangered species of lemur. Features included a thin, elongated middle finger used to extract larvae from dead wood or, in our case, coconut flesh. This is a shy and nocturnal creature. On our return, we found a Dwarf Mouse Lemur, another nocturnal lemur. A spectacular tiger-moth lookalike was seen (Daphnisura fasciata). The next morning, our breakfast was spent in the company of a female Black Lemur, which was intent on stealing fruit from the table. At Palmarium, we had wonderful views of Red-bellied and Red-ruffed Lemurs, the majestic Black and White Ruffed Lemur, Crowned Lemur and Brown Lemur. Some of these had been reintroduced, and so close-up views were guaranteed. Before we left the idyllic Palmarium, we walked a short distance to a pineapple plantation serenaded by a descending series of hoots from the Madagascar Coucal. We then retraced our steps to Manombato to join our minibus and driver, who drove us to Hotel Neptune in Tomasia, a large, bustling sea port on the Indian Ocean.

**Masoala National Park**

The next day, we continued our journey to Moronsetra with another early morning flight. After a bumpy ride in a bright yellow minibus, we boarded two high-speed boats for an exhilarating journey across the bay to Masoala peninsular. The first rainforest walk was hot, humid and dark. A Madagascan Tree Boa put in an appearance in the kitchen of our lodge in the evening, leading to celebrity status with all the party. A Short-legged Ground Roller was seen at Masoala, and Pied Kingfisher and Helmeted Vanga the next morning. Another boat journey to the idyllic island of Nosy Mangabe followed for our last night, where we slept in tents, surrounded on the one side by rainforest, and on the other by the Indian Ocean. Walks revealed plenty of Madagascar Forest Nymphs (Aterica rabena), quite often settled on the forest paths. Other highlights included a good view of Climbing Mantella (a green-and-black frog). White-fronted Brown Lemur and a mating pair of Skippers. Land crabs were also seen in the rainforest. Also more Leaf-Tailed Geckos on a night walk and a Plated Lizard in the day.

The youngest members of the party cooled off on our last afternoon with a delightful swim in the Indian Ocean, while the two oldest and most intrepid members of the group again went out exploring. Our last day was spent travelling back to Tana in three stages: boat, minibus and flight. We had a lovely end-of-trip meal out with Bakoly at the Vanilla Restaurant, serenaded by some traditional Malagasy music – a fitting end to a superb trip. In summary, the group recorded over 80 bird species, 16 lemur species and over 100 butterfly species.

Our thanks to all of our local guides for their expertise, to our drivers for safe travel, to Bakoly who was a tower of strength and showed good organisation in putting together a tricky itinerary, to Safi for his knowledge, enthusiasm and expertise, and to Mike Williams, for organising an unforgettable trip.

Article and photographs by Bob Hall
Casual Recording in the West Midlands 2018

John Tilt highlights uneven coverage and unrecorded sightings.

iRecord

Statistics for casual recording on iRecord for 2018, up to 18 August, show:

- 22,219 records
- 481 recorders
- 42 species

There are over 2000 records and others none. We need recorders to help us improve coverage of these under-recorded squares.

Facebook

Please note that putting records on Facebook does not contribute to Branch Recording. The records must be entered onto iRecord or the UKBMS system for us to analyse and conserve butterflies. At present, good records are being entered onto Facebook but they never find their way onto our systems.

Please use iRecord.

Article by John Tilt Transects and Web Coordinator

The chart below shows the number of species recorded in each 10 km square of the OS grid for our region, ranging from 36 to one. We’d expect at least 20 species, so squares with fewer are not being covered adequately. Similarly, some squares have over 2000 records and others none. We need recorders to help us improve coverage of these under-recorded squares.

West Midlands Branch AGM
11am to 3pm on Saturday 24 November 2018
Shropshire Wildlife Trust: Abbeygate Hall, 193 Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6AH

Lift access from ground floor, 15-min walk from station, parking in Abbey Foregate car park. Directions from A5: At the first roundabout (Preston Boats), take filter round to the left. When approaching the next roundabout (Emstrey) as you cross the River Severn, get over to the right and take the 4th exit, signposted Shrewsbury A5064. At the next roundabout (Column), take the 3rd exit onto Abbey Foregate. After about 0.6 miles, turn left (brown Shropshire Wildlife Trust sign) into the Pay & Display car park. Venue is at far end of car park.

Tea and coffee from 10.30am, food from caterers at 1pm

Business (annual reports and Branch updates) start at 11am

2017 minutes available at www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk/news/meeting-minutes

Main Speaker: Dr Phil Sterling, editor of The Field Guide to the Micro-moths of Great Britain and Ireland will talk about Butterfly Conservation’s Building Sites for Butterflies project. Our region provides many opportunities for this project and we look forward to learning more.

Butterfly Conservation 50th Anniversary AGM, Members’ Day and Celebratory Dinner
9.30am on Saturday 10 November 2018
The Nottingham Belfry, Mellors Way, Off Woodhouse Way, Nottingham, NG8 6BY

Lunch and refreshments available (£10 and £3, respectively), free car parking

More information at www.butterfly-conservation.org

**Dates for your diary**

**Continuous on page 30**
Dates for your diary cont’d

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

Trench Wood Work Parties
10am in the reserve car park (SO930588)
Contact John Holder: 01905 794854 or johnholder@tiscali.co.uk

Wyre Forest Work Parties
Sundays: 11 Nov, 13 Jan, 10 Feb
10am in Earnwood Copse car park on the B4194 Bewdley to Kinlet road (SO744784)
Mid-week: Tue 23 Oct, Tue 27 Nov, Wed 12 Dec, Tue 22 Jan, Tue 26 Feb
The mid-week dates are joint events with Natural England – tea and coffee provided
23 Oct and 26 Feb: 10am in Earnwood Copse car park as above
27 Nov, 12 Dec and 22 Jan: 10am in Dry Mill Lane car park, Bewdley, at the start of the disused railway line
Contact Mike Williams: 01299 824860 or wmbutterflies@gmail.com

Wood White Project Work Parties
If you plan to come to any of these, please contact Rhona Goddard: 01746 762364 or rgoddard@butterfly-conservation.org
• Siege Wood, Herefordshire: 10am – 3pm, Thu 22 Nov and Thu 10 Jan, Siege Wood car park (SO605348)
• Onny Meadows: 10am - 1pm, Sun 2 Dec, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms (SO435825)
• Blakere Wood, Shropshire: 10am – 3pm, Sun 20 Jan, Blakere Wood car park (SO295866)
• Joint work party with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust: 10am - 3pm, Tue 5 Feb, meeting point TBC
• Bury Ditches, Shropshire: 10am – 3pm, Sun 17 Feb, Bury Ditches car park (SO331837)

Dingy Skipper Work Parties at Cannock Chase Visitor Centre
Chase (Community-led)
11am – 3pm on Sun 4 Nov and Sun 11 Nov
Contact Rob Taylor, Countryside Ranger, 01543 370737, 07817 122760 or robert.taylor@staffordshire.gov.uk

Chairman
Peter Seal

Vice Chairman & Conservation Officer
Mike Southall

Treasurer
Lucy Lewis

Branch Secretary
Vacant

Regional Officers
Dr Jenny Joy (Senior Regional Officer)
Rhona Goddard & (Wood White Project Officer)

Records
Branch Recording Co-ordinator – John Tilt

Reserve Managers
Ewys Harold – Ian Hart

Moth Officers
Bham & the Black Country - David Jackson

County Leaders
North Staffordshire - John Bryan

Brown Hairstreak Champion
Simon Primrose

Committee Members
Chairman
Vice Chairman & Conservation Officer
Treasurer
Branch Secretary
Regional Officers
Records
Reserve Managers
Moth Officers
County Leaders
Brown Hairstreak Champion
Committee Members
Publicity and Marketing Officer
Magazine Editor
Magazine Design and Production
Website coordinator
Wider Countryside Butterfly Count Co-ordinator
Link Trustee

Malvern Grayling Work Parties
Mondays: 22 Oct, 12 Nov, 14 Jan, 11 Feb 10am in North Hill Quarry car park, WR14 4LT (SO 771847)
Tea and coffee provided but bring your own lunch if staying all day
Contact Mel Mason: 01684 565700 or malverngrayling@btinternet.com

Monkwood Work Parties
1st Sundays: 7 Oct, 4 Nov, 2 Dec, 6 Jan, 3 Feb, 3 Mar
Contact George Groves: 01905 620721, george_groves@btopenworld.com
3rd Thursdays: 18 Oct, 15 Nov, 20 Dec, 17 Jan, 21 Feb, 21 Mar
Contact Phil Adams: 01905 610830 or pdadamsrainbow@gmail.com
10am in the reserve car park (SO803603)

Penny Hill Landfill Site Work Parties
Sundays: 14 Oct, 21 Oct, 4 Nov 10am at the site entrance off Pudford Lane, Hillside, Marley (SO752613)
Contact Mike Williams: 01299 824860 or wmbutterflies@gmail.com

Preses Heath Common Work Parties
Wednesdays: 17 Oct, 14 Nov, 12 Dec (half-day only), 16 Jan, 13 Feb
10.30am on the access track opposite the Steel Heath turning off the A49 (SJ557363)
Contact Stephen Lewis: 07900 886809 or phwarden@sky.com

Scarlet Tiger Project Work Parties, Stourbridge
Every 3rd Friday: 19 Oct, 16 Nov, 21 Dec, 18 Jan, 15 Feb, 15 Mar
10am at a location posted on the notice board at the northern (crematorium) end of Roman Road
Contact Joy Stevens: 01384 372397 or joystevens@blueyonder.co.uk

Committee Members and Officers

Committee Members

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Marion Newell

Magazine Design and Production
Trish Connolly Morgan

Website coordinator
John Tilt

Wider Countryside Butterfly Count Co-ordinator
Philip Nunn

Link Trustee
To be confirmed

August 2018
Having lived in the Malverns for seven years, I read this book with great anticipation and, like other recent Pisces publications, it did not disappoint. The range of information is impressive, even referring to lost species such as Cirl Bunting and Wood White.

Scope of the book
Ten chapters cover different aspects of the Hills’ wildlife, with others on history, geology and future issues. The insect chapter includes 18 pages on butterflies and moths, with a descriptive overview of the species found on the Malverns and discussion of future considerations such as the potential to reintroduce Fritillaries.

Themes explored by the authors
Some themes recur at intervals through the book, such as managing conflict between the needs of different species and habitats. In particular, we in insect conservation must acknowledge the need to adjust plans to take into account the needs of other types of wildlife.

However, we do know that scrub clearance (and indeed planting) to benefit butterflies and moths helps other insects, and the birds and bats that feed on them. Hence the author of the insect chapter speaks of the ‘much welcomed management that has started over the last few years, and the return to more open and warmer grassland swards’. It’s noted, for example, that the Mattled Grasshopper has benefitted from recent scrub clearance as it prefers short turf, exposed soil and rock.

A close reading of the book illustrates why different wildlife interests have to be taken into account in any given conservation management plan. So, while insect-lovers will be concerned about scrub encroachment, the mammals chapter talks of the need for very particular habitats – thick grass tussocks for voles and dense scrub and bramble on lower slopes for dormice. The point is made that, with their mix of woodland, scrub and grassy areas, the Hills are in better condition to support a variety of creatures than they were a hundred years ago, when the slopes were more heavily grazed.

Work of the Malvern Hills Trust
My experience and observations over the last ten years support this view. The Conservators – now Malvern Hills Trust – have adopted a much stronger focus on managing for wildlife and, indeed, our Branch has a very productive volunteer arrangement with the Trust to improve Grayling habitat.

The impact of human pressures is acknowledged but presented in a positive manner. The final chapter outlines what the Trust is doing to accommodate demands from dog-walkers and mountain-bikers, and to encourage sensitive use of the land.

Conclusion
Another strand within the book is that there is much yet to discover, especially within the insect world. It offers a good overview for those who lack detailed knowledge and, all in all, I certainly have no hesitation in recommending it.

It inspired me to revisit the Hills to look for things I’d not yet found. It’s more wide-ranging than a handbook and yet it does help with knowing what to look for and where. For example, the picture of the Hairy-footed Flower Bee enabled me to identify an all-black creature I used to see on my Pulmonaria.

As a final aside, transect walkers and other observers will be delighted to see a photo of an old friend, the Notch-horned Cleg, whose capacity to draw blood is renowned!

Article by Peter Seal  Branch Chair