

Butterfly Conservation Newsletter

North Wales Branch

Spring 2004

Dear member,

Welcome to the BC North Wales Branch newsletter.

I hope you approve of the new look. We've produced the events list as a separate document, so you can put it on your noticeboard or in your diary and refer to it throughout the year. We've included more photographs and contributors have produced longer more 'in depth' articles, which makes this is our biggest branch newsletter to date.

The most exciting thing for me though, is the tie in with the North Wales Branch website. Go to www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk where there is already a wealth of useful information. As the year progresses, I am sure all sorts of additional information will be added, but already the branch website is a great source of information about lepidoptera in North Wales. It contains a full list of regional butterflies (including photographs, habitat and distribution information), details of priority moths, the latest updated events list, articles about butterfly gardening and lots more. The Eyrarth Rocks leaflet and the last three newsletters are already available to download as PDF files, and this newsletter will soon be there too, with all the pictures in 'glorious technicolour'.

Thanks must go to Jan Miller and Andrew Graham for all their hard work in setting up the website.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter.

Alan Wagstaff
Newsletter Editor



Butterfly Conservation Wales
Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Cymru

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats. Actio'n gilymrodol a gwyddonol i'w cynnalwedd

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More Monthly Moth Meetings

Following the success of the informal evening meetings held on the first Monday of each month at Pensychnant, it has been decided to hold similar meetings on the third Monday of each month at the Treborth Botanical Gardens, Bangor. The meetings start from 7.30pm onwards. These meetings are additional to and not in place of the Pensychnant meetings.

These informal meetings do not generally have a planned programme, but are arranged so that anyone can come along and meet others with similar interests, to talk about moths and butterflies (and conservation in general), learn what others are doing, to put forward ideas for activities, to see moths caught at Treborth the previous night, get your own specimens identified etc.



photo: Alan Wagstaff

The first meeting on the 16th February was well attended and we look forward to meeting more people interested in Lepidoptera in the future, both at Pensychnant (1st Monday of the month) and Treborth (3rd Monday of the month).

For more information, please contact Doug Murray (01248) 750089

The e-mail newsletter and anti-spam legislation

We already have a packed programme of events planned for 2004, but news of additional events throughout the year (and a reminder of those events already planned or any changes) is available via the branch e-mail newsletter.

New anti-spam laws governing the use of e-mail addresses came into force in December 2003. Briefly this legislation means that any organisation within the European Union cannot e-mail you unless you explicitly opt-in to receive such e-mail communications.

To ensure we are following best practice; **IF YOU WANT TO START TO, OR CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THE E-MAIL NEWSLETTER THEN YOU WILL NEED TO SUBSCRIBE TO IT** by sending an e-mail to naturaldtp@aol.com with the words **BCNW NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBE** in the title.

We promise that the e-mail newsletter subscription list will only ever be used for that purpose and will not be passed on to any other organisations. If at a later date you wish to unsubscribe, just send an e-mail to the same address with **BCNW NEWSLETTER UNSUBSCRIBE** in the title.

Alan Wagstaff
Newsletter Editor

Eyarth Rocks Reserve Leaflet

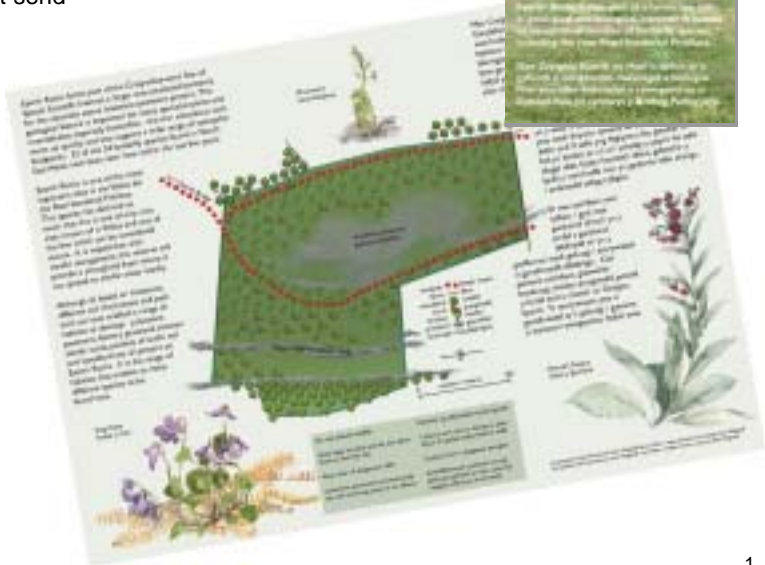
The new free, bi-lingual leaflet for Butterfly Conservation's only North Wales Reserve, Eyarth Rocks is now available and one should be enclosed with this newsletter.

As well as informing members and local residents, it is hoped to distribute these leaflets across North Wales to further publicise the work of Butterfly Conservation in saving rare butterflies, moths and their habitats.

The leaflet has been produced by two of our committee members, Alan Wagstaff and Jan Miller with a grant from the legacy of the Millennium Commission called 'UnLtd'.

If you would like further copies, or have any ideas for good distribution points, then please contact Jan Miller (details on the back of this newsletter). The leaflet is also downloadable from the Branch website.

Jan Miller



A Star is Born - Twice!

The phone was ringing persistently as we arrived home after a long car journey down from Scotland. It was Karen, my work colleague. "I thought I had better warn you, the press are desperate to speak to you, and the BBC are coming to film tomorrow."

No I wasn't suddenly famous or notorious, but the caterpillar that had been discovered in our potatoes was about to become a star. I work at Henfaes, the University research station near Aber, where we study the potato blight organism, *Phytophthora infestans*. This was the cause of the Irish potato famine in the 1840's and is still a major problem today for growers. I am also the Caernarfonshire county moth recorder. Part of our work involves testing and comparing the resistance of new and old varieties of potato to potato blight and we had a large field trial in progress. While closely inspecting the plants for signs of the disease a large, extremely well camouflaged caterpillar was found munching the lush foliage.



© Dave Shaw

Despite my absence it was easily identified as a larva of the Death's Head Hawkmoth, *Acherontia atropus*. The moth is not native to the UK but originates from Northern Africa and Southern Europe. When conditions are favourable the adults migrate northwards and occasionally turn up in Britain.

Southerly winds combined with the long hot summer made 2003 an excellent year for many species of migrant moths and butterflies. An adult Death's Head Hawkmoth had already been found earlier in the summer on Anglesey. The caterpillars however are much less frequently found and are found mainly in southern counties of England. They feed on potato plants and other members of the Solanaceae family.

The majority of records come from gardens and allotments where there is no mechanisation & less use of sprays, and gardeners are more likely to closely inspect their crops than commercial growers. I can find no previous records for larvae being found in North Wales.

The press had been alerted to this rare find and there was considerable interest; the Death's Head Hawkmoth having been made famous by *The Silence of the Lambs*, where pupae of the moth were placed inside the mouths of the serial killer's victims. Our caterpillar, nicknamed Fred, became a star for a day, gracing the pages of *The Telegraph* and the local papers and he appeared on all the BBC Wales and S4C news' bulletins. He certainly was a spectacular beast, 10cm long, bright green with purple and yellow stripes and with the characteristic hawkmoth horn on the end of his abdomen.

Fred had his one day of fame but failed to meet his next photo call the following day. He must have tired of all the attention and pupated overnight deep down in the soil we had provided. Luckily despite Fred's untimely exit from the stage we found another caterpillar - Larry - to act as a stand in, and his guest appearance was one of the major attractions at the Treborth Botanic Garden open day that weekend.

Following the press coverage we received a deluge of letters, photos and phone calls from all over the country reporting sightings of similar caterpillars.

The majority of these reports however were of other hawkmoths and there were few verified Death's Head Hawkmoth records. The commonest sightings were of Elephant Hawkmoth larvae, a native species often found on fuschia bushes.

The period between pupation and the emergence of the adult moth is temperature dependent and can be as short as 3 weeks at temperatures above 20°C and when conditions are ideal. We eagerly awaited the appearance of our 2 adults. Larry won the race 4 weeks later with Fred following within 2 days. Both moths turned out to be females and were renamed Loretta and Freda.



© Dave Shaw

The press interest was rekindled and a star was born again. Loretta appeared on BBC Wales and in the newspapers, and an open day for the potato trials at Henfaes enabled members of the public to see the moth close up. The adult moths were beautiful, yet slightly sinister creatures, absolutely pristine on emergence with the characteristic 'skull' marking on their backs.

When handled or disturbed they emitted a high-pitched squeak. In the wild the moths feed at night on the nectar of plants such as potato, tobacco, sweet-william and orange blossom, and are attracted to light.

They are also known to frequent beehives, where they feed undisturbed on the honey by making themselves 'chemically invisible' to the honeybees, mimicking the cutaneous fatty acids of their hosts. The squeak is thought to resemble the piping of the queen

bee and the thorax pattern is supposedly similar to the head pattern of a 'super' queen bee, all contributing to fooling the worker bees. In captivity the adults can be fed on diluted honey but need to be encouraged; unfortunately we failed to persuade our guests to feed.

Members of the moth group decided to investigate whether there were any further moths present in the crops. We set up light traps one evening and used the 2 female moths as bait to try and attract any males in the area. (We were aware of at least another 4 larvae having been spotted in the fields). Weather conditions were unfortunately poor on the chosen night and no moths were caught. The adults cannot survive the winter in Britain, dying once the temperature drops, and any pupae remaining in the soil would be killed by the first frost.

It could be many years before the moths and caterpillars are found again in North Wales.

2003 will be remembered as an excellent year for migrant moths and butterflies but I will remember it as the year of the Death's Head Hawkmoth. I was privileged to have seen this beautiful and spectacular creature in all its life stages.

I would welcome any further records of Death's Head Hawkmoths, adults or larvae, particularly if they can be substantiated with photos, and of other migratory species, e.g. Convolvulus and Humming-bird Hawkmoths.

Debbie Evans, VC49 recorder.

North West Wales Moth Report

Adroddiad Gwyfynod Gogledd Orllewin Cymru

It is an exciting time to be involved with moths, with a significant increase in the number of people actively recording and enjoying moths. Great leaps in the use of biological records are on the horizon in the form of the proposed North Wales Local Records Centre and the National Macro-moth Recording Scheme.

With these things in mind it is important that we make best use of our records locally. In practice this means submitting them to the Vice-county recorders (addresses on the back of this issue) and being very honest with ourselves about which ones are 'definites'! The job of the VC recorder is then to check, scrutinise, process, store and use all this valuable data.

It is hoped that the production of the North West Wales Moth Reports will contribute in a small way to the wider process of bringing in records and ensuring that they are verified to the highest possible degree. This may not be the most enjoyable part of mothing, but it does provide the basis for any efforts to conserve our wonderful variety of moths. Without basic information about where species live and which species are common or rare, it is impossible to do anything to help a species which is in need of protection. At a simpler level, the Moth Reports are also a celebration of this major branch of the biodiversity of our area - a roll-call of life from the tiniest leafminer to the biggest Hawk-moth.

As part of the Moth Report project we are compiling a regional database of moth records which it is hoped will in time be of use to conservation bodies and planners, biologists, ecologists and others who have a use for records of particular species or records from a particular site.

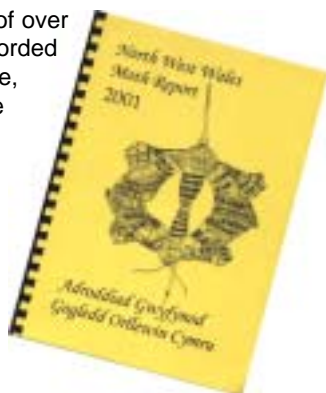
A further aim is to process some of the major local datasets, starting with the huge and very important set of records from Treborth Botanic Gardens. Analysis of this could throw up some very interesting evidence of changing status of particular species.

Finally, and this is still a far-distant ambition, all this piecemeal work lays the foundations for the brave or foolish soul who will at some point start work on writing the County Atlases for our area, finally making some real sense of all our countless thousands of isolated observations.

2001 report available while stocks last!

Details records of over 700 species recorded in Merionethshire, Caernarvonshire and Anglesey (Vice-counties 48, 49, and 52).

Produced by John Harold; price £4.00 inc. p&p.



2002 report available in April 2004

Covering nearly 800 species, with summaries of migrants and rarer resident species recorded during the year. Produced by John Harold and Andrew Graham; price £5.00 including p&p.

Available from:
John Harold
Hen Ardd, Carreg y Garth
Rhiwlas
Bangor
Gwynedd
LL57 4HD

(01248) 361126

Let's forget the introductions

BUTTERFLY GUARDIANS TRAINING WORKSHOP 11TH JULY 2003

Memories drew me back to Lake Vyrnwy, it was there I saw my first Northern Eggar during a weekend recording for the Millennium Atlas that also included a hair-raising experience of sinking into a bog in the Migneint area near Ffestiniog looking for Large Heath...

...This time it was the challenge of spotting the spectacular Welsh Clearwing that appealed, since as a novice moth-er I had not seen a clearwing of any description, so why not have a first tick by the rarest and most attractive of them all.

Another attraction was rubbing shoulders with inspirational experts such as Dr Paul Waring and Tony Davies from Butterfly Conservation Head Office, and one of your own members, Andrew Graham, who undertook a research project on the distribution of the moth last year. It quickly became apparent we would be lucky to see one since Andrew explained they are rather elusive and unpredictable in their habits. His method of surveying mainly relied on identifying the residual exuviae sticking out from the trucks of mature birch trees. He then said he had only seen one moth during the whole of his project!

The weather was rather overcast and cool so our chances were probably going to be slim but I consoled myself that we could always call in at Allt Dolanog for High Brown Fritillary, with my West Midlands Branch colleague, on the way back home in the afternoon.

We started the event at 10 am. Fifteen people had come from far and wide ranging from novices like us to dedicated moth-ers plus two people employed by the Welsh authorities to protect the country's wildlife heritage.

At the outset the day's objectives were established and we were informed about the lifecycle and useful field tips about the Welsh Clearwing. We then all introduced ourselves which turned into quite a lively debate about records and recording protocols. I had been quite proud of the fact that this year I had recorded Orange Footman in my Stourbridge garden, the most northerly record ever on the western side of the British Isles. I had even been on BBC radio explaining this to the listener. It then transpired Andrew had also caught one by his Bala home but Paul pounced on these facts since strange things are happening to the distribution of the moth this year.

During the course of the morning we spread out across the side of the valley studying holes in tree trucks. Only one tree had the tell-tale exuviae on show which was by the roadside and had already been examined by Paul and Andrew at about 9 am without any sign of the emergence. Overall a good number of suitable trees, they are quite choosy these 'welsh wonders', had signs of occupation and we were probably just a little too early at this particular location. Apart from seeing numerous Ringlets the only butterfly flying, I was impressed by the beauty of Green Carpet and Flame Carpet moths.

Summing things up, I would encourage anyone to attend these events. It really doesn't matter about your level of expertise I just see it as a wonderful opportunity to learn in glorious surroundings. I marvelled at the patience and diligence required to understand the habits of this moth. Next year I will have the ability to help Andrew with his project. One thing we all learned is; if introducing ourselves is really necessary let us do it encircling a suitable birch tree - the best technique for actually seeing the moth pop out.

Richard Southwell
West Midlands Branch Organiser

Elm is alive and well & living somewhere near you!

I went on a guided walk around a local country park about 10 years ago and was stunned speechless when the Ranger - in his late twenties - pointed out a Wych Elm to us, saying that he was not old enough to have ever seen a mature English Elm as they were wiped out by Dutch Elm disease in the mid-seventies. Good grief! A whole adult generation is now walking around, making grown-up decisions, who not only were born after Man landed on the moon, never understood what the Hippies were about, but who also have never seen - and whose grandchildren will not see - those towering 200 year old trees that darkened the lanes of Somerset when I was a child in the 60's. (I'm sure every generation has its comparable historical landmarks, but the three above were mine, and precious to me!)

I recently gave a Butterfly Identification workshop where I showed branches of Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Old English Elm (*Ulmus procera*) from my own fields near Holywell in Flintshire, to help people distinguish between these when looking for White-letter Hairstreaks.



Old English Elm (small leaves) and Hazel (large round leaves) in a hedgerow

photo: Jan Miller

Yes, the Old Elm is making a come-back. But of course it has not grown into big trees yet - it is regenerating from 'dead' stumps all along our hedgerows. What prompted me to write this article was an attendee at our workshop who asked me to later go and look at her hedges - she had been told by a local County Ecologist that they were Wych Elm - they were not when I saw them - they were Old English. How old was this ecologist? - Oh, late twenties, early 30's...

So here is my simple pictorial guide to recognising these three species - not easily confused when you know what to look for.



photo: Jan Miller

The defining thing about all elms is that their leaves are asymmetrical; one side of the leaf comes further down the leaf-stalk than the other. Both Wych and Old English Elm leaves are rough to the touch - like coarse sandpaper, but Wych Elm leaves are far larger, 3 or 4 times the size, and Wych Elm has smooth bark whereas older Old English Elm bark is very humpy and knobby. This latter characteristic is said to be why *U.procera* succumbed to the beetle that spread the disease, when *U.glabra* did not, as the beetle likes to burrow into the corky ridges of the bark.

Hazel, for which elm can be easily be mistaken on a casual walk along a hedgerow, has symmetrical, almost completely round leaves, and tends to be a more light, grass-green colour.

Of course, if you see these trees in flower or fruit the difference will be quite obvious, but that will only be for a short time each year.

The new Old English Elms regenerating from suckers seem to mostly succumb to the disease again after about 20 years. This is said to be because that is when the trunk bark becomes knobbly and furrowed enough to attract the beetle. A lot of people seem to think this means there is no point in planting this species anymore, and you will not find a nursery in the whole country that has them for sale. However, I disagree; if we keep planting them then we keep the species alive and part of the gene pool; the length of time the individual trees live does not matter, unless, as some suggest, species like the White-letter Hairstreak can only live on the mature trees.

Research has been going on for some years to find a species of elm that is resistant to the Dutch Elm Disease. A paper has just been published on the Butterfly Conservation Hampshire Branch website entitled "The adaptation of the White-letter Hairstreak to disease-resistant hybrid and exotic elms" by Andrew Brookes. It includes information about a recently started long term study of several species of different elms planted in different locations in the county. It also contains details of suppliers of these different disease-resistant trees. You can view this paper at; http://bchantsandiovi.users.btopenworld.com/Elm_Report.htm

Max Coleman at Reading University (who identified my local specimens as *U.procera*) is also researching elm, and recently had a paper in "British Wildlife" vol 13, no.6 August 2002 "Identification; British Elms" He is interested in any reports of locations of existing *U.procera*, especially mature trees. E-mail him at; m.coleman@reading.ac.uk

I have a very limited number of *Ulmus procera* propagated from local suckers, for sale to those who can guarantee to look after them well! Other butterfly and moth plants for sale to benefit the North Wales Branch funds can be viewed on our new website at www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk or direct from me; 01352 711198.

Cheshire Branch ran a wacky and fabulously inspired project last summer when they hired an open-topped bus for a week and invited people to come and see White-letter Hairstreaks from the top of it in Halton! You can see a short movie of this on their website at; www.butterfly-conservation.com

A nationwide project is being run by the Natural History Museum to locate remaining mature Old English Elms (*Ulmus procera*) plus using local naturalists for all kinds of recording programmes - contact them at; www.nhm.ac.uk/science/biodiversity/index.html

Get involved with the Elm Map walks via the Ramblers' Association website or phone; 020 7339 8500.

Jan Miller
jan@7wells.org or 01352 711198.

Branch Website

The New North Wales Branch website is now available; as well as the obvious things like the current events list and past newsletters, it has sections on regional species (with many beautiful photographs), on LBAPs and Recording, on Gardening for Butterflies and education - including an online workshop to help beginners identify butterflies. Go to www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk and let us know what you think about it and if you have any ideas for additions.

Jan Miller
Website Administrator

Butterfly Report 2003

North East Wales

Just for a change, I'll report on the butterflies of Denbighshire and Flintshire in alphabetical order.

There was only one record of **Brimstone** and that was from Graigfechan (RW) on 15 October.

There weren't many records of **Brown Argus** either, but they did include one from Rhyd y Gaseg, Ruthin(SR) on 12 July. This is a totally unsuitable site for this species but does demonstrate that this normally sedentary species can and does disperse.

There were also 7 fresh **Commas** at this site on the same date; they had a good season and a late one was sunning itself on a fence in Graigfechan on 23 November.

Common Blue records came from a number of new sites as did those for **Dark Green Fritillary**. Only one of the latter was recorded in the Maeshafn area (JA) where they can be quite numerous.

Dingy Skippers appeared in above average numbers at most sites, including Pen y Gelli LNR (BR, JM).

Gatekeepers also did well and counts of over 100 were made at The Shelf, Graigfechan and Eyarth Rocks Reserve (RW).

Graylings were only reported from four sites - 10 at Eryris (RW); 1 at Pot Hole Valley (JA); 2 at Rhyd y Foel (MB) and 1 was an unusual visitor to my garden in Graigfechan (RW).

Only two recorders saw **Green Hairstreaks** at Loggerheads (DCH) and Castle Wood, Ruthin (RW) and from a new site in the south-east at Cilnant (RW). **Green-veined Whites** were commonly seen from April to October.

Grizzled Skippers were in disappointingly low numbers at Loggerheads this year (DCH). I have not received official records from elsewhere but believe they were also recorded at the Wrexham site (JBF) and larvae were recorded at Halkyn (DB), a new site.

Holly Blue were scarce in the spring and the good weather failed to produce a better second brood in July and August with records only coming from near Holywell (BR, SR) and Graigfechan (RW).

Large Heath were only recorded from one site on the Denbigh Moors and none were found at Moel Garegog despite thorough searches.

Both **Large Skipper** and **Large White** had a good season.

Meadow Browns produced counts of more than 10 at only a handful of sites but probably did better than in 2002.

Orange Tip numbers were generally low. In recent years this species seems to have suffered from early fine weather reverting to cold and wet soon after the initial emergence.

Painted Ladies were reported from many sites with numbers peaking at the end of August and early September.

My maximum count of 12 **Peacocks** at Eyarth Rocks on 30 August was less than can often be seen on one buddleia bush!

Pearl-bordered Fritillaries emerged in decent numbers at Eyarth Rocks in May and were utilising areas of newly created habitat (Well done - to all the volunteer workforce last winter!).

Purple Hairstreaks were only recorded at four sites in the area (out of hundreds?) but include Greenfield Valley (SR) & confirmation they still occur at Llanfihangel (RW).

Red Admiral built up to good numbers in late summer.

Ringlets appeared to have a good season but were not reported from any new sites.

The single **Silver-studded Blue** at Cefn yr Ogof (DCH) on 29 May was the only record of this species.

Small Coppers appeared at several locations and 7 recorded at The Shelf, Graigfechan on 7 October may have been a third brood.

Small Heath had their best year for some time at Eyarth Rocks where 35 were counted on 13 July.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were out in better numbers than in 2002 in the Clocaenog Forest area with over 70 seen at one site on 9 July.

The **Small Skipper** never seems to match the numbers seen 10 or 15 years ago but 23 were counted at Pot Hole Valley (JA) on 9 July.

Small Tortoiseshell certainly had an improved year and **Small Whites** were also plentiful.

Speckled Woods were present from April to October but only in any numbers at Graigfechan at the end of August.

Wall Brown records don't suggest to me that this species is declining locally. There is concern for it in other parts of the UK.

As usual there were very few records of **White-letter Hairstreak** but 13 did appear at Rhyd y Gaseg for our field trip on 12 July.

I will remember 2003 as a much better year for the butterfly watcher rather than a spectacular one for the butterflies.

Thanks to all the recorders who included: John Almond (JA); Dave Bennett (DB); Brian Bull (BB); Mel Bellingham (MB); Bryan Formstone (JBF); Jean Green (JAG); David Hinde (DCH); Richard Jones (REJ); Jan Miller (JM); Brian Roberts (BR); Sue Roberts (SR); Rob Whitehead (RW); Malcolm Young (MRY).

Rob Whitehead

Flintshire Change of County Recorders

Please note that the County Recorder for Butterflies for Flintshire has changed from Lawrence Rawsthorne to Rob Whitehead - and the Moth Recorder for Flintshire has changed from Geoff Neal to David Bennett. Please send your records to these new recorders if you've recorded lepidoptera in Flintshire.

We would like to thank Lawrence and Geoff for all the work they have done over the years in these important voluntary posts.

See the back of this newsletter or the website www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk for details of all the North Wales Recorders.

Training Courses

Training events in Butterfly Identification, Timed Counts and Transects are being planned this year (in addition those in the events list). See the website events list, or subscribe to the electronic e-mail newsletter or telephone Jan Miller 01352 711198 for more information.

There is also an online butterfly identification workshop for beginners. Please see the website education page.

My Moth of the Year

The record-breaking temperatures of early July undoubtedly brought some remarkable catches of moths in North Wales.

Unfortunately I missed most of them! At the time I was sweltering away in Surrey (35°C on several days) on family business, with no moth trap and no time to go looking for beasties during the day. As you can imagine this was rather frustrating!

An extremely long, slow, and hot train journey on the 9th July brought the children and myself home to some hot but slightly fresher weather. That evening I was utterly exhausted by 9 o'clock, and had to struggle to find the energy to go out and set up the moth trap. It was only an effort of will which overcame the temptation not to bother.



photo: Alan Wagstaff

The following morning I stumbled out, rather bleary-eyed, in to the garden and peered through the perspex of the 15W actinic trap. What I saw sitting on top of the egg boxes should have made me jump around the garden shouting things like 'Yes! Wow! Fantastic!', but I didn't. Instead I had an out-of-body experience, where I could watch myself in a very calm and deliberate manner simply close down the perspex lids and walk away, back to the kitchen to eat my porridge.

An hour later, when Sam had finished his porridge (cold as usual, but he doesn't seem to mind - I think he's used to eating it like that) I said to him casually "You might like to come and empty the trap with me, there's something quite good in there". So out we went and started to carefully list the moths. There seemed to be an unusual abundance of Large Yellow Underwings (182), but a rather limited range of species otherwise; a couple of Rush Veneers, a handful of Silver Y's, a Northern Rustic.

Quite disappointing really except for one odd thing - there were no less than 8 Iron Prominents, a species I have never had more than the odd 1 or 2 of in the garden previously.

The trap was nearly empty; but where was that moth? Had I dreamed it in my sleepy early morning state? Or had it lifted up the perspex by itself? Surely not....

... and yet we were turning over the very last egg box and, suddenly, miraculously, there it was - a magnificent olive-green and cream Hawk-moth.

"Striped? No, it's not stripey."

"Bedstraw, I think."

"That's even better, - I've seen Striped before. Have you?"
"You know perfectly well I haven't."

Carefully potted and cooled down, we were able to appreciate the combination of subtle colours on the upperwings, and exquisite rose-pink underwings, along with the very sleek and powerful build of our first Bedstraw Hawk-moth.

When I released it later, it gave an impressive display of its powers of flight, rising vertically to 15 feet, turning full circle on the spot and then shooting off like an arrow in a straight line. These moths really can fly!

It seems to have been a good year for Bedstraw Hawk-moth with 10 recorded nationally in Atropos, not bad for a species which can go years without a single record. It has been a good year for other migrant hawk-moths too, with several Death's Heads locally, some of which hit the national news, Convulvulus Hawk-moths seen several times near Barmouth, and many Hummingbird Hawk-moths, including at least one local breeding record.

John Harold

Members' Day 19th June 2004

After the great success of last year's Members' Day, when over 50 members met to hear our guest speaker, enjoy a pub lunch and then have a guided tour of our new Eyarth Rocks Reserve, we are planning a similar format day for you this year. But grander!

We have secured a specially reduced rate for members to use the conference room, lounge and have lunch at the beautifully refurbished Penmorfa Hotel in Llandudno. This was the seaside home of Alice Liddel, the "Alice in Wonderland" that Lewis Carroll wrote about, and who also holidayed here with the Liddel family. The hotel retains many of the paintings and features of Alice's home and has fabulous views across the bay of West Shore, at the foot of the Great Orme.

On Saturday 19th June we will have guest speakers from different branches of Butterfly Conservation who have specialist knowledge of the unique Silver-studded Blue and Grayling butterflies that live on the Great Orme, as well as Tony Davis, Moth Officer from Butterfly Conservation Head Office in Dorset, who will speak about some of the rare moths also to be found here.

Your committee have decided to subsidise the gourmet lunch in the restaurant. The cost will be £7.50 for a 2-course meal that normally costs £12.50, but naturally we can only afford to do this for members. The maximum number that can be accommodated is 80, so we will take bookings on a first come, first served basis. Guests may come if we have space at a cost of £9.00 for lunch and £1.50 for morning coffee.

In the afternoon we will take a walk up the Orme to see the butterflies (bring walking boots), guided by Sally Pidcock, the Countryside Ranger for the Great Orme.

A more detailed programme will be sent to all members closer to the date, but if you would like to secure your place please return a copy of the the form below to: Jan Miller, Saith Ffynnon Farm, Whitford, Holywell CH8 9EQ.

If you would like more information, please telephone Jan on 01352 711198, or e-mail: jan@7wells.org.

To see more information about the Penmorfa Hotel go to; www.penmorfa.co.uk
A location map is now on our Branch web-site; www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk on the 'Latest News' page.



Butterfly Conservation North Wales (BCNW)
Members' Day 19th June 2004 - Booking Form

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Telephone No.....

Membership No (if known).....

I will/will not be attending the 2004 Members' day

Total number of.....BCNW members
and.....guests

Our choice for lunch is (give numbers);

Roast Beef with Yorkshire pudding.....

Grilled fillet of local Salmon finished with an
asparagus, dill and lemon sauce

Chef's Special homemade vegetarian
option.....

All meals are cooked to order on the day and
served with fresh local vegetables..

A desert of your choice from the sweet trolley
and coffee will be served afterwards.

Total cost £ 7.50 (members only)
£10.50 (guests)

Please makes cheques payable to
"Butterfly Conservation North Wales Branch"



SPECIAL OFFER FOR BC MEMBERS
Reduced price tickets to the North
Wales Garden Festivals

North Wales Garden Festivals, Bodelwyddan

Sunday 30th & Monday 31st May 2004
Sunday 29th & Monday 30th August 2004

Name.....
 Address.....

 Tel.no.....
 e-mail.....

Please send me.....tickets for the
 May/August (delete as appropriate) Festival
 @ £3.00 each. I enclose a cheque made out to
"Butterfly Conservation North Wales Branch"
 for;

TOTAL SUM.....

OR

I would like to help on the Butterfly Conservation
 stand for 2 hours at the May/August Show
 (please delete as applicable) on the (Please
 tick:);

Sunday AM.....Sunday PM.....
 Monday AM..... Monday PM.....

and obtain a FREE volunteer helper's pass for
 the entire day.

Return to; Jan Miller, Saith Ffynnon Farm,
 Whitford, Holywell CH8 9EQ, Flintshire.
 (Tel; 01352 711198 if you'd like more details)

The North Wales Garden Festivals held at Bodelwyddan Castle, on the A55 near Abergele on the May and August Bank Holidays every year have become one of the local highlights of the year.

Not just for gardeners, the festival has more and more local conservation group stands every year. As part of this they have offered BCNW special rate tickets for our members; the normal £5.00 entrance ticket for adults can be bought through us this year for just £3.00! This will also help us raise a small amount of funds. The more people that buy tickets through us, the more we make!

Come and see our Butterfly Conservation stand at the show, where we will have butterfly and moth attracting plants for sale, plus books and free leaflets. We also have live specimens of common butterflies, moths and caterpillars for children (of all ages) to see, children's craft activities and guided walks to the Butterfly Glade in the castle grounds.

This show is our biggest fund-raising and membership-increasing event of the year. As you may know, the Branch is facing huge financial pressures in trying to fence, and restore important habitats on our new Reserve at Eyarth Rocks. If you could help us man the stand for a couple of hours during the day it would be immensely appreciated by our exhausted organiser, you will be helping towards real conservation on the ground, locally, plus you get into the show completely free! (You really don't need any specialist knowledge - another volunteer with lots of experience will be there to guide you).

Please return the form on the left for your tickets or to help out on the day and attend the festival for free.

Jan Miller

The Netted Carpet

Eustroma reticulatum in Wales

The Netted Carpet Moth *E. reticulatum* is an endangered species listed in the British Red Data Book as RDB 2 (vulnerable) (Shirt 1987), and included as a priority species of greatest conservation concern in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The larval foodplant, Touch-me-not Balsam *Impatiens noli-tangere* is also considered nationally scarce (Stewart et al 1994). In the UK Touch-me-not is probably native (occurring in 16 10km squares) only in the Lake District, North Wales; in the Dolgellau area, and in a small area on the Montgomery - Shropshire border (Hatcher and Hooson 2000), although colonies that are considered to have been introduced also exist.

The UK stronghold for Netted Carpet is the English Lake District, although several records have also been obtained from Wales. The first Welsh record was listed in Barret (1902) who states that larva was found by a Colonel Partridge in an unspecified spot in North Wales, although Birkett (1951) was not able to trace this record further. Smith (1951) lists one adult found in 1930 near Bala by R.E. Vaughan-Roberts, who exhibited a specimen, also from Bala, in October 1952 (it is not known if the exhibited specimen relates to a second record or if this was the specimen from the 1930s record). The larva was not seen again in Wales until Pat Cordell found larvae in 1973 on Touch-me-not growing near a river 6km north-east of Dolgellau, subsequent searches were made at this site but it appears that a road widening project may have destroyed the site of this colony. Eighteen years were to pass before the next Welsh record when in 1991 Paul Hatcher found two second instar larvae at a private site west of Dolgellau. Three larvae were found at a second site west of Dolgellau by Mike Howe and Adrian Fowles in 1994; 2 in September and 1 in October.

The most recent record concerns three mid instar larvae found by the author, at the same private site as those found by Paul Hatcher, in September 2003.



photo: Graham Jones

In the Lake District the Imago flies from July through to August. It is crepuscular, flying close to the foodplant colonies from between 21.00 and 22.30 and again at dawn from first light until c.06.00. Netted Carpet is univoltine, and Heath (1959) states that the eggs are laid singly on the leaves of the foodplant. Yet during captive breeding in August 2003 two gravid females laid eggs in batches of up to 30 on a single leaf. The larvae feed on the flowers and ripe seed pods, particularly in the early instar, and in the mid and late instars on leaves from late August through September, and sometimes into early October. It pupates in the soil spinning a loose silken cocoon some 5 -10 cm from the surface, close to the foodplant, and remains in this stage through the winter and until the imago emerges in the following July - August.

Touch-me-not is an annual herb of damp (but not waterlogged) shaded woodland (particularly Ash, Rowan, Alder woodlands). It is a ruderal and can be quick to colonise disturbed areas but appears intolerant of competition.

Colonies that have become established may quickly become extinct once more aggressive perennial competitors become established within the same area. In terms of Netted Carpet conservation permanency of Touch-me-not colonies is essential. Within the Lake District habitat management is undertaken to ensure that such permanency occurs by encouraging ground disturbance which in turn reduces perennial competition.



photo: Graham Jones

Despite the fact that Netted Carpet is indeed a rare moth in Wales and records will presumably always be sparse, volunteer involvement in searching not only for the moth, but perhaps more importantly, for colonies of the foodplant is certainly to be encouraged. The majority of Touch-me-not colonies in Wales are situated around the Dolgellau area, although colonies have also been recorded near Bala, Welshpool, and also in Flintshire, although this colony was probably introduced in the 19th century. Any damp shaded woodland within the Dolgellau area may produce records of Touch-me-not, although it is possible that other areas of suitable habitat within the rest of North Wales may also hold colonies of Touch-me-not that are yet to be discovered.

Once Touch-me-not has been found, recording Netted Carpet is best undertaken by searching for larva, the first week of September is the optimum time for this.

Early instars are usually hidden inside the seed pods or flowers but mid instars will sit on the underside of the leaf along the midrib and mimic an unripe seed pod (below).



photo: Dave Green / Butterfly Conservation

They can also often be found forming a triangle with the Balsam by clasping on to a leaf stem head down and holding on to the main plant stem with the first legs (below).



photo: Dave Green / Butterfly Conservation

Gently turn the top few leaves over to check for larva (this is where most tend to sit), or scan with eyes level with the top of the plant. Porter (1997) has a good photograph of a mid instar larva. If a greenish, almost opaque geometrid larva is found on Touch-me-not while searching it is strongly recommended that the finder makes contact with somebody with experience of Netted Carpet larva to confirm the record.

I am more than happy to take a look at such finds as soon as is possible and Andrew Graham has also confirmed that he would be willing to confirm such records (angrhm@globalnet.co.uk).

Andrew is also happy to advise anybody keen to search for Netted Carpet within the Dolgellau area, and I would strongly suggest that interested parties do just that, as many of the Touch-me-not colonies in this area are at private, particularly sensitive sites.

The Netted Carpet imago does come to MV light but can be easily missed. A sheet trap as close to the Touch-me-not colony as possible works best. Ensure the light is switched on early, as Netted Carpet can be one of the first moths to fly, and will cease flying early in the night too, the chances of catching Netted Carpet after 23.00 are extremely small. Placing an Actinic within a Touch-me-not colony can be just as successful as using MV; similarly dusking Touch-me-not colonies can also be successful. In the Lake District the most successful period in terms of imago capture is the last week of July.

Any records of either Netted Carpet or Touch-me-not in Wales, both in an historical and future context would be gratefully received by the author.

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0151 6448392

Some of our members helped Graham Jones look for Netted Carpet larvae last September, in Downing Wood (unfortunately without success).

This year we have an event on 28th July looking for the adults. For more info, see the events list, or view it on-line at www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk and follow the events link.

Work off that extra winter weight - and do your bit for conservation at Eyrarth Rocks

We need volunteers again to help us clear the scrub from the reserve, on Wednesdays and Saturdays up to the end of March. Thanks to a bigger grant from CCW this year (because we did so well last year) we are able to pay contractors in February to chain-saw down most of the remaining hawthorn and gorse that has enveloped the site. Those of you who have not seen the reserve since last summer will be surprised at how much limestone pavement is now visible - mostly due to the continued hard work of volunteers from Cheshire as well as locals this winter. Please come and help us for the 'final push' of habitat restoration.

Contact Jan Miller (01352) 711198 or e-mail jan@7wells.org or Rob Whitehead (01824) 704507 or rob@haulfryn99.fsnet.co.uk if you would like more information.

Morfa Conwy

1. The Boys' Own Adventure Story

It came as some surprise, when reading Julian Thompson's excellent review of the Pencychnant moth records, to spot a reference to a record of Sandhill Rustic (*Luperina nickerlii gueneei*) at Morfa Conwy. Until then I was not aware of any VC49 (Caernarvonshire) records for this Red Data Book RDB2 species. A little digging confirmed that the record was a good one - in 1983 and by the eminent lepidopterist Hugh Michaelis. In fact there are also a couple of other, older, records from the Conwy/Deganwy area in the CCW records.

This brings us to the 16th August 2003, when Sam Thomas and I were returning from a rather cold night's mothing at the RSPB Glan Conwy reserve. Nothing much to cheer us there, except perhaps the Small Seraphim (*Pterapherapteryx sexalata*) - not rare, but seldom recorded in these parts, and a rather fine Latin name. Anyway, a plan formed, as it sometimes does, to stop off at Morfa Conwy to see whether we could update the Sandhill Rustic record for the site. We began searching at 23.45 and worked our way along the foreshore, trying to spot the compound eyes reflecting in our torchlight, looking for that chunky pale moth shape perched up on a grass stem. The omens were good; sand-over-shingle just as it occurs at Kimmel Bay, with 'plenty' of the larval foodplant, Sand Couch. For Sandhill Rustic 'plenty' means a few straggling half-dead wisps, with the occasional larger clump which is normally buried under dog dirt.

One hour, and two Flounced Rustic (*Luperina testacea*) false-alarms, later and we were rapidly becoming tired and pessimistic. Trudging back to where we had started searching, we had to decide whether to accept defeat or make a final effort by searching in the opposite direction from the start point.

We chose the latter and within a couple of minutes were rewarded.



photo: Ilija Vukomanovic

Sandhill Rustic
(*Luperina nickerlii gueneei*)

"Sam", I shouted over to where I could see his torch working to and fro in the darkness "I think I've got one!". Then, more calmly, as Sam hurried over, "I have got one". We savoured the moment, enjoying the special beauty of the moth, perched on a dead stem of dock; the subtle differences from Flounced Rustic making all the difference.

2. Belted Beauty at Morfa Conwy

Morfa Conwy has been the subject of much attention over the years, as the site of a well-known colony of Belted Beauty (*Lycia zonaria britannica*). The moth survived the sometimes heavy predations of Victorian collectors, for whom this was a relatively accessible site.

In more recent years it has survived the mounting pressures from the adjacent golf course, public use as a dog-walking route and general repository for refuse.

A major research programme on Belted Beauty has been carried out by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). On several occasions BCNW members have taken the time to add their observations of Belted Beauty to the record (counts of male and female adults, larval searches), indeed one member has been central to the development of rearing techniques for an attempted introduction of the species to another North Wales locality.

Without going too far into the tortuous debate which surrounds introduction schemes, it is worth considering why such a scheme is considered necessary, and what it might mean for the future prospects of Belted Beauty in North Wales.

Mike Howe of CCW comments...

“CCW has embarked on a 3 year programme (now in its 2nd year) to introduce the belted beauty from Morfa Conwy, one of only 3 surviving sites in England and Wales for the moth and the only site in Wales, to a Local Nature Reserve near Rhyl where long-term management is more secure. Although there are no known records from this site, it does lie within the historic range of the moth on the north Wales coast. In recent years, the population at Morfa Conwy has been squeezed into ever-decreasing pockets of flower-rich, short grassland as areas which were previously occupied have become ranker, grassier and with a dense layer of thatch. Whilst actions are underway to address this situation, it was felt wise to translocate the moth to an additional site so as not to have all our belted beauty eggs in one basket!

Within CCW, introductions are seen as a final option after more appropriate avenues (habitat restoration, habitat creation, promoting natural dispersal and colonisation)

have been considered. With the continuing decline in habitat, the possible threat of coastal protection and the establishment of a cycle route through the dunes and the vulnerability of the moth to extinction, options were rather limited.

It may be a little early to judge the success of the introduction. No adults were seen this year following the release of about 1000 late instar larvae in May 2002, but the moth can remain in the pupal stage for up to 4 years. A second release of similar numbers took place this May so we await developments in spring next year.

It is vital that we do not lose focus on the population at Morfa Conwy. CCW is currently involved in negotiations with Conwy Golf Club regarding the notification of key parts of Morfa Conwy as a SSSI. A management agreement is already in place which will result in a series of small scrapes being undertaken to restore areas of rank grassland to flower-rich grassland, a practice already successfully adopted at a site on the Wirral, and the establishment of a mowing regime. Discussions with Conwy County Borough Council will soon take place to secure better management of areas occupied by the moth under its ownership, and the possibility of managing areas at the western extreme of the dune system will be explored.”

3. The Status of Morfa Conwy as an important site for Lepidoptera.

Further input into the site management comes from the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and planning policies of Conwy County Borough Council. Alun Rhys Jones, CCBC Warden for Morfa Conwy explains the background in terms of site ownership, potential threats, and the BAP and local authority planning policy framework...

“Much of the site is in the ownership of the golf club, except for a small block to the north of the golf course and the western

end of the Morfa which is in the ownership of the Council. The dunes to the north of the access track (6.65ha) are managed by the Council's Countryside Service, while the dunes to the south of the track are leased by the caravan park.

There are no known development threats at the moment.

The Belted Beauty is included in a Species Action Plan which includes actions to continue monitoring and to protect and enhance its existing habitat, which is also covered by the Habitat Action Plan for coastal sand dune. In the near future a 2 metre square scrape together with raking of the grassland in a known Belted Beauty location, within the SSSI, is being undertaken. We are also hoping to scrape two experimental scrapes some 20 metres square, to the west of the caravan park, this winter.



Belted Beauty (*Lycia zonaria britannica*) male

photo: Ilija Vukomanovic

The emerging Unitary Development Plan will include several relevant policies. The strip of dunes, except to the west of the caravan park is being notified as an SSSI. This will be protected under a policy which

will not normally allow development on SSSIs. There are also policies that normally protect sand dunes from development, and protect priority habitats and species in the LBAP. Another policy commits the Council to managing its own land to promote nature conservation management.”



Belted Beauty (*Lycia zonaria britannica*) female

photo: Alan Wagstaff

4. Some Final Thoughts

Considerable resources are being devoted to the conservation of Belted Beauty at Morfa Conwy and elsewhere. The dune habitat of this species is shared by a whole range of other scarce invertebrates, including Red Data Book and nationally Notable macro- and micro-moths.

The importance of the planning and BAP processes at the local authority level is very clear; a robust habitat protection approach at this level will clearly achieve much and reduce the need for a rear-guard action for a particular species.

The role of biological recording as a basic step on the road to site protection and management is clear when one looks at Morfa Conwy - why are resources being put into Belted Beauty at the site? The answer is rather like the mountain-climbing principle - “Because we know it’s there”.

John Harold & Sam Thomas

Moth identification Pitfalls?

There are certain groups of species which many people have trouble with when they start mothing. Here are a few notes on some groups I am familiar with. I hope they are of some help.

Small Emerald & Light Emerald

These 2 species are not very similar but if you only look on the page with the 'true emeralds' then you could mistake them. The inner cross-line is straight in Light Emerald and curved in Small Emerald.

Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet & Red Twin-spot Carpet

The red form of Dark-barred can be confused with Red Twin-spot Carpet, but Dark-barred has the inner edge of the central band notched near the costa (leading edge of the wing).

Beech-green Carpet & Yellow-barred Brindle

Most people call their first couple of Yellow-barred Brindles Beech-green Carpets. This is due to the poor pictures in Skinner and that Yellow-barred Brindle is on a different page further in the book than you'd expect. The definitive character is that Yellow-barred Brindle has only one pair of spurs on its hind tibia, whereas Beech-green Carpet has 2 pairs. Beech-green is much the rarer in North Wales, if it is present at all.

Devon Carpet & Water Carpet

Once you have seen both species side by side they are unmistakable. The Devon Carpet is smaller, has a more curved wing margin and has the mid-band strongly angled towards the costa; it is barely angled in Water Carpet.

Scarce Umber & Mottled Umber

Many Mottled Umbers are strongly marked and should be obvious. It is however a very variable species and obscurely marked or worn individuals may be confused with Scarce Umber, which in spite

of its name is a common moth. Both species have wingless females, so the following applies only to males.

The terminal fringe of cilia of the forewing is normally barred in Mottled Umber and plain in Scarce Umber. On the underside of the underwing, Mottled nearly always shows 2 dark bars, whereas scarce has 1 at most. The front legs are strongly barred and the underside of the abdomen strongly speckled black in Mottled Umber; the legs are hardly barred and the abdomen not speckled in Scarce Umber. The most reliable feature is the pectination (feathering) of the antennae; Scarce has long pectinations with a tuft of short hairs at the end, whereas Mottled has short pectinations with long hairs.

Spruce Carpet & Grey Pine Carpet

The terminal (outer) line is normally more distinct in Spruce and the edges of the mid-band more obviously toothed.

Dusky Brocade & The Confused

The Confused is much more restricted in distribution, seemingly found in rocky places near the coast and around the upland margins, but it is difficult to be sure of this due to confusion with, in particular, Dusky Brocade. The costa (leading edge) in Confused is straighter, and the subterminal line (the outermost wiggly line) is straighter in the middle. The reniform stigma (kidney shaped blotch in the middle of the wing) is much smaller, and the underside of the wings show 2 well-developed lines, as opposed to 1 in Dusky Brocade.

I hope that these guidelines help.

Sam Thomas

Why monitor butterflies?

Butterfly monitoring is the foundation upon which conservation is built, as it allows us to assess trends, identify priorities and measure the effectiveness of conservation action. It is also one of the areas in which BC's volunteers excel and, therefore, a major strength of the Society. Anyone can help with butterfly monitoring and we need to maintain a thriving volunteer community to provide vital ongoing information. This article aims to clarify the main monitoring projects undertaken by BC members and explain how the data gathered plays an essential role in conservation.

What is monitoring?

By 'monitoring' we mean collecting information that can be used to determine how well butterflies are faring. This might be at the level of an individual colony or site (e.g. using the butterfly transect method) or across counties, regions or countries. Most monitoring carried out by BC members falls into two main activities: walking butterfly transects and general butterfly recording as part of the Butterflies for the New Millennium (BNM) project. Both types of monitoring provide essential, but different, information that enables BC to conserve butterflies effectively. Abundance data from transects and distribution data from BNM recording compliment each other and together provide a much clearer picture of how butterflies are faring than could be gained from either type of monitoring alone.

Butterfly transects

Butterfly transects are the most accurate way to check how butterfly populations are faring on individual sites. A transect is a walk around a particular area (perhaps a favourite walk near your home) during which all of the butterflies seen are counted. The route remains the same each time and the transect is walked during fine weather every week from April until the end of September.

Clearly, this requires commitment from recorders, although transects can be shared by groups of people each walking a certain number of weeks. Some transects are set up to focus on particular rare species. These are quicker to do as only the focus species is recorded and are done for shorter periods of the year (i.e. during the flight period of the species concerned).

The information gained from transect monitoring is immensely useful, especially if the same transect is walked for many years. When data are brought together from a large number of sites, regional and national indices can be generated. The key value of such annual monitoring is that it provides early warnings of species decline, at a time when conservation action can be most effective and before species are lost from whole sites and areas. Transects not only provide accurate assessments of how each species is doing every year, but enable us to investigate many questions about butterfly ecology and how habitat management and the weather affect populations. The BC transect project, which has collated data from over 500 transects involving 2000 volunteer recorders, has already provided important information to the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. For example, we now know that the Government's green farming schemes are helping to slow the declines of many butterfly species. Impressed at the quality of BC's monitoring, DEFRA have now extended their funding of this project, specifically to investigate how habitat management affects different butterfly species.

Despite the success of the project so far, more transects are needed, particularly in northern England, Wales and Scotland and in farmland, urban, wetland, upland and coastal habitats. Your butterfly transect records could end up on a Minister's desk and help improve the future of the countryside for butterflies.

Recording butterfly distribution

Butterflies for the New Millennium is BC's project for general butterfly recording. Since 1995, over 2.3 million butterfly sightings have been collected from 10,000 volunteers. As with transect data, butterfly records are important at both the local and national scales. Recording is essential for local conservation, providing the locations of colonies of scarce and declining species to conservation organisations and planning authorities seeking to protect them. Records can also provide national assessments of how species are faring by comparing current distributions to historical ones.

Data from the first five years of BNM were used to produce *The Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford University Press, 2001), but this book is only the start. The distributions of most species are changing rapidly and it is vital that people continue to record butterflies and that more recorders are recruited. You can make a record any time you see a butterfly that you can identify, anywhere in Britain and Ireland. You don't have to be an expert and even recording in your garden, local park or nature reserve can be a big help. Standard recording forms are used to note down any butterflies that you see, together with the date and name and grid reference of the place where they were. Records are returned to Branch co-ordinators. We are currently working toward the production of new national distribution maps based on the survey period 2000-2004. Many areas remain under-recorded and there are undoubtedly many colonies of scarce species still to be discovered - it is not too late to get involved!

Why is monitoring important?

The data generated by BNM recording and transect monitoring of butterflies underpin almost all conservation work and can be used over and over again to benefit butterflies, both at the local scale (e.g. by improving site management) and nationally.

The data are used to determine Government policy, to decide planning applications and to influence the activities of major land-owning organisations such as the Ministry of Defence and Forestry Commission. Ultimately, butterfly data collected by members and submitted through BC's Branches determine which species are the focus of conservation action through Biodiversity Action Plans at the national, regional and local levels. Monitoring data are also important in research and have been used to advise the Government and its conservation agencies on the state of Britain's butterflies, agricultural reform and the impacts of climate change. BC has gained an excellent reputation for providing high quality information on butterfly trends, but your help is vital to ensure that we maintain these standards in the future.

How to get involved?

Everyone can contribute and we really do need your help. Whether you are a new recruit or a long-term member, now is the time to get involved with butterfly monitoring (if you aren't already!). You don't need to give up lots of free time and you don't need to be an expert. Contact your Branch Recorder or Organiser to see how you can help or find out more about transect walking and Butterflies for the New Millennium from the BC web site (www.butterfly-conservation.org). We need both distribution records and transect data to conserve our declining butterflies.

Richard Fox & Dr. Tom Breton
Butterfly Conservation

A general recording form has been included with this newsletter. If you want more forms or a site specific form, then please contact your local county recorder (addresses on the back of this newsletter) or visit the branch website where casual recording forms and transect forms are available on the website 'Recording' page.

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