

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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**BUTTERFLY
CONSERVATION** SM

Over to You...

by Gavin Vicary

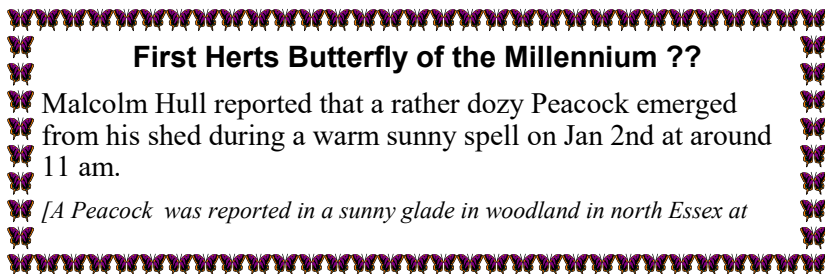
In this issue you will find advertised our Field Trip Program for this year. We have deliberately reduced the number of trips from previous years, as an experiment to see how this affects attendances.

The number of people that normally attend varies from just 3 or 4 up to about 20. This seems fairly random and it is sometimes difficult to explain why a trip has proved popular when a similar trip in terms of distance, species to see, time of year, etc, does not. We are hoping that by having fewer trips, we will have bumper

attendances on the ones that we have organised.

The trips that we have arranged are intended to be varied with two days at some of the best butterfly sites in the west of our branch area, including a visit to our own reserve at Millhoppers. We also have a trip, further afield, when we shall be going up to Norfolk, to the national society reserve at Catfield Fen, home of the spectacular Swallowtail, our largest native butterfly. Finally, the last trip of the year will be to my favourite haunt; Patmore Heath, to see how management is progressing at a time when there should be plenty of Small Coppers on show. In addition some moth evenings have been planned and I do hope members will put the dates in their diaries and try to attend. If you have not been on a field trip before do not be shy – we would very much like to meet you.

Whilst I am on the subject of getting members involved, the numbers of people at the Millhoppers work parties have also dropped off. It is two years since we managed to acquire the reserve and initially the work parties were very well attended and this led to considerable progress in terms of conservation management. So much was achieved in such a short space of time, that it would be a shame if we did not build on the initial success. The tasks get you out in the countryside, keep you fit and might even be considered as good fun. They also keep the reserve in ideal condition for the wildlife that thrives there. I hope therefore, that you will again make a special effort and try and help out.



First Herts Butterfly of the Millennium ??

Malcolm Hull reported that a rather dozy Peacock emerged from his shed during a warm sunny spell on Jan 2nd at around 11 am.

[A Peacock was reported in a sunny glade in woodland in north Essex at

Field Trip Report – Brown Hairstreak Egg Hunt in Bricket Wood – 15 January 2000, by Malcolm Hull



Brown Hairstreak is an elusive species, best detected by hunting for its tiny white eggs in winter. John Murray reports that his records show only one egg has been found in the whole of Herts & Middx in the last five years. There have been a few adults reported at the Bricket Wood site, although I have not recorded it in three years of transect walks.

I had prepared for the trip by joining Upper Thames Branch on an egg hunt at the RSPB reserve at Otmore near Oxford in November. I learnt how to look for & identify eggs and found out that a magnifying glass, good boots & a lot of patience are essential!

Our first field trip of the millennium assembled at the Old Fox Pub at the end of School Lane on a bright sunny morning. The place to look for the eggs is on blackthorn hedges, about two to five feet off the ground. The eggs are often laid on prominent shoots standing proud of the hedge. They prefer new growth and favour south/south-west facing hedges. We started searching along School Lane, which is often referred to as the best place to look. Colin Everett confirmed this was the location of the egg he found in March 1996.

Although the blackthorn here is plentiful, it is quite mature with little new growth at a suitable height. Plants adjoining the lane are pruned regularly and the habitat looked unpromising. No eggs were found in this section.

We next searched the hedge along the south side of Mutchetts Wood, which faces a grassy field rich in anthills. Here the blackthorn is mixed with other species, but there was plenty of new growth with suckers extending out from the hedge. Alan Downie commented that on a previous trip in Hampshire, he had found these outlying suckers to be preferred. Alas, a good 40 minutes of searching again drew a blank.

We then moved one field further south to a horse paddock where the hedge is dominated by young blackthorn and there are lots of suckers. This habitat looked ideal, but careful searching proved fruitless. We then moved on to a good looking hedge on the south-west side of Coldharbour Plantation. Here there are prominent Ash trees above the blackthorn. The only disadvantage here is that the horses have been chewing the protruding shoots – exactly the ones the butterflies would have chosen. Once again we found no eggs. The total finds for the morning were one Muntjac deer, two hibernating ladybirds and a tree creeper.

When the others had gone, Colin and I searched higher up School Lane around the turn off for Little Munden Farm, which has been mentioned as a site in the past. The plants in this area are now too old and overgrown and we finally had to admit defeat.

Nick Bowles reports that Brown Hairstreak numbers have declined substantially in Upper Thames Branch in recent years and the butterfly's range has shrunk, for reasons we can not explain, into a tiny region of the three counties (Berks Bucks and Oxon.) where it now exists in worryingly low numbers. This area (Bernwood/Otmore) is about 50 miles away, but is probably the nearest surviving colony to Bricket Wood. Surrey Branch have also reported falling numbers this year. It seems unlikely that the small Herts colony could survive in isolation for long and it may even now be extinct. However it is too soon to reach any definite conclusion. The reason for the decline is not clear. Certainly there is habitat that looks good, even though the old sites in School Lane are overgrown. Nick Bowles suggests one possible explanation is a parasite moving from the East, but no-one knows for sure. One thing is certain – the many Vapourer Moths and Purple Hairstreaks in the wood will be closely examined next autumn to see if there is Brown Hairstreak among them!

A Beginners' Guide to Moth Trapping – by a Beginner! by John Carter

Well it all started at the beginning of the year when I attended one of Rob Souter's talks on moths. I'd been interested in butterflies for about a year after watching a Camberwell Beauty fly in from the sea at Holme in Norfolk whilst birdwatching. After 20 odd years of birding I realised that butterflies were a huge untapped source of excitement. It wasn't long after joining BC that I appreciated that I could attract moths to my garden in far greater numbers, both in variety and numbers of the same species than I ever could when dealing with birds or butterflies – so that was it – 3 weeks later, at the end of April, I had a Heath trap and a new copy of Skinners 'Moths of the British Isles' (At £44 the most I had ever paid for a book but what an investment it proved to be!)

So that evening I put the trap together in my rear garden in the depths of Letchworth, and sat down to await the hoards of moths that would certainly descend upon this beacon of purple light – 30 minutes later I was beginning to get cold and not one moth had arrived at the trap.

Unperturbed I went indoors and returned about an hour later to find a moth not in but on the outside of the trap – my first moth! With shaking hands I captured the specimen in a small jar and went indoors to consult the oracle – its not in there! A rarity! New to science! – No, unfortunately not! This was, alas, to be the first of many searches through 'Skinner' where I would only actually find the moth on the 23rd flick through the picture pages. I suppose what is rather disconcerting is the fact that the moths in the book are all neatly laid out – nothing like they are in real life (unless of course you count the one my 7 year- old stood on by accident as it escaped from the trap.) The moth turned out to be a Hebrew Character moth (common).

The next night only saw one moth also – but in fact this was a bit more uncommon – a Scarce Tissue (Very Local and a pretty good record by all accounts!) and again this was outside the trap not in it.

And there's another thing – no one told me you have to leave the trap out all night. I was leaving it out for 2 to 3 hours then bringing

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it in, usually empty, before I went to bed. The secret, which is obvious, really is to leave it out all night. What! - £80 worth of equipment spreading an attractive light over North Herts – what if someone steals it? Well it's a chance you take and considering the increased catch – a chance well worth taking.

Anyway, the numbers of moths began to increase with the onset of spring and some even began to go in the trap!

And there's another thing – no one told me to examine the moths in the morning. Being a family man with all the hullabaloo the morning brings, I would cover the top of the trap, bring it in doors then examine my catch at leisure that evening before releasing them prior to setting it up for another night. The trouble is – in the morning the moths are docile and asleep and easily handled. In the evening, however, they have all been boosted up by huge injections of adrenaline and when you lift off the lid – whoosh! – up they go, fighting to escape and free of the risk of being identified!

Still all was not gloom and doom – we did have some excellent catches and with me being an ardent birder – each new species was like a lifer in birdwatching – only I was getting 4 new lifers a day on good days – incredible!

Highlight of the year was undoubtedly a Privet Hawk Moth which I overlooked. (How can you overlook a Privet Hawk Moth?) In fact it had settled on the house wall about 5' from the trap. A gorgeous creature, very obliging and allowing itself to be man-handled and photographed by the whole family.

A Garden Tiger Moth was no less attractive – for me a beast of mythical proportions. I never thought I'd catch one of these beauties in my first year!

So in my first year I caught 59 identified species and many unidentified, but the numbers were sometimes very



impressive – finding over 40 Large Yellow Underwings one morning was brilliant.

Speciality of the year was a rather non-descript moth called a Shaded Fan Foot – found again outside the box. Your hands begin to shake a bit when you realise that according to ‘Skinner’ it has not been seen in Herts before! I’ve asked Rob Souter



to check this specimen out for me – if it’s a first for Herts I shall buy all the BC members a drink down my local pub (If you can find out where it is!)

So am I into moths – yes! For about £100 you can set yourself up with a hobby to last a lifetime. I’m still catching now as I write (17th Dec) but only in small numbers. Roll on next spring and let me at them again!

A Feature of Our British Landscape, by Margaret Noakes.

Unbeknown to most of us, including myself until relatively recently, is to be found, dominating pockets of our British landscape one of Britain's largest native trees, the Black Poplar *populus nigra* var. *betufoia*. It was not until the purchase of Millhoppers, our reserve in West Herts, that I became

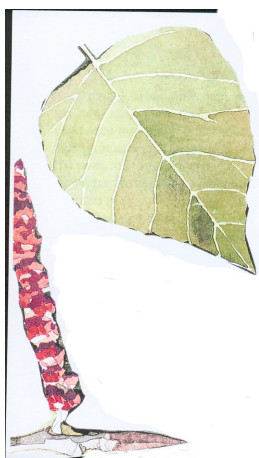


aware of the significance of these magnificent trees. (We have 16 on the boundaries and in our reserve.) Often reaching 100ft and 6ft in diameter they can outrank even the oak and ash. A survey by

Edgar Milan- Redhead 20-30 years ago indicated only a possible 1000 trees in the whole of Britain, with the highest concentration around the village of Long Marston in the Vale of Aylesbury. Since then there has been a recognition that the figure may well be around 3000.

But the tree is relatively rare in Britain and because of the changes in our landscape over the past few centuries and the lack of female trees, is a somewhat threatened species.

Special Features. The shape of the Black Poplar is unique, with long arching branches and deeply fissured bark, with large knobby burrs. The leaves are bright green, triangular and shiny, bearing a similarity but a significant difference from other Poplar species.



Most trees have been pollarded, usually at a height above the level that animals can feed. Traditionally pollarding has been seen as a method to conserve the trees and render them safer, thereby prolonging their life.

Real Concerns. With the Black Poplar, the red male and the green female catkins grow on separate trees. Because the female trees produce vast quantities of white fluff from their catkins, they were considered a nuisance and were felled in considerable numbers. (The Cottonwoods of North America are of the same family).

Agricultural drainage in the 17th century meant that the damp conditions required by generating seeds through the summer and autumn were less likely and trees became isolated. Our more recent drainage programmes in natural flood plains has added to the loss of these habitats. Like so many members of the Salicaceae family, e.g. the Willow and Sallow, the Black Poplar thrives in damp conditions found in valleys and flood plains and is never found in woodland and forest. The mode of growth of this particular species make it susceptible to splitting and damage by high winds and rain.

The culmination of these factors resulted in little sexual reproduction. Fortunately the ability to strike roots from fallen trunks and branches as well as the ease with which cuttings can be taken has saved the trees from disappearing from our British landscape.

Distribution. Most of our Black Poplars are to be found south of the Humber with a few in Shropshire and some in the valley of the Wye bordering Wales and England. There are a number to be found in Suffolk but significantly less than those to be found at the time when Constable was painting 'The Hay Wain' which shows a fine example of our native tree.

Timber Usage. There is evidence that Black Poplar's beautiful curved branches form the frames of 'Cruck' buildings. In fact it is



extremely likely that the timber frame of our own cottage is of Black Poplar. The making of clogs and baskets and the providing of fodder for animals has also been identified.

Surveying. A survey of Black Poplars in the Vale of Aylesbury has been underway for some time. For those that know the strange way in which Herts. juts into Bucks, it is not difficult to see how important this area is within the Vale of Aylesbury, an area that has never been surveyed. We have now completed a community survey of all the Black Poplar trees in this peninsular of Herts with the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal, acting as the southern boundary, and have found around 1000 trees .

All the data is at present being entered on a mapping computer programme provided by Herts County Council from which, when completed, we will be able to identify a great deal of significant information. With the overall aim of conserving and preserving our Black Poplar Trees we hope to be able to develop management guidelines, including planting and pollarding. With the help of many local people with different skills we feel we have achieved a lot.

Richard Mabey in Flora Britannica says "On late afternoons in March, especially when there is a patchy sun glinting from the west, parts of the Vale of Aylesbury are suffused with an exotic orange glow. This spectacular display is the largest concentration of our grandest native tree, the Black Poplar, in all its spring finery, and there is no other treescape like it in Britain".

Why not come and see for yourself!



Apples, by Liz Goodyear



In the December 1999 Newsletter, Gavin said he had been putting apples out to attract Redwings etc. into his garden. I too have left out apples for the birds, and since the New Year a Green Woodpecker has visited my garden several times each day to peck at the now rotting apples. He/she is very nervous but if undisturbed will stop for over 10 minutes at a time.

On another occasion I was delighted to see the bird drinking from my newly created pond. My delight turned to horror as it then proceeded to peck the ground right by the edge and nearly into the liner!



Update on the Grizzled Skipper Survey, by Christine Shepperson

In 1998 the Herts and Middx branch of Butterfly Conservation and the Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust started a Grizzled Skipper survey. It has now run for two seasons and 2000 will be the last year for the survey phase of the project. This report aims to keep you informed on progress and, hopefully, to recruit a few more volunteers to join the team.

Butterfly Conservation and HMWT have both developed a species action plan that aims to halt and reverse the decline of the Grizzled Skipper. The survey is the first step in the plan. We are looking for the remaining Grizzled Skipper colonies in Hertfordshire, trying to determine their size and providing habitat information to find out whether conservation management is needed.

On 2 May after a short spell of warmth and sunshine the first Grizzled Skipper, a singleton, was seen in one of the two herb rich glades in **Broxbourne Woods**. Both glades are sheltered with an interesting and varied flora that includes Heather, Broom, Bugle, Common Cow wheat, Yellow Archangel, Tormentil and Wild Strawberry (the last two are both Grizzled Skipper foodplants). The Countryside Management Service manages the glades to keep them open and to encourage species diversity. Visits on 20 and 27 May, during the two bursts of warm and sunny weather towards the end

of the month, produced further records with a maximum of five Grizzled Skippers seen on a single visit.

The first Grizzled Skipper of 1999 at **Waterford Heath** was found on 3 May in a deep sheltered sandy dell on the south pit. A few days later (7 May) Graham White of the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust found 5 on the north pit, which proved to be the maximum seen on any one day. Grizzled Skippers proved fairly elusive at Waterford this year and several observers failed to find any on their visits. However, a few were seen, at both halves of the site up until 24 May, but in small numbers. One Grizzled Skipper, presumably a 'Waterford wanderer' was recorded on a railway embankment close to the north pit.

Success in finding our target species at Waterford this season was a bit uneven and results from the south pit were disappointing. The heavy spring rains in May 1998 produced an abundance of tall growing Goats Rue there, which shaded out some previously low growing vegetation, although there was still plenty of Wild Strawberry this spring. Disused gravel pits are highly dynamic habitats and at such a valuable site it is important that such changes are taken into account.

Fortunately, Waterford pit is the focus of much conservation effort. The HMWT has drawn up a conservation management plan which is being discussed with Butterfly Conservation. On the North pit Alan Downie, with some help from Groundwork, has improved the habitat for Grizzled Skippers by clearing scrub from a more open section in the conifer area where Wild Strawberry grows. In the south pit he has undertaken clearance of scrub and small trees (mostly Silver Birch) along a ride between the 'sandy dell' and the 'stony slope' in the south west corner. All these factors should help to maintain the colony at Waterford and prevent it from succumbing to the rapid natural succession so typical of many man made



habitats.

During the 1999 season a local butterfly enthusiast volunteered to do a transect at Waterford pit, which will allow this important Grizzled Skipper colony to be monitored and population trends established.

At **Dawley Warren** near Harmer Green (about six kilometres from Waterford) ten Grizzled Skippers were seen in early May in two different flight areas along the base of the south and south west facing chalky slopes, where there is a good supply of larval foodplants. Both areas would benefit from scrub clearance and management of the herb layer.

In addition, a minimum of 9 were observed at the railway cutting between the tunnels at **Digswell**. The flight area is a small strip of chalk grassland at the top of the cutting, with plenty of Wild Strawberry, together with a range of chalk grassland species, such as Salad Burnet. The site, owned by Railtrack, would be threatened if the proposed quadrupling of the East Coast main line goes ahead. Now that steam trains no longer belch out fiery sparks to burn the vegetation on the steep banks, scrub is encroaching and the area suitable for the species (and the Dingy Skipper, recorded there later in the month) is reducing. Skipper populations would benefit from some clearance.

I would like Butterfly Conservation and the Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust to find out if there are firm plans for the site and, if it is secure, to negotiate with Railtrack for some conservation management. A site with both Grizzled and Dingy Skippers is rare and valuable: every effort should be made to conserve it.

At least 14 Grizzled Skippers were also found at a new, probably previously overlooked, site by the railway at the foot of the west-facing cutting, at **Welwyn North station**. The flight area here was only small but Wild Strawberry was abundant and it seems that quite a modest stretch of suitable habitat can support a reasonable colony. This site also belongs to Railtrack and may suffer the same fate as the nearby Digswell cutting if the line is quadrupled.

On 9 May Grizzled Skippers were found at another new site, **Tring**

Park. Brian Jessop walks a transect here and had searched for them, unsuccessfully, in 1998. On 9 May 1999 he found two. Their flight area was over chalk grassland and open parkland with some scrub and Wild Strawberry growing in several areas. Dacorum District Council owns the site and it is managed by The Woodland Trust. I think that Butterfly Conservation should inform the Council and The Woodland Trust that the species is present and should investigate the possibility of having some input to the management plan for this significant new site.

Grizzled Skippers were not seen this year at Stubbings Wood (where they were first seen in 1998) and the area is becoming very overgrown. It is also in the ownership of Dacorum District Council and the HMWT has been negotiating with them to get some management in place. However, to date conservation work there has not been implemented.

On 9 May eleven Grizzled Skippers were seen at **Frogmore Hall**, a disused gravel pit at Hook's Cross south of Stevenage. It is a warm, sheltered site with abundant low growing vegetation. There is a fairly narrow grassy perimeter around a deep and wide central 'well'. The Grizzled Skippers are well distributed, both on the grassy perimeter and in the central area itself. A further 5 were recorded there 22 May.

In 1997, Alan Downie found a tract of Wild Strawberry about 120 yards x 10 yards at the back of the Frogmore Hall site overlooking a dry watercourse and recorded a maximum of 31 Grizzled Skippers in that area. It would be helpful if visitors to the site next year would check whether it is still there or has been shaded out. When my husband Denis and I recorded there this spring we found only limited Strawberry and a lot of Creeping Cinquefoil. Wild Strawberry seems to be the larval foodplant most favoured by the Grizzled Skippers and it would be a matter of some concern if it were declining at Frogmore Hall.

A total of 16 Grizzled Skippers were recorded at the Frogmore Hall site in 1999. The site was generally good for butterflies with Common Blue, Small Copper and Brown Argus among the species found. Frogmore Hall belongs to a gravel company, is also

unprotected at present and public access is restricted. Negotiations taking place between our Branch and the owners may result in a management plan. If an agreement is put into place it would be valuable to set up a transect here to get reliable statistics on the colony and the dynamics of the habitat.

The first 'probable' sighting at **Aldbury Nowers**, in the west of the county was on 20 May. The butterfly did not settle to allow secure identification. (I sometimes think that the odds against seeing a



Grizzled Skipper at a site are fairly strong, even if they are there. When the weather is poor they sit tight and merge into the background. On warm, sunny days they live up to their name and skip about, as if delirious with joy, and disappear in a blur of small brown wings.)

Grizzled Skippers were firmly identified at Aldbury Nowers over the next few days with a maximum of 8 seen on 28 May. Green Hairstreak and Brown Argus were also recorded. Parts of Aldbury Nowers are a Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust reserve designated as an SSSI and managed under an agreement with the owner. It is one of the finest butterfly habitats in Hertfordshire.

In 1998 a single Grizzled Skipper was found at **Telegraph Hill**, a chalk site near Great Offley in the north west of the county. This year, on 26 May, after a lengthy visit to the site, two were seen. Telegraph Hill also supports Green Hairstreaks and Dingy Skippers. It is a HMWT reserve and another place where conservation efforts should be targeted.

Visits made to any of the Grizzled Skipper sites in 1998 or in 1999 were not sufficiently regular to give definitive figures about colony sizes (except for Aldbury Nowers and Tring Park, where transects are walked). Grizzled Skippers were not found at Tring Park in 1998 and 12 were found in 1999. At Aldbury Nowers numbers were considerably higher in 1999 than the previous year. So transect

information seems to show that numbers have increased this year in the west of the county.

Similarly, most sites were not visited regularly enough to make definitive statements about flight dates. However, there appears to be a time lag between the observations of Grizzled Skippers in east/central Herts and those seen in the west. In the east/central group of sites the first sighting was 2 May. Good numbers were seen on the 3rd and the final record was 27 May. Apart from Brian Jessop's record at Tring Park on 9 May (a week later than in east/central Herts) observations in west Herts cluster around late May (20- 29th) and continue into June. The final sighting at Tring Park was on 15 June.

There may be another difference in the west Herts and east/central Herts colonies. Alan Downie lead a field trip to Aldbury Nowers this season and the group saw 3 Grizzled Skippers. Alan noticed that the butterflies were lighter in colour than those he sees at Waterford. It would be interesting to know whether this difference applies to the Tring Park colony and whether anyone has noticed similar colour variations.

...Continued on page 18

List of Grizzled Skipper Sites in Herts 1996-1999

SITE	TETRAD	1996	1997	1998	1999	NOTES
Aldbury Nowers	SP91L		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Bramfield Wood	TL21Y		Yes			Site ploughed in 1999
Broxbourne Wood	TL30I	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Burydell	TL10M	Yes				Not visited in 1999
The Commons	TL21			?	?	
Danesbury Park	TL21I				?	
Dawley Warren	TL21M				Yes	
Dawley Warren	TL21S		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Digswell cutting	TL21N		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Frogmore Hall	TL22V	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Harmer Green Wood	TL21N		Yes			Not visited in 1998 or 1999
Sacombe Road	TL31H		Yes			
Smallford	TL10Y	Yes				Not visited in 1998 or 1999
Stubbings Wood	SP91A			Yes		
Telegraph Hill	TL12E			Yes	Yes	Charles Smith saw a G Skipper here 1993
Tewin	TL21S		Yes			Not visited in 1998 or 1999
Tring Park	SP91F				Yes	
Tyttenhanger/ Coppice Wood	TL10X		Yes			
Waterford Pit	TL31C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	New site in 1999
Waterford Embankment	TL31C				Yes	Not visited in 1999
Watery Grove	TL22G	Yes				New site in 1999
Welwyn North Station	TL21M				Yes	New site in 1999

Grizzled Skipper Flight Dates Recorded in Herts 1996 – 1999

Flight dates	Year	Flight period in days
2 May – 15 June	1999	45
14 May – 19 June	1998	36
13 April – 8 June	1997	56
27 April – 15 June	1996	50

Conclusions

The recorded flight period in 1999 was shorter than 1996 or 1997 but longer, by 11 days, than the very poor 1998 season. Without transects being carried out at all the sites the flight period data will not be truly accurate and meaningful. However, the data available seems to indicate an improvement this year. There was also a slight increase in sites from eight to ten.

More actual butterflies were observed this season than last (102 in 1999 and 57 in 1998) and at most sites there was an increase in the maximum number of Grizzled Skippers recorded on a single day compared with 1998. (Broxbourne Woods and Waterford South pit being exceptions). It would be rash to suggest a direct relationship between the numbers of Grizzled Skippers observed in a season and the actual numbers present. More (or fewer) records one year than the next or more (or fewer) visits to a site obviously affect the numbers of butterflies seen. Only the comparison of regular transects at a site over a number of years would provide reliable comparative figures. However, by a rough and ready comparison the longer flight period, greater number of sites and larger butterfly numbers seem to suggest that 1999 was a better season than 1998.

For me one of the highlights of 1999 was the delightfully warm afternoon we spent in the sun-baked deep ‘well’ at Frogmore Hall pit. In a small grassy patch at the base of a steep grassy slope at

least five Grizzled Skippers whirled in flight together. They seemed to dance in the air with a blurring of wings as they skipped from one Forget-me-not to another. The good news of colonies at Tring Park and Welwyn North as well as increased numbers at Aldbury Nowers were further high spots, as is the news of some progress in putting conservation management into place at several important sites. The down side has to be the apparent fall in numbers at Waterford south pit and possible development of the railway line adjacent to two sites.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

Firstly a big thank you to all who took part in the survey this year. The success of the project so far is due to the efforts of the survey team. I hope we can do even better next year and that the weather is kinder than it has been so far. I would also like to express my appreciation to Brian Sawford and John Murray (Butterfly Conservation) and Trevor James (Herts Biological Records Centre) for help, encouragement and advice.

And Finally..

The survey will continue for one more year and the more people out scouring the countryside the more likely we are to find Grizzled Skippers. If you would like to join the team please let me know. I will send an information pack to all the recording team in March. If anyone knows of any sites worth a visit, let me know and I will add them to the list.

This is a vulnerable species and I am pleased that we are making a concerted effort to find out where it still thrives. When we have done this, it is vital that Butterfly Conservation and the HMWT use that information to secure its future on sites where they have influence and attempt to establish influence on those where, currently, they have no input.

Help us Save Butterflies, by Malcolm Hull

This Spring the branch will be setting up our stall at several gardening & environmental shows to:

- Sell butterfly friendly plants
- Spread the Butterfly Conservation message
- Recruit more members
- Sell butterfly goods to raise funds.

The dates of events we've booked so far include:

Friday 7 – Sunday 9 April	Capel Manor Gardening Show, Enfield
Saturday 20 – Sunday 21 May	Three Rivers Environment Day, Rickmansworth
Saturday 24 – Sunday 25 June	Hatfield House Festival of Gardening, Hatfield
Saturday 1 – Sunday 2 July	Ealing Countryside Weekend, Greenford
Saturday 5 – Sunday 6 August	Enfield Steam & Country Fair, Trent Park

If you are able to spend some time helping on the stall at any of these events, or would like to know more about what's involved,



please ring Malcolm Hull (01727 857893). Previous experience is not necessary and you get the benefit of free admission to some interesting events. We are hoping to add to this list and publicise more dates in the next newsletter. If you know of a forthcoming show which may be local to you and suitable for a BC stall, contact Malcolm Hull



Copy Deadline for the June Newsletter will be

15 May 2000

NB it helps the editor if you can submit an electronic copy of your article (but don't worry if you can't). Files can be on disk or sent by e-mail to ian.small@lineone.net or send an article by post - address on back cover

Many thanks to those of you who have sent articles and photographs, unfortunately there wasn't space to include them all in this edition. Please keep sending material to me, and maybe next month I will have time to make the newsletter bigger. Please accept my apologies for the slight delay in this issue - due to pressure of work in my day job !

Field Trip Programme - 2000

Sunday 21st May – Ivinghoe Beacon & Albury Nowers

Leaders Alan Downie & Malcolm Newland. Meet at 10.30 at the lay-by in front of Albury Nowers (SP 952129). Coming from Tring, go past the railway station & take the first left. The lay-by is on the right after approx. ¼ mile.

And/or 1.30 at the car park at Ivinghoe Beacon (SP 965 158) To see Green Hairstreak, Orange Tip, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper Duke of Burgundy and other spring butterflies.

Saturday 3rd June Moth Evening. Time 21.00

Location: Millhoppers Pasture (BC Reserve), Long Marston, Herts. Grid Ref: SP903 142. Park at Wilstone village hall. Meet on reserve. Target species: Moth trapping event. Contact: Rob Souter 01992 410783

Sunday 18th June – Catfield Fen (Butterfly Conservation Reserve) - Norfolk

Hertfordshire and Middlesex Branch Newsletter

Norfolk Branch are holding an open day at Catfield Fen, with guided tours at 11 am and 2 pm. Parking will be signposted from the church in Catfield Village, OS Sheet 134: TG 388 217. Further details will be in the next national Butterfly Conservation News. To see Swallowtails, dragonflies

16th July – Millhoppers and Tring Park

Leaders; Margaret Noakes(01296 660072) and Brian Jessop (01442 824907) Meet at 11.30 at Millhoppers (SP 900149) and /or 1.30 at Tring Park (Crossroads to Marlin Hill SP 924094). To see Marbled Whites, Ringlets, Chalk flora & something special?

Saturday 29th July Moth Evening Time 21.00

Location: Bramfield Woods, Bramfield, Herts. Grid Ref: TL282166. Meet in car park off Bramfield to Datchworth road. Target species: Moth trapping event. Contact: Rob Souter 01992 410783

Sunday 20th August – Patmore Heath

Leader Gavin Vicary From Little Hadham on the A120 head north for approx. 3 miles until you reach the Catherine Wheel Public House. Immediately turn right and follow the lane for ¼ mile. Meet by the reserve notice board next to the big pond. Meet at 11.00 To see Small Coppers, Small Heath.

Saturday 23rd September Time 20.00 National Moth Night.

Location: Amwell Gravel Pits, Gt Amwell, Herts. Park on Amwell Rd. TL374 125 Meet at birders watchpoint. TL376 128 Target species: Moth trapping event. Contact: Rob Souter 01992 410783

Further moth evenings may be arranged at short notice - details will be posted on the Branch website (url is in the header of the newsletter.)



Conservation Dates

Conservation work is one of the most important activities of the Society, as loss or neglect of suitable habitats is one of the major reasons for the decline in many of our butterflies as well as other wildlife.

Below are a series of dates across Herts. and Middlesex where you can help with essential management that aims to maintain the correct conditions on these sites for the wildlife that inhabits them. Several of the dates are run by the HMWT on their nature reserves.

Millhopper's Pasture There will be no more working parties until September.

Therfield Heath, TL 335400 First Sunday of each month from 10.00 a.m. - 1 p.m. Details from Vincent Thomson (01763) 341443.

Duchies Piece (Aldbury Nowers) SP 952131. Third Sunday of each month. Meet 10.00 a.m. in the lay-by, near Tring station. For details ring Alan Strawn (new reserve warden) on (01442) 232946

Hertford Heath TL 354111. For details ring Anthony Oliver on (01992) 583404.

Fryent Country Park - details from Leslie Williams at the Brent Ecology Unit on (0181) 206 0492

Patmore Heath TL 443257. Meet at 10.00 a.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Further details from Gavin Vicary (01279) 771933

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