Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE *57*

Winter 2009

Territories,
by David Chandler

One quiet reflective moment recently whilst walking in the Chilterns I was thinking about my lifestyle, when it dawned on me that, like many creatures in the wild, I have a territory. Whereas wild creatures territories tend to be limited by their need to survive and breed, my territory is described by the places where I choose my family and friends' connections to take me. My own territory is approximately 1350 square miles in size and is, roughly speaking, a huge triangle in shape bounded in the north by Northampton, in the south by London and in the east by Southend.

When travelling around in this area following my active social calendar in the Spring and Summer months, I try to find time to stop

and follow my hobby of studying butterflies. Relatively speaking, by being such a big territory, I have a large variety of habitats to choose to go see butterflies on, ranging from ancient woodlands, chalk downlands, agricultural and metropolitan areas, brownfield sites to a coastal estuary.

I try to see as many different English species as I can each year within my territory and my target is to see at least 30 each year. I tend to see most species first on my Sharpenhoe transect walk in the Chilterns but there are a few species that cannot be found on Sharpenhoe's chalk downs and I will make an effort to visit other sites to record them there. I tend not look for butterflies outside my territory unless there is a compelling family-related reason to leave my patch, which allows me a special twitch.

In 2009 I saw 36 species in my territory. I recorded 29 species on my Sharpenhoe transect and 7 elsewhere on my territory if I count in the south bank of the Thames:

- Adonis Blue – BC Kent branch field trip - Gillingham Kent.
- Duke of Burgundy and Grizzled Skipper – Whipsnade Downs Beds.
- Heath Fritillary – Pound Wood Southend Essex.
- Wall and White Letter Hairstreak – Benfleet Downs Essex.
- White Admiral – Balls Wood Hertford.

I thought that 36 was a good total for the year having missed Silver Washed Fritillary, Wood White and Black Hairstreak in my territory because I was just too busy to find the time to go looking for them in their usual haunts. I also missed out on seeing any of the Clouded Yellows that were reported seen on Sharpenhoe Clappers and along the Thames gateway (Rainham / Canvey Island) so I could have made 40 had I tried.

Butterfly territories themselves are interesting in that they too can be very different, ranging from the Painted Lady's pan European range to the Black Hairstreak's restricted blackthorn copse habitat on the Oxford clays of the East Midlands.

More parochially, within their territories, the male Small Copper

protects its own territory by driving off other males that may stray into it. Similarly both the male Green Hairstreak and male Speckled Wood protect a perch on a well-chosen sun-lit leaf on a scrubby bush or a tree thus winning the right to wait the passing of a female.

Territories are the boundaries that set the perimeters of lives and within these limits my annual targets keep my hobby interest sharp and, with the turn of the year, I get a fresh start to go out looking for butterflies on their territories within my own territory.

Annual General Meeting –Saturday 23rd January 2010

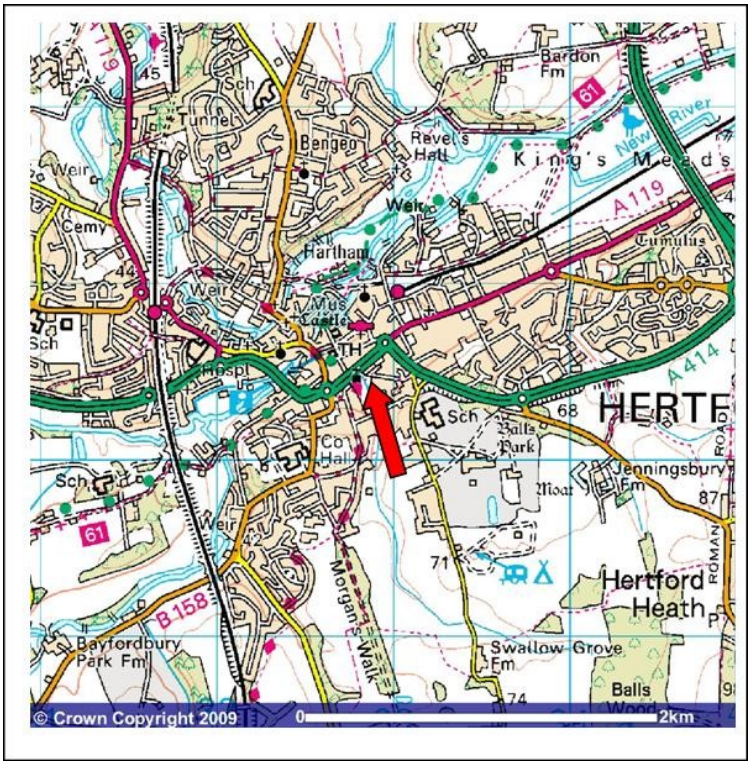
The Branch Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 23rd January 2010, at St John's Hall (All Saints), Churchfields, Hertford, SG13 8AE. The agenda and officer's reports are included in the Branch Review, enclosed with this newsletter.

St. John's Hall is just off the A414 as it passes through the centre of Hertford. The nearest stations are Hertford North (First Capital Connect from London King's Cross) or Hertford East (National Express East Anglia from London Liverpool Street). The 724 Greenline bus from Heathrow to Harlow stops at Hertford Bus Station (hourly service). There are several subways under the A414. A map of the location is shown on the next page.

Travelling by car:

From the A10 follow signs for Hertford along the A414, after the 1st roundabout continue along the A414 into Hertford. The road goes downhill and *there is a slip road (towards Mangrove Road) on the left off the main road, take this and then turn almost immediately right and then left into Greencoates, follow the road to the end and the church hall is on the left side. From the west along the A414: Continue through Hertford along the A414 until you reach a major roundabout, take third exit and follow signs for Harlow. As you go uphill keep in the right hand lane and after about 400m there is a right turn which allows you to cross the other carriageway. Then follow the local directions* if coming from the A10.

Map of location of St John's (All Saints), Churchfields, Hertford



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Guided Tour of our Millhoppers Reserve and Spring Meeting - Saturday 6th March 2010

Our second meeting of 2010 will be held at Cecilia Hall, Puttenham, near Tring (grid reference SP887149 Map 165) on Saturday 6th March 2010, which will include a talk on the national White-letter Hairstreak Project by Andrew Middleton and Liz Goodyear. We would like to ask everyone to hang onto their photographs until this meeting, when we will allow plenty of time to show them. Images will include a selection of photos taken by Roger Gibbons in France during 2009.

Please send photos to Andrew Wood (details on back of cover) prior to the meeting.

In the morning, Jez Perkins (Millhoppers Reserve Manager) will be giving a guided tour of our Branch Reserve at Millhoppers Pasture. Meet at Wilstone Village Hall at 11.30 for a short walk across the fields to the reserve (grid reference SP903142). Please ring Jez Perkins (details on back of cover) to confirm numbers in advance. We would suggest you bring a packed lunch (hall will be open from about 1.30) or visit one of the local public houses for lunch!

We appreciate that for those that do not drive, both sites are not easily accessible by public transport, therefore we are arranging for members to be collected from either Wendover (London Marylebone) or Tring (London Euston) stations. Provisional meeting times are for the following trains:

For Millhoppers guided tour and Spring Meeting

Depart: London Euston	10:04	London Marylebone	09:57
Arrive: Tring	10:47	Wendover	10:44

For Spring Meeting only

Depart: London Euston	12:54	London Marylebone	12:57
Arrive: Tring	13:37	Wendover	13:37

Please check timetable before travelling – unfortunately at the time of writing we can't guarantee there will be no engineering works. Please confirm with Liz Goodyear before travelling that you will require a lift from the station (stating which station and the time). We will arrange to get you back to the station after the meeting.

Directions by road to Cecilia Hall, Puttenham from the M25 (J20): Take the A41 (dual carriage way) (SP Hemel Hempstead, Aylesbury). After 11 miles, branch left, then at roundabout take the 1st exit onto the B4009 (signposted Wendover). Go downhill, ignoring left turn to Wendover and right turn after it. At mini-roundabout turn right onto Lower Icknield Way (signposted Ivinghoe). Cross over dual carriageway and take next left (SP Puttenham). Cross humpbacked bridge and road turns right as you enter Puttenham. Take the first left (Church Lane) and the hall is at the end.

Guided tour of our Millhoppers Pasture Reserve &
Spring Meeting
Saturday 6th March 2010

Morning programme
Guided tour of Millhoppers Pasture
Meet: Wilstone Village Hall at 11:30
(Wilstone Village Hall - Grid ref SP903142 Map 165)
After a short walk across the fields to the branch reserve - reserve manager Jez Perkins will show members around the site.
Please ring Jez (details on back of newsletter) in advance to confirm numbers

Lunch break (bring a packed lunch or visit one of the local pubs)

Afternoon programme
Spring Meeting, Cecilia Hall, Puttenham, nr Tring
(Grid ref SP887149 Map 165)
2.00 for 2.30 – 5.30 pm

2.30 ~ Introduction

2.35 – The White-letter Hairstreak Project ~ Liz Goodyear & Andrew Middleton
At the beginning of 2007, Liz and Andrew devised and co-ordinated a national project to determine the distribution of the white-letter hairstreak butterfly by visiting randomly selected 1km squares across England and Wales. Their aim was to also find out to what degree elms may be used as a proxy for white-letter hairstreak distribution. The project has now ended and preliminary results will be available

3.30 - Interval and refreshments

4.00 – Members photos
This is a chance to show members your own photos.
Roger Gibbons will also show some of his superb photos taken in France in 2009
Please send your photos to Andrew Wood in advance (details on back of newsletter)
5.15 - End

Approximate times only *Non-members welcome*

An Insight into the Painted Lady Migration – by Phil MacMurdie

Introduction.

One of the highlights of the 2009 butterfly season was undoubtedly the mass migration of the Painted Lady (Vanessa cardui). Whilst mapping several tetrads in eastern Hertfordshire during the weekend of the 23rd-25th May 2009, this mass migration soon became apparent by the unusually high number of sightings. During the normal process of arriving at a site, walking around for approx. 30 minutes to map in a good representation of the number and abundance of the local species found, we encountered increasingly more Painted Ladies. It was soon apparent that this was going to be an interesting weekend's mapping. We soon decided to complete a series of timed counts of the butterflies in order to ascertain an approximation of the rate at which these intrepid travellers were moving through the area, in addition to attempting to estimate the speed at which they were moving.

South to North-East Direction of Travel.

The vast majority of the migrants were flying at approximately 1 metre above the ground and at all locations and specifically when moving across open country the butterflies were moving from an origin due South on a heading towards the North East. All were most purposeful in their quest to keep going, as none paused to rest despite the abundance of nectar opportunities.

Natural Barriers.

Natural barriers such as houses and single or small groups of trees presented little more than a minor distraction as the migrants tended to fly up and over the obstacle. Larger hedgerows did tend to concentrate the migrants to more narrow "roadways". One of the localities surveyed in Braughing, a road lined on one side by trees approx 10-15 metres in height acted as a funnel for the approaching butterflies, conveying them down the road until at the end they reached an opening to large fields, whereupon they fanned out.

Woodland blocks presented a different barrier, when the migrating

butterflies ran into these more significant barriers a different behaviour was observed. Initially the butterflies tended to fly up into the trees until reaching a height of approx 5-10 metres then if no way was found over the top they would fly along the woodland edge until they either reached a route through or travelled around the block entirely. This behaviour was observed on a number of occasions at Plashies Wood (TL385202) and again at Coombs Wood (TL318218) where butterflies migrating north east were observed flying along the woodland margin until they could resume their north-east passage. At no stage during our mapping exercise were any Painted Ladies encountered within any woodland environment.

Migration Locations Surveyed.

A total of 16 locations were surveyed (see map below) and the timed surveys undertaken to produce an average butterflies per hour figure (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

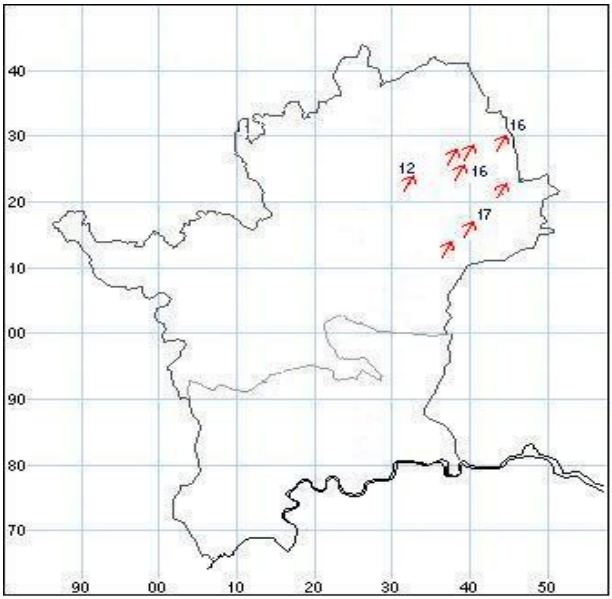
Table 1 Locations Surveyed

Date	Locality	Grid Reference	Description	Number Seen	Time Elapsed	Rate of Migration (No/Hr)
24th May-09	Wareside (garden)	TL 396156	South facing garden to open farmland	56	30 mins	112 / hr
	Bury Green	TL 455214	Open land facing south.	28	20 mins	84 / hr
	Hadham Ford	TL 436215	Open country	44	30 mins	88 / hr
	Braughing	TL 395250	Around the village	42	30 mins	84 / hr
	Braughing	TL 401253	Roadside to B. Friars	95	60 mins	95 / hr

Date	Locality	Grid Reference	Description	Number Seen	Time Elapsed	Rate of Migration (No/Hr)
	Hobbs Lane – Dassels	TL 393274	Fields bordered by 5m hedging	32	30 mins	64 / hr
	Hare Street	TL 390297	Pathway to open fields – acted as a channel for migrants	41	20 mins	123 / hr
	Hare Street	TL 390297	Open field facing south	31	20 mins	93 / hr
	Stocking Pelham	TL 445294	Open land facing south	45	25 mins	75 / hr
	Colliers End	TL 373213	Open farmland.	23	20 mins	69 / hr
25th May	Plashies Wood	TL 385202	Open country bordering woodland	62	40 mins	93 / hr
	Coombs Wood	TL 318218	Open country bordering woodland	76	60 mins	76 / hr
	Wareside	TL 396156	South facing garden to open farmland	38	30 mins	76 / hr
	Haultwick	339230	Open farmland	40	30 mins	80 / hr
	Amwell (Dragonfly Walk)	TL 375133	Open nature reserve.	72	60 mins	72 / hr
	Standon Mill Lane circular walk	TL 395229	Open country chain walk	33	30 mins	66 / hr

We also conducted a timed count at Wareside, positioned on the side of the south facing slope of the Ash Valley (TL 396156) our front garden faces due south. The outlook is upon open country, without many barriers. Again the butterflies came in thick and fast. Our house acted as a barrier but of a minor nature as many flew straight up and over the roof; however some did pause to take advantage of the nectar sources on offer.

Figure 1 Locations and Direction of Flight



Flight Speed.

At four locations where the butterflies were travelling across open land we managed to conduct an exercise where the time taken to travel across a measured distance was recorded. Measuring a sample of butterflies all flying directly without stopping we estimated the speed at which the butterflies were travelling (see Table 2).

Whilst the method of obtaining the timing was crude (i.e. a stop watch and the time taken to pass two points of a known distance, this did

prove a useful estimate of the velocity at which the migrants were flying

Table 2 – Summary of Flight Speed Measured

Location	Number measured	Fastest	Average
Wareside	50	17.65mph	13.97mph
Braughing	50	15.97mph	13.76 mph
Stocking Pelham	30	15.97mph	13.5 mph
Coombs Wood	40	15.24mph	13.23 mph

Sample data collected:

Location	distance (m)	time (Seconds)	speed (m/s)	KM/H	Mph	number
Wareside	15	1.9	7.89	28.42	17.65	2
	15	2	7.50	27.00	16.77	1
	15	2.1	7.14	25.71	15.97	4
	15	2.2	6.82	24.55	15.24	3
	15	2.3	6.52	23.48	14.58	4
	15	2.4	6.25	22.50	13.97	8
	15	2.5	6.00	21.60	13.41	15
	15	2.6	5.77	20.77	12.90	8
	15	2.7	5.56	20.00	12.42	5
				Total Number		50
				Average Velocity		13.97

Location	distance (m)	time (Seconds)	speed (m/s)	KM/H	Mph	number
Braughing	20	2.8	7.14	25.71	15.97	2
	20	2.9	6.90	24.83	15.42	2
	20	3	6.67	24.00	14.91	3
	20	3.1	6.45	23.23	14.42	5
	20	3.2	6.25	22.50	13.97	10
	20	3.3	6.06	21.82	13.55	12
	20	3.4	5.88	21.18	13.15	6
	20	3.5	5.71	20.57	12.78	8
	20	3.6	5.56	20.00	12.42	2
				Total Number		50
				Average Velocity		13.76

Location	distance (m)	time (Seconds)	speed (m/s)	KM/H	Mph	number
Stocking Pelham	15	2.1	7.14	25.71	15.97	1
	15	2.2	6.82	24.55	15.24	2
	15	2.3	6.52	23.48	14.58	4
	15	2.4	6.25	22.50	13.97	3
	15	2.5	6.00	21.60	13.41	9
	15	2.6	5.77	20.77	12.90	8
	15	2.7	5.56	20.00	12.42	4
				Total Number		30
				Average Velocity		13.48

Location	distance (m)	time (Seconds)	speed (m/s)	KM/H	Mph	number
Coombs Wood	15	2.2	6.82	24.55	15.24	2
	15	2.3	6.52	23.48	14.58	3
	15	2.4	6.25	22.50	13.97	7
	15	2.5	6.00	21.60	13.41	10
	15	2.6	5.77	20.77	12.90	18
	15	2.7	5.56	20.00	12.42	7
	15	2.8	5.36	19.29	11.98	3
				Total Number		50
				Average Velocity		13.23

Of the four localities where flight speed was measured the locations at Wareside and Stocking Pelham were the most open, with little or no barriers. Coombs Wood was the site where the most consistency was observed which was interpreted more as a product of a situation where butterflies were seeking a way around the woods. However what is perhaps not surprising is the similarity in the flight speed measured across all the locations.

Reverse Migration

At no point during the summer did we observe any evidence of a reverse migration.

Conclusion

The "invasion rate" of butterflies per hour measured across the sites surveyed across eastern Hertfordshire was largely constant, averaging 93 per hour on the 24th May and 76 per hour on the 25th May. The time of the day also appeared to have no influence upon the rates as similarities were seen whether early in the morning or later at early evening.

The majority of butterflies migrating across open country were travelling at approx 23km/h. Butterflies travelling along woodland margins tended to travel at a slower speed, possibly looking for a route through the obstacle.

Single barriers tended not to provide any significant obstacle to the flight path or behaviour of the migrants, however woodland blocks did provide a barrier which was circumvented as opposed to flying directly over.

All in all an enjoyable couple of days in the sun and an enlightening exercise. My thanks to Lorraine MacMurdie, Rebecca MacMurdie and Danny Stammers who actively fulfilled the role of field assistants and spotters thoughout.

Standing Up for Middlesex, by R A Softly

Middlesex has always been the poor relation in the Herts & Middx Branch of Butterfly Conservation but Peter Shirley's article about the tropical butterfly house in Golders Hill Park has goaded me into a reply. He says he appreciates that Golders Green is situated at the very edge of the Branch area, beyond which no doubt dragons can be found. Let me say a few words to introduce dragon country.

On retirement I found myself in Hampstead, and having determined to become a full time amateur naturalist I was content to accept Hampstead Heath as my study area. The Hampstead Scientific Society had in 1913 published "The Geology and Natural History of Hampstead Heath", but with WW1 from 1914 to 1918 had not been able to fulfil their intention of continuing their studies. The society became based on physical science and their book had no sequel. I kept a field notebook which became largely a list of my nightly light trap (Heath portable actinic 6W) records at my address across the road from one end of the Heath complex. I started the Heath transect for butterfly monitoring, which is still run by the Heath staff..

Middlesex is embraced by the Coln and the Lee as they flow from the northern chalk of the Thames Basin, and at its heart lie the North London Heights, the uneroded centre of sands and gravels overlying the London clay that fills the syncline of the chalk. Although the Royal Parks of Middlesex are artificial, various woods and open

spaces, the heaths based on the common lands and remaining open ground of former country estates still provide a habitat for Lepidoptera which do their best to survive there and keep a foothold in suburban gardens.

When I used to commute to the City, the Old Lady (of Threadneedle St ?) turned up in the banking hall where I worked, and I found Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillars in flower beds by the Royal Exchange. The Brindled Beauty (Lycia hirtaria) bred on the trees of Finsbury Circus. The Vapourer (Orgyia antiqua), notorious for being able to exist on London Plane, could be found in Grays Inn Road and in a tiny City churchyard containing a solitary London Plane, and totally surrounded by buildings. Cocoons could survive under window sills for several years – that is where the larvae have to start, and my theory is that, very hairy as they are from the moment of eclosion (emergence), they rely on wind dispersal to reach a tree trunk or any greenery.

Do not neglect Middlesex. I have seen the extinction of the Chimney Sweeper moth, but I have also recorded the colonisation of Blair's Shoulder Knot and the Light-brown Apple moth.

British Butterfly Recording at Butterfly World, by Malcolm Hull

The gardens and meadows at Butterfly World have been designed and planted to attract butterflies. A visitor on a sunny day this summer is likely to have seen many individual butterflies, particularly Painted Ladies, jostling for nectar on Buddleia and Verbena.

But how can we measure the true ecological value of the site? How many species visit the site and how many are breeding there? How do numbers respond to the different types of habitat at Butterfly World and the way it is managed. What fluctuations in species and total numbers are there from year to year?

To start to answer these questions we need data. To get the ball rolling, Herts & Middx branch of Butterfly Conservation have teamed up with Butterfly World to start a regular monitoring scheme. This standardised recording exercise, is known as a transect and carried out at many key butterfly sites around the UK. A regular weekly route is

walked during the season (April to September) at times when the weather is good enough for butterflies to be flying.

Due to the construction activities on site, walks in 2009 did not begin until early June, so some of the Spring butterfly species will have been missed. But before then, time had to be spent planning the route. Clive Farrell gave his enthusiastic support and Andrew George who designed the British Butterfly Garden helped plan the route. Consisting of eight sections representing distinct habitat types, the walk lasts a leisurely 30 minutes and runs clockwise in a loop round the site, taking in the gardens, pond, antennae, meadow, proboscis and the flower-bank south of the shop.

The full results have yet to be collated. In total 12 species were recorded on the transect. The full list of species recorded on the transect, starting with the most common is

Large White – prolific across the whole site, breeding in the Theatre of Insects

Painted Lady – most common in the gardens, breeding on the site of the dome.

Small White

Small Tortoiseshell – breeding in the British Butterfly Garden

Common Blue – good numbers in the wildflower meadow

Peacock – mostly in the gardens

Green-veined White

Red Admiral

Comma

Meadow Brown

Brimstone

Small Skipper – only 1 seen

I also had reports of a thirteenth species, Clouded Yellow being seen on two separate occasions.

The total of 12 species is not spectacular, compared to other sites in the area. But considering how much of the site was bare earth in May, it is an impressive start. The **Common Blue** is not particularly common in St Albans, so to record as many as 36, including both males and females, was particularly encouraging. With ample supplies of its larval food-plant, Birds-foot Trefoil established on site, it looks likely that this species will form a new colony. Common Blue has been in general decline across the district for many years, principally due to loss of its food plant, which looses out to un-grazed coarse grasses in fertile soils. There is now more Birds-foot Trefoil at this site, than anywhere else I know of in St Albans district. In future years, Butterfly World could develop as a local stronghold for Common Blues – a real conservation success.

Painted Ladies were everywhere this year, arriving from Africa at the end of May. Numbers peaked in mid August, when many individuals attempted a return migration. However others remained until the end of the season and were still flying well into October. The species bred on the sunflowers planted on the site of the dome – unusual as the normal food-plant in the UK is Thistles and occasionally Nettles.

Small Tortoiseshells did particularly well and caterpillars appeared on the Golden Nettle patch in the British Butterfly Garden in June. In total there were 69 records of adult sightings, more than double its close relative the Peacock. This is a real success as the butterfly was hardly recorded at all in St Albans area in 2008.

There are 28 butterflies that are still resident (or are common migrants) in the St Albans area. Many more have become locally extinct, mainly due to the loss of habitat due to changes in the ways we manage the land. It may be possible for some of the butterflies we have lost to return if favourable habitat management can be restored. We will find out in future years!

Many thanks are due to Clive Farrell for allowing the Transect, Andrew George and Martin Warren of Butterfly Conservation for helping to plan the route and to Mandy Floyd for walking the Transect when I was away. If any other branch member would like to help recording butterflies at this site in 2010, please let me know.

Report on the Ninth National Biodiversity Network Conference, London, 20 November 2009, By Debbie Pledge

On 20 November 2009 I attended the Ninth National Biodiversity Network Conference, held in London, representing Barn Hill Conservation Group (the group which lets me loose with a saw every Sunday morning).

The conference was hosted by the Royal Institution of Great Britain, and nearly 200 delegates took their seats in the well-appointed lecture theatre. The theme was 'Non-native species: alien invaders or benign newcomers?'. There were seven talks covering a range of topics: an introduction to non-natives in the UK, harlequin ladybirds, crayfish, public engagement projects, government policy, improving identification of species, and past and present plant invasions. Some of these talks presented scientific data which had been, or was about to be, published in academic journals; other talks explored the work of those attempting to prevent new non-natives from entering the UK and groups who are monitoring and managing our current non-natives. The memorial lecture presented a more philosophical look at evolution and distribution in a changing world. All of the speakers were well prepared and engaged the audience. My only criticism is of the speaker who was attempting to demonstrate what non-native species are by showing photographs but rarely mentioning the species by name. I don't think this irony was felt only by me.

Below are summaries of two of the talks.

When it comes to determining the success of plant introductions, Professor Michael Crawley from Imperial College London claimed that 80-90% has nothing to do with the biological traits of the species; in other words biological traits are a poor predictor of the success of alien invaders, and this was held to apply to non-plant species too. Factors more important include when and how many times the species was introduced and the nature of the ecosystem and the habitat. Experience was claimed as the only reliable guide to alien success, along with the belief that if a species has been a problem elsewhere, it is likely to be a problem in the UK too.

Certain environments are "easier" than average to invade: remote

islands (lack of co-evolution); those with high disturbance rates (due to seed limitation); those with specialist resident herbivores and pathogens (they ignore the alien); and those with low interspecific competition (an example was given of UK grasslands which have high levels of this competition and are hard for aliens to invade). In the UK, churchyards do not contain many aliens, whereas motorway and railway embankments and waste ground do. The UK is lucky in that the impact of non-natives has been 'slight': other countries have a worse problem and in some the impact has been devastating.

Dr Max Wade from RPS told us that biological recording in the UK is 'second to none'. Establishing the distribution of non-natives relies on correct identification and there are a number of bodies and projects working to improve identification. Identification is not an end in itself; it has several aims, including raising the awareness of specific groups and the general population, understanding non-native species, supporting management and achieving prevention. Methods of facilitating reliable identification were outlined: leaflets, booklets and field guides; websites; training courses and workshops; and standards and qualifications. The high quality of UK field guides was noted, and advance notice was given of a new field guide from A&C Black, due out in late 2010, on non-native plants and animals. About 200 species will be included, and the guide will include distribution maps, identification tips, habitat, similar species, and both photographs and line drawings.

The buffet lunch was filling, and gave an opportunity to browse posters and pick up free booklets and leaflets on biological recording.

In conclusion, there was a broad range of talks to suit all tastes, from the practical to the philosophical. My attendance confirmed to me that the time I spend recording species, both for myself and for various groups, is worthwhile and I would encourage anyone who has the inclination to record, report and share. It is does not have to cost much, and is addictive and endlessly fascinating.

Readers with sufficient spare time may be interested in a new Open University course called Neighbourhood Nature, which teaches some of the methods used in science to identify, classify and record plants and animals, including the use of simple biological keys:

www3.open.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/course/s159.htm

The websites below are all worth exploring to both learn more about non-native species and to participate in recording projects for both natives and non-natives:

nonnativespecies.org

opalexplorenature.org

ispot.org.uk

bto.org/birdtrack

bto.org/gbw

ladybird-survey.org

bbc.co.uk/autumnwatch

I would recommend this conference to anyone who has a chance to go in future years. You will undoubtedly learn new things, and hopefully be inspired by being among other people dedicated to improving and extending biological recording.

Fundraising Request from Jez Perkins

In September 2010 I will be taking part in an expedition to Tanzania to climb Mount Killimanjaro, at 5,895m it's the highest free standing mountain in the world. The climb will take 8 days and I am aiming to raise money for four charities one of which is our branch of Butterfly Conservation. The proceeds will be spent on our only reserve Millhoppers Pasture. Any donations will be gratefully received. Please send your donation to:

Jez Perkins
Butterfly Conservation
23 Miswell Lane
Tring
Herts
HP23 4DD

Cheques should be made payable to “The Charities Trust”

Brown Hairstreak at Panshanger, by Malcolm Hull

Two Brown Hairstreaks were seen by Kevin Hornby on 9 August. The location was an Ash tree in a hedgerow at the eastern end of Panshanger Airfield, just east of Welwyn Garden City. This is exciting news, as the species has generally been considered to be extinct in both Herts & Middx since the late 1990's. However it is an elusive species, easily overlooked and Kevin's report is convincing. He had good views of the butterflies through binoculars and was able to achieve a positive ID with the help of a guidebook. The individuals were watched for a period of several hours and seen again on subsequent days.

I visited the site on 22 August and again on 6 September. Although I was unable to repeat Kevins sighting, the wood edge location, with Ash and suckering Blackthorn nearby seemed to match the butterfly's habitat requirement. The best way to positively record the presence of this species is by hunting for the butterfly's eggs on Blackthorn during the winter months. Unfortunately, some of the best Blackthorn has already been removed by the local farmer. However we are aiming to conduct an egg search on the morning of Sunday 17 January 2010. Please contact Malcolm Hull for further details if you would like to attend. The date may be subject to change if there is poor weather.

Attract More Butterflies into your Garden in 2010, from Malcolm Hull

A new stock of seeds for butterfly attracting plants is now available to branch members. Offering a range of caterpillar food plants and valuable nectar sources, our seeds are all packed by branch members and available by post in return for a voluntary donation. The current list of available species is set out below and this will expand as more seeds ripen during the autumn. An up to date list will be kept on the sales page of the branch website, together with all our range of butterfly sales goods, at

http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/gardening/sales-new.html

Suggested donation – 50p per pack. Please add 10% for postage & packing (minimum 30p) and order from Malcolm (details on

back page. Please make cheques payable to Butterfly Conservation

The current Herts & Middx Branch seedlist is:

Aquilegia (Red & Maroon)
Asclepias Incarnata (White)
Asclepias Incarnata (Dark Pink)
Betony
Birds Foot Trefoil
Black Medick
Broad Bean (The Sutton)
Cosmo Daisy (Mixed Colours)
Single Dahlia (Mixed)
Single Dahlia (Apricot)
Devils-bit Scabious
Evening Primrose(biennial)
Fleabane
Forget – me – not
Foxglove
Garlic Mustard
Globe Thistle
Greater Knapweed
Helichrysum
Hemp Agrimony
Hollyhock (Single)
Honesty (Purple)
Honesty (White)
Honesty (Lunaria – mainly White)
Ice Plant
Iponea (Magenta)
Knautia (Mixed)
Lavender Dwarf Munstead Blue
Lavender – Hidcote
Lesser Knapweed
Lychnis Coronaria (Rose Campion)
Nicotiana Sylvestris
Purple Toadflax
Perennial Sweet Pea
Red Campion
Red Valerian
Red Valerian - White
Red Valerian – Pink
Runner Beans
Scabious (Tall Pale Lilac),
Scabious Drakenbergensis (White)
Silene Fimbriata
Sweet Pea Mixed Scented
Sweet Rocket White
Sweet William Mixed
Teasel
Wonder of Peru (Mirabilis)

Copy Deadline for the Spring Newsletter will be

28 February 2010

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

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 SP 900149. Contact Jez Perkins on 07967 832627 for details of planned work parties

Therfield Heath, TL 335400 First Sunday of each month from 10.00 a.m. - 1 p.m. Contact Paul Palmer, Clerk to the Conservators, on (01462) 675232

Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve TL 252396 for the entrance off Hinxworth Road. Work parties on the third Sunday of each month starting at 10am. Contact Chris James on (01462) 742684

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

Fryent Country Park - details from Barn Hill Conservation Group on 020 8206 0492, www.bhcg.ik.com

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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