

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 17

MARCH 1999



**BUTTERFLY
CONSERVATION**

Progress at Millhoppers

by Gavin Vicary

I am sure many of you will have seen the article concerning our reserve Millhoppers Pasture in the Times. Margaret and John Noakes were instrumental in bringing this about and it is obviously excellent publicity not just for the branch but also for the national society.

I was interested in the excellent article by John Noakes in the last edition of the newsletter concerning the problem of litter at Millhoppers. I must admit I have never really noticed too much

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litter when I have visited the site but the enormous number of cans John collected shows that this is a real problem. It seems a great pity that people, albeit a minority, are prepared to spoil the countryside in this way and it may be necessary for us to erect a notice asking people to take their rubbish home with them. The only other suggestion I can make is that we erect a grid on the stream where it enters the reserve to prevent cans etc that may be deposited during times when the streams are full and become stranded when the water level recedes. This will at least hold them in one place so that they can be more easily collected

The work parties have been going extremely well and I am amazed at how much has already been achieved. I arrived at a work party recently to find a dozen people clearing scrub, cutting grass with sythes and a bonfire raging to burn the debris. The result is that the site is already in a considerably healthier state than when we acquired it and also looks considerably larger due to the scrub clearance. The recording and monitoring already underway will in time, I am sure, reveal the benefits of the management work being carried out.

At about the time you receive this newsletter the first butterflies of the year may well be starting to emerge from hibernation heralding the imminent arrival of spring and the first moths have already started to appear. This is the final year of the millennium project and so please remember to send your records to John Murray so that they can be included and give as comprehensive coverage as possible for our branch area.



The field trip program is included in this issue and I look forward to seeing members at these events.

Re Litter at Millhopper's Pasture, by Valerie Carter

Judging by the experience of the Enfield Preservation Society, litter

in the countryside is a constant problem. If you install litter bins, they need to be carefully sited, emptied regularly, and designed to that birds and foxes cannot pull out the contents and scatter them about. However, if you can organise frequent litter picks, so that the site is normally free from litter, I am sure you will notice a gradual improvement. We have found that litter seems to attract more of the same, but that people are less likely to spoil a clean area. It is a good idea to encourage members to take a large plastic bag and a pair of strong gloves with them every time they walk through the reserve, so that they can pick up any rubbish as soon as they see it.

As I cannot help with any of the clearance or conservation work, much as I would like to, I am enclosing a donation for branch funds. With all good wishes for a happy and successful new year, and a good butterfly season.

Spring Butterfly Survey 1999, by John Murray

Final year of the "Butterflies for the New Millennium" Project

The 5 year country-wide survey of British and Irish butterflies, begun in 1995, will be coming to an end this year. Our aim in Hertfordshire and Middlesex is to record the numbers of butterflies in every tetrad (2 x 2 km square) of the area, regardless of whether there are good butterfly sites there or not. To do this, every tetrad should have had at least one good recording visit in the spring, and one in each of the months of June, July and August, as the different species of butterfly are flying; i.e. a minimum of four visits in each tetrad. This has already been achieved for most tetrads, but there are still plenty of squares in northeast and southwest Hertfordshire that have not had a visit in either April/May or in June, and some in west Middlesex and the Middlesex/Greater London border that have not had a visit at all yet, amongst them some important butterfly sites.

Spring is an important time of year, since many of our rarest butterflies are on the wing only in springtime. These include Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak, Dingy Skipper and Grizzled Skipper. To emphasize the point, the largest block of unvisited

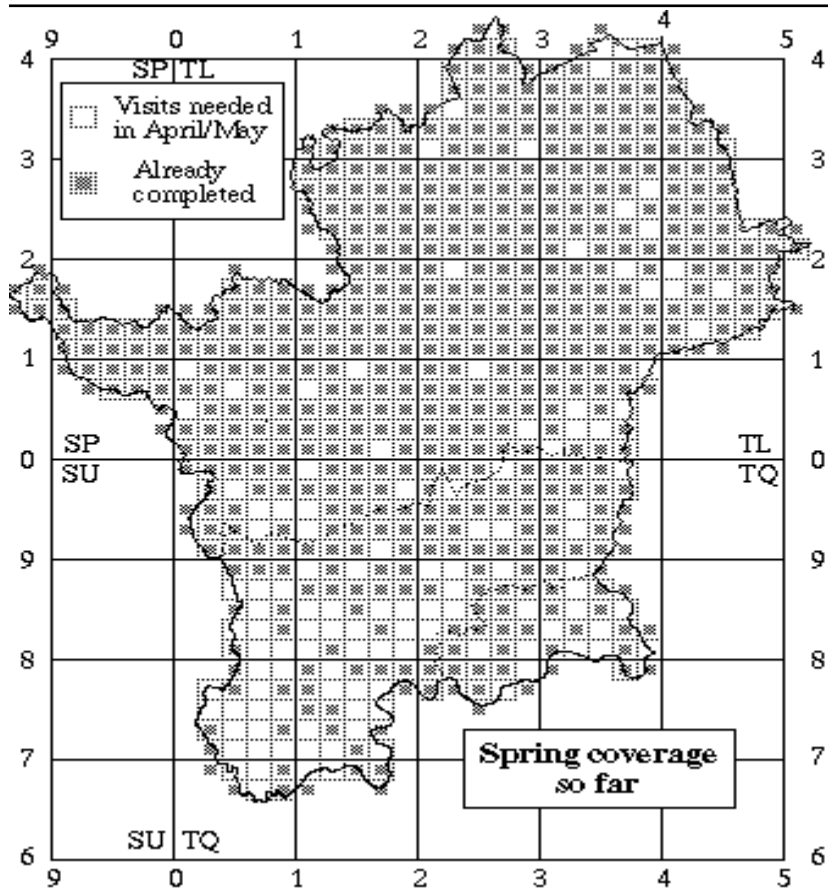
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tetrads (3 together north of Ealing) contain two Green Hairstreak colonies, yet we have had no visits to confirm whether these are still surviving, and this butterfly and the Grizzled Skipper have a habit of turning up in surprising places, and could be found almost anywhere.

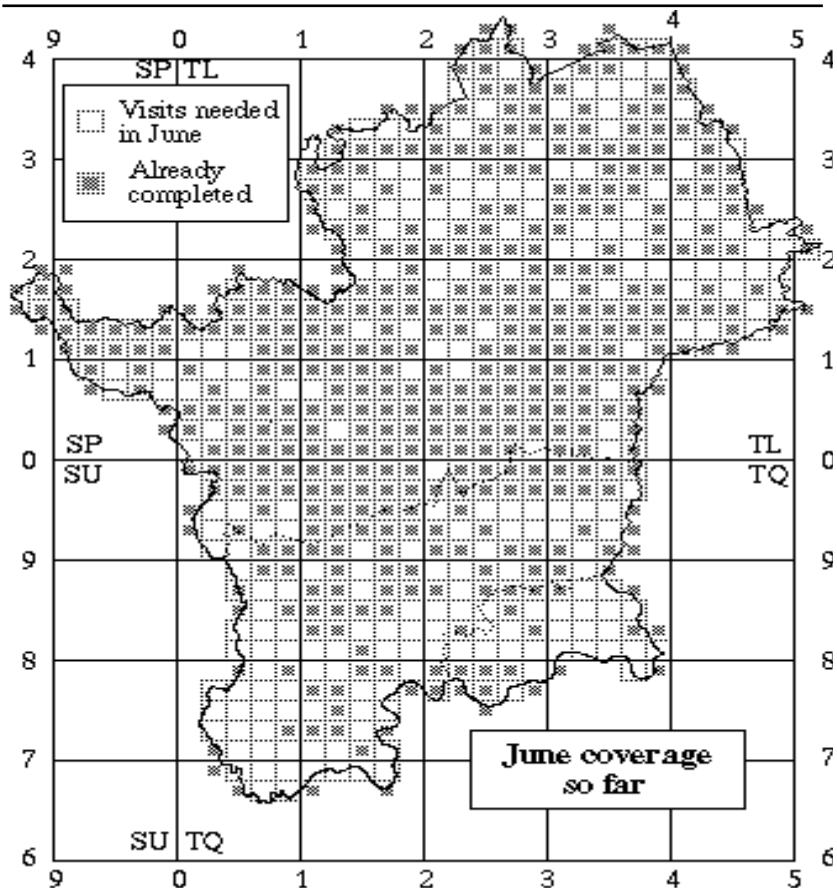
Help needed

We need all the recorders we can get to make sure these areas are covered in this final year. If you would like to help, please contact John Murray (address, telephone and Email on back cover) for your own information pack. If you have already contributed to the Millennium project and wish to continue, please check the maps in this article to make sure you choose an area that needs a visit before setting out to record butterflies this spring. Better still, contact John Murray for up-to-date information on which tetrads to visit, so as not to duplicate effort. The first map shows those tetrads that need a visit in springtime (taken as April or May), and the second shows those that need visiting in June. The final stages of the recording effort will need careful organisation to make sure we get complete coverage with no gaps and no unnecessary duplication, so do keep in contact and send off completed recording sheets promptly throughout the year so that we can keep track of which areas still need attention. Please use the Herts & Middx recording sheets as it saves Michael Healy, who has now entered details of 394,741 butterflies, a great deal of time. These recording sheets are also obtainable from John Murray.

Early submission of recording sheets is particularly important this year, as the Atlas is to be published by Oxford University Press in the autumn of the year 2000. There are a strict series of deadlines to meet, the first of these being your own final date for submitting recording sheets which is 9th November 1999. No records for the Atlas can be accepted after this date, but also bear in mind that if all records arrive on 8th November this is going to make it impossible for Michael Healy to type everything into the computer in time for proper vetting, checking and correction before meeting our own deadline of sending the Herts & Middx dataset in to the central database in December. Hence the particular need for sending off recording sheets as you complete them this year.



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Copy Deadline for the June Newsletter will be
14 May 1999

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

Getting our Message Across – 1999 Stalls by Malcolm Hull

Every summer we meet the public at a variety of events - County Shows, Garden Festivals, Environmental Fairs and other public events. Well beforehand a dedicated band of gardeners sow seeds and nurture young plants for sale on our stall.

This year we will be continuing with the theme “Gardening for Butterflies”. The stall will have a greater focus on publicity and membership and the main features will be:

- ⇒ Sale of Garden Plants suitable for nectar/larval food, ready for people to plant at home to start a butterfly garden
- ⇒ Display Boards with full colour photos illustrating the work of the Society
- ⇒ Books including “Gardening for Butterflies” and Information Leaflets
- ⇒ Membership forms and packs
- ⇒ Sales goods including T shirts cards & stickers

Events planned so far include:

April 9-11	Capel Manor Spring Gardening & County Show, Enfield (Fri - Sun)
May 25 - 28	Chelsea Flower Show (helping at national BC stall) (Tues - Fri)
May	Herts County Show, Redbourn (dates to be confirmed)
June 19 - 20	Festival of Gardening, Hatfield House, Hatfield (Sat - Sun)
June 26 - 27	Middlesex County Show, North of Uxbridge (Sat - Sun)
July 17 - 18	Notcuts Garden Centre, Staines (Sat - Sun)
July 17 - 18	Notcuts Garden Centre, Hatfield Road, St. Albans (yes - the same dates as in Staines)
September 16 - 19	Hitchin Environmental Market, Hitchin (Thu - Sun).

We shall also have a sales and publicity stall at all of our indoor

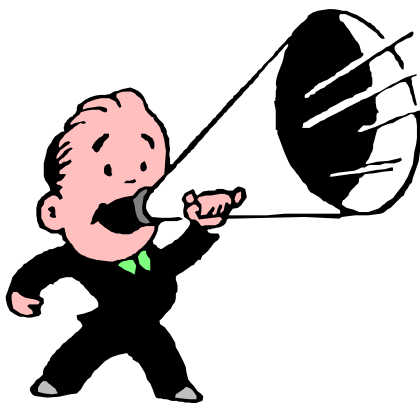
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meetings including the AGM.

What you can do to help

- ⇒ Volunteer to help run a stall. You don't need any previous experience. If you've not been a helper before do have a go - its great fun! We operate a rota system so you can help for as long or short a time as you like. We usually get free entry into shows where there are lots of other interesting stalls and events to visit. There will always be a committee member present to assist with any tricky questions!
- ⇒ Let me know if there are any events in your area which are not on our list where we could take the stall to publisise Butterfly Conservation
- ⇒ Come and see us at one of the Shows. Even if you can't commit to help, its still good to have your support.

To find out more ring **Malcolm Hull**, stall organiser on **01727 857893** (evenings & weekends)



Calling All Moth Recorders...

Moth Traps - A Warning, from Rob Souter

Atropos, the journal for Lepidoptera and Odonata enthusiasts, recently highlighted the dangers to your eyes of exposure to ultra violet (UV) light from bulbs used in moth traps. The 125 watt MBF lamp (perhaps the commonest bulb used) gives off UV light with dangerous quantities of both UV-A and UV-B rays.

Those of you who regularly use this type of bulb will know that they are very bright, more than three times as intense as an equivalent value tungsten filament bulb, but with the added UV light. Examining your moth trap with the bulb switched on and from a short distance of a metre or so will be causing damage to your eyesight, this damage being cumulative. Worse still is the sheet method for trapping moths. It is vital that you do not look directly at the bulb when trapping. Advice given in Atropos suggests that the best protection is Polaroid sunglasses meeting the current BSEN 166 standard and carrying a CE mark.

Spectacle wearers get approximately 90% protection against UV light. For £15 you can have your lenses coated with a UV barrier giving 100% protection. But the coating will not reduce the dazzle effect of a bulb. So when you look away from the bulb, take care not to walk into a tree!

When organising public moth-trapping events, it is necessary to point out in pre-event publicity that visitors are advised to wear Polaroid sunglasses to protect their eyes; advise on looking directly at the bulb should also be given. The Society must protect its staff and volunteers and has a duty of care towards anyone who may be affected by our activities (Section 3, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974).



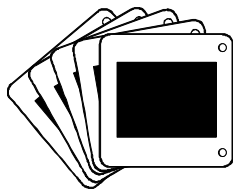
Butterflies in my Life, by Richard Bigg

My interest in butterflies started when I was about 12 or 13 years old (a few years ago!). I don't know what sparked it off but I became an avid collector. These insects were plentiful then and collecting was not frowned upon as it would be today. I made myself two wooden cases, lined with cork and a sheet of glass laid on top, in which I kept my pinned specimens. The books on the subject talked about 'killing bottles' using unobtainable (to me) chemical, so I remember approaching the biology teacher at school for a suggestion. He came up with using leaves of the laurel crushed in a jar and this seemed to work well. I would be horrified at anyone killing butterflies now, but it was a different world then and I only took one of each species.

I would cycle into the countryside round Cambridge with a 'proper' two-section net (which someone gave me), the killing jar (courtesy of Messrs. Kilner) and The Observes Book of British Butterflies, and would be gone for hours. Parents were unconcerned that their offspring were gone, they know not where, for hours at a time – dangers were few then. The sight of an Orange Tip still evokes memories of those warm sunny days – it never rained or was cold and windy! Today's youngsters have to live with far more restrictions placed on them.

As I got older my second love (or maybe it was always first) – that of fishing – took over, and although I retained a mild interest butterfly watching faded. Then, about five years ago, the monthly talk given to the Hertford Local Association of the National Trust was by a member of BC. My interest was fired up again and I obtained a membership form from him and joined.

I am pleased that I did. The Millennium Survey has given me a reason to go out looking for butterflies and I have become a keen collector again – this time of photographs. This area of photography I find is sufficiently difficult to form a challenge, and my target is to build a collection of 'good' photographs (the best I can muster anyway) of as many of the British species as I can – I have a long way to go!



Happy Memories, by Brian Jessop

On one of my usual weekend jaunts, I took a walk through Stubbings Wood, Tring. My thoughts were ‘What will I see today?’. I hoped to see perhaps something unusual for a change, as well as the familiar Speckled Wood, Peacock, Green-veined White etc.



Although the wood has become overgrown, the gales of a few years ago opened up a few areas. While walking a well-trodden path, I decided to investigate a small open area on the escarpment, which faces west. On closer examination I found wild strawberry plants everywhere and some common dog violets. I stayed awhile, but only saw the odd White passing through. I decided to move on after about 10 minutes. As I made my way back up towards the pathway I saw what I thought was a moth. On closer examination I discovered that it was a Grizzled Skipper! I watched it feeding and flying around a patch of Herb Robert for some time. It was in pristine condition, and had probably just hatched. It did not seem to mind my being within inches / centimetres of it and I regretted not having my camera with me.

I feel the same excitement now, as I did when I was a lad, on seeing something so small and beautiful. It made my day

Shrubbs Wood Summer 1998, by Brian Jessop

On a delightful Sunday afternoon, I was walking around Shrubbs Wood near Tring. I came to an open grassy area that I usually record. On approaching a clump of ragwort, where there were about 8-10 Essex Skippers feeding. I noticed that one of them was not looking very happy – probably because a Hornet was making a meal of him/her. As it gorged itself it seemed to flick the wings away and, while this was happening, the other Skippers carried on feeding, some within centimetres of the Hornet, seemingly oblivious

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of what was happening.

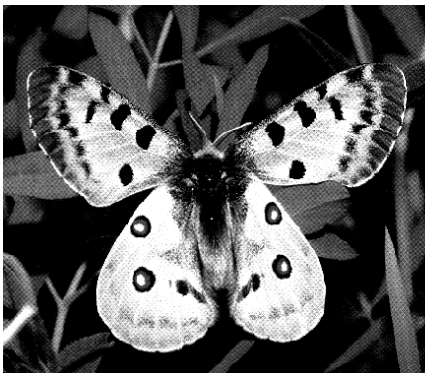
Do butterflies have any sense of fear, or can they communicate warnings of danger to each other? Or did they know they were safe while their mate was being made a meal of?

Have any other members come across any similar experiences?

INDOOR MEETINGS by Ian Small

Butterflies of the Picos de Europa

This excellent talk was given by John Noakes, ably assisted by his wife Margaret, on a Saturday afternoon at the end of January. Almost 30 attendees were treated to a superbly illustrated adventure through this spectacular region of northern Spain. There was something for everyone - from pictures of the local (rustic) architecture, landscape pictures from the valleys to the mountain tops, to of course the local flora and fauna. Many species of plants and butterflies were shown and described, including fritillaries, ringlets and that alpine wonder, the Apollo.



For the Love of Butterflies

For those who ventured into deepest Hertfordshire on this icy evening in early February, there was a treat in store. An evening of entertainment was provided by Ian Loe (apologies for spelling his name wrong in the last newsletter) at the Princess Helena College in Preston. A small number of us had been invited to join Ian and some friends and staff of the College for dinner, prior to the talk, and this set the convivial tone for the evening.

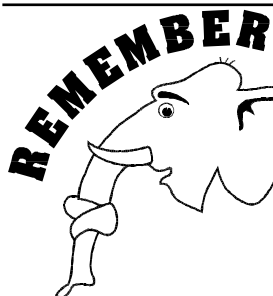
Ian is an artist, who has specialised in producing artwork for stamps for a number of years, the vast majority of which feature illustrations of butterflies. This work has necessitated spending considerable periods abroad in search of the subjects for these paintings, which Ian has captured in superb photographs, often suffering for his art in the process. One such anecdote which ‘tickled’ the audience related to a particular foray in Zimbabwe when, whilst avoiding the leopards, Ian found himself attacked by a swarm of ants. Such was their social behaviour, that he was not aware of them climbing on him until they all started biting him at the same time !.



Ian ‘packaged’ the evening all around the butterfly theme, with music (Shuman’s ‘Papillons’) prior to the talk, and an extract from Madame Butterfly during a short break whilst he changed slide carousels. Afterwards, attendees were able to study many examples of Ian’s excellent artwork, whilst enjoying refreshments.



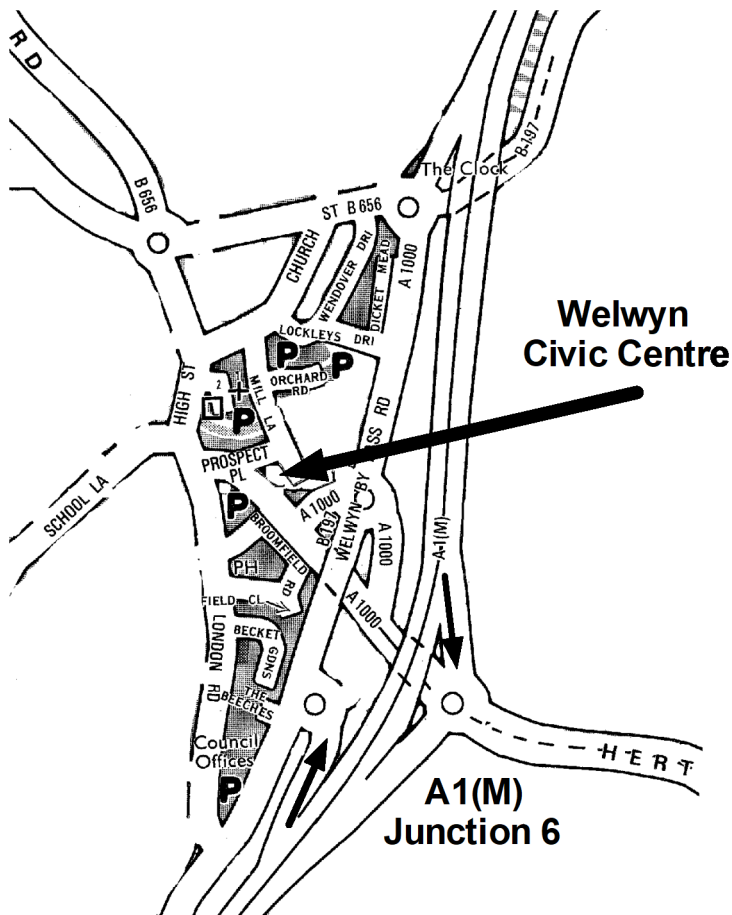
This was an excellent evening for the Society. The majority of those present had not previously heard of us, but we were given a very strong plug, and the retiring collection took over £120 towards Branch funds. In addition, Malcolm’s stall took over £60 in sales goods.



All You Need to Know About
British Moths, by Rob Souter.

Saturday 27 March, Welwyn Civic Centre,
Old Welwyn, 2pm.

Refreshments Available.



And in my Particular Neck of the Woods..

by Andrew Holledge

For those who did not see it, the following is the text of an article which appeared in The Times, on Saturday 5 December, relating to Millhopper's Pasture



You do not expect to see a For Sale sign on a wood. Not on a gate protecting a grove of beeches. But there it was: "Woodlands for sale". I had never thought anyone actually owned the woods in which I walk every weekend. Did the sign mean my sylvan playground would soon echo to the sound of builders replacing the trees with executive homes?

There is nothing like a shot of "nimby-ism" to convert one's vague sense of concern about the fate of the British countryside into defensive panic. The thought of a wood for sale Quite Close To My Back Yard in the Chilterns made me realise I had not given the matter of Rural England, Threats To, any serious thought.

It had never occurred to me, naive neo-ruralite that I am, that you could buy acres of wood complete with beech, cherry, sweet chestnut, ash and birch and become landlord to deer, foxes and badgers. So why not do it? Buy the place. Save my own back yard.

That is what John and Margaret Noakes of Long Marston, Hertfordshire, did. They heard that a patch of woodland was for sale on the edge of the village, joined forces with six other people and bought it. Not because they wanted to develop it but because they did not want anyone else to do so.

At first glance their three-and-a-half acres, known locally as the Millhoppers, look nondescript. A footpath picks its way through scrub alongside a muddy stream. It is well worn by dog walkers and Sunday strollers. One end was traditionally used by friendly neighbourhood rubbish dumpers. But this little patch has stronger claims on our interest. Some hedges may date to Tudor times; it boasts 16 rare black poplars; there are marsh marigolds, reed sweetgrass, gypsywort, meadowsweet and many butterflies.

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Noakes explains that the land had often been the target of builders. "Luckily, the council had already identified the area as worth preserving," she says. "It has a fund called Agenda 21, thanks to the Rio Earth Summit, for encouraging environmental projects.

"We had to raise £20,000 for the wood and had to present a case to win a contribution from the council, which insisted that we were linked to an environmental agency before it would consider parting with any money.

"I knew it was an area with great potential for butterflies - I am local secretary of a Middlesex and Hertfordshire butterfly society - and it gave us £4,000. The council then donated £16,000 and the eight of us added a sum to pay for running the area."

Walk through the land now and you may spot some differences: rubbish has been cleared; a stile has been fixed; some poplars have been pollarded; rank grass in a marshy area has been cleared to give other flora a chance to breathe. You may even spot one of 21 species of butterflies. Noakes is particularly proud of the marbled white, an unusual species which has alighted on this land in increasing numbers.

Brian Sawford, senior keeper at the North Hertfordshire Museum's natural history department, said: "This is an exceptional case for conservation. I did not see much wildlife during my visit - it was November - but the site held a special appeal. I felt that here, amid the trappings of modern agriculture, lay a small oasis of the traditional landscapes which have unfortunately almost vanished from our countryside."

But what about "my" wood? Why would anyone spend £75,000 on its 45 acres? The estate agent handling the sale suggested that I could use it for bird watching. However, he sounded neither convinced nor convincing. "Well, you can generate tax-free income from the sales of thinning the trees. In fact, commercially managed woods qualify for 100 per cent relief from Inheritance Tax after two years' ownership and you don't pay tax on timber sales," he said.

And when you have cut down the trees there are 100 per cent grants for replanting. Now that's more like it.

What is more, according to the glossy brochure, there are the "sporting purposes": deer stalking, game and clay-pigeon shooting, horse riding, orienteering, paintball games and off-road driving. Not to mention moto-cross - a particularly virulent curse of the countryside which involves muddied fools howling through woods on high-pitched motorbikes. All are potentially profitable activities. Now that is much more like it.

Ironically, it is from reading the detail in the brochure that you realise how crucial country woodland like this is for everyone's wellbeing, not just my nimbyism.

Not just because of the hundreds who walk there and ride their horses, either. At the weekends, Tring station, nearby, is full of walkers, in their serious boots and anoraks, setting off on the Ridgeway which stretches to Avebury, near Marlborough - although I suspect most do not get much further than the Valiant Trooper in Aldbury, two miles away.

No, "my" wood is important because of a sense of tradition and timelessness: the Grim's Ditch, an ancient fortification of some kind, runs at the edge of the wood where there are bluebells in spring and infinite spires of foxgloves. It is also important because of the trees, with names so redolent of the countryside: larch, spruce, cherry, holly, yew and oak. It all adds up to so much more than a tax-exempt asset.

© Times Newspapers Limited

Status of the Grizzled Skipper in Hertfordshire by Christine Shepperson.

The following is an extract from a comprehensive survey report prepared by Christine, the scope of which was too detailed for this newsletter, covering the work of some 15 Branch recorders. For conciseness, the name “Grizzled Skipper” will be abbreviated to “GS” in this article.



The aims of the survey included identification of the location and status of all remaining colonies of the Grizzled Skipper in the county together with the recording of habitat details. The overall goal was to use all the information gathered to produce an up-to-date action plan to halt and reverse the decline in this species.

Current Status In Brian Sawford’s book “The Butterflies of Hertfordshire”, the GS was noted to be recorded in 38 tetrads between 1970 and 1986 (most towards the end of this period when survey work for the book was being carried out). More recently, in the Branch’s annual Butterfly Report, the picture has appeared much gloomier: 5 sightings in 1993, 2 in 1994, none in 1995. Then, in 1996, six sites were recorded, including one new one, the disused gravel pits at Waterford, where substantial numbers were found. This increasing trend continued in the report for 1997, with records from 11 tetrads, 3 of which were the same as in 1996. This apparently increasing trend should be seen in the light of the increased effort put into recording over this period, as part of the Butterflies for the New Millennium Atlas project.

Despite this increased recording, however, this data suggests a real decline in the status of the GS from 38 tetrads in the mid-1980’s to about 14 tetrads, little over a decade later. Furthermore, the 38 tetrads were themselves a serious decline from the position in the 1950’s and 1960’s, due in part a combination of loss of habitat, late cold springs and a decline in the rabbit population. It is possible that some of the factors that contributed to the decline in the GS may be showing a slight improvement. These are discussed below:

The dramatic crash in the rabbit population has been largely reversed, with some grassland sites now more closely cropped. These conditions should be more favourable to the larval foodplants which thrive in a warm micro-climate amongst low, sparse vegetation. However rabbit grazing is an unreliable means of habitat maintenance.

The long cold springs of recent decades now appear to have ameliorated. Data recorded by John Murray at Marshall's Heath indicate that during the 1990's the Spring temperature has been warmer than the previous 25 years. The early Spring of 1998 was exceptionally warm, up to but not during the normal Grizzled Skipper flight period.

Local extinctions and reductions that came about due to improvement or ploughing of grasslands or shading of woodland rides and clearings have not been strongly reversed. However, there are man-made habitats in Herts. (gravel pits) which, for a period at least, can provide a suitable habitat.

The GS likes sunny sheltered conditions and its favourite habitats are characterised by: i) an abundance of Spring nectar plants, ii) an abundance of a key larval foodplant (e.g. wild and barren strawberry, tormentil, creeping cinquefoil, agrimony, bramble) growing in short herb rich turf and especially on bare ground, and iii) patches of ranker vegetation and scrub / woodland edges.

These favourable conditions often occur in disused gravel pits, and the Society's recent Action Plan for the GS indicates that recently abandoned artificial habitats like this are the butterfly's main habitat over much of the English midlands. Although there are many such habitats in Hertfordshire, which may go some way to replacing the loss of the natural ones, disused gravel pits are highly dynamic and difficult to conserve. Problems include: i) the fact that many are small and isolated, ii) the vegetation is highly transient, iii) difficulties in introducing grazing, and iv) that the bare ground was created manually, in a large-scale one-off process.

Railway lines, particularly sunny sheltered cuttings, provide suitable habitats for the GS, often with warm basking places. Indeed, railway lines may have provided a haven for this, and many other species, during periods of decline, as they provide linear corridors

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between potentially suitable habitats. Railway lines are also fairly inaccessible to naturalists, so butterflies could flourish here undetected. Indeed, several of the recently discovered sites have themselves been, or are close to, railway lines.

The land directly adjacent to railway lines was traditionally managed by periodic burning, or was often set alight by sparks from steam trains. Alas, no longer, and as a result suitable habitat along railway lines is becoming more densely vegetated and less favourable to the GS. One recently discovered colony by a railway line at Digswell was indeed helped by a fire a few years ago, but is now under threat from scrub encroachment. It may be appropriate for us to approach the landowners (RailTrack?) to enable a management plan to be adopted.

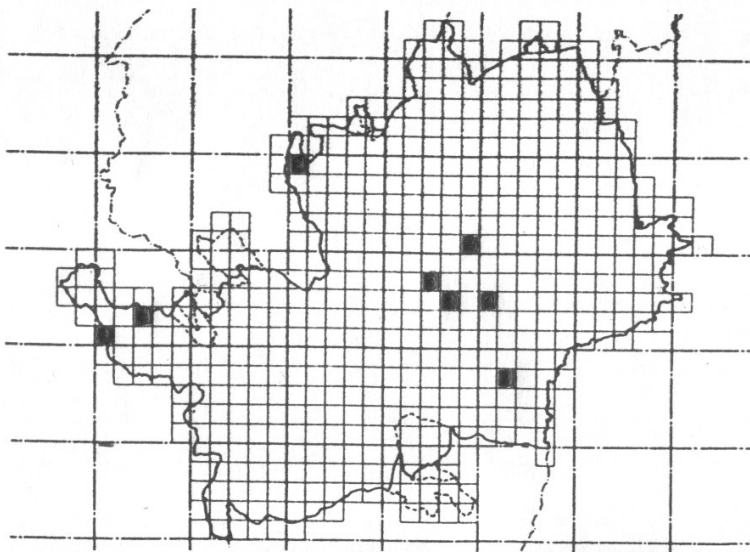
The recorders drew up a list of 56 sites for survey, either based on past records (going as far back as 1828 !), proximity to known sites or habitat e.g. gravel pit. Of these 37 were visited during 1998, not all during the GS flight season. The flight season this year (14 May – 19 June) was markedly later and shorter than recent years, due to the cold, wet weather in late Spring. It was the wettest April on record, and there was no burst of warmth until May 13 – 20, when the GS finally emerged. The short late flight season may adversely affect the numbers to be seen next season: poor weather after emergence may have prevented the butterflies from being active, finding mates and successfully completing the breeding cycle; also the wet Spring produced taller vegetation which in turn will result in shading of low growing plants and cooler micro-climates. In total, the GS was recorded from 8 tetrads in 1998 (see map).

The conclusions were as follows.

The GS survey was carried out in a year that proved very unfavourable for the target species. It demonstrates that, despite some encouraging findings in 1996 – 1997, this is a vulnerable species that needs further work if the aims of the action plan to halt and reverse its decline are to be achieved.

Two of the sites where the GS has been found recently are HMWT reserves, Aldbury Nowers and Telegraph Hill. The first of these is a traditional site and one at which the current management plan is already aimed at butterfly conservation. This is a very important

butterfly site within the county. It may be necessary to review the



plan to see if more needs to be done to take account of the requirements of the GS.

The single GS record for Telegraph Hill was a late one and almost the last sighting of the season. Therefore, if there is a colony at the site greater numbers may have been on the wing earlier and it should be looked for in the future. This site is close to the northern county border and does not seem to have a history of GS records. However, Brian Sawford's data show 2 previous records for the same tetrad (TL12E), one in 1945 and one in 1988.

GS were also recorded at 2 sites where they had been found in 1997 – on the banks of the railway cutting at Digswell, where 5 were recorded on 31 May, and also at Dawley Warren, on the 'peninsula' of old chalk spoil that juts out from Dawley Wood, where 9 were recorded on 17 May. This site supported much larger colonies in the past, and could be much improved by some conservation management. Areas where scrub was cleared some years ago have

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now overgrown again.

It was also encouraging to receive a record for Stubbings Wood, another new site on the chalk. There were also records in both the glades in Broxbourne Wood where they were found last year. These glades are managed for wildlife by the Countryside Management Service. These two sites have produced the highest numbers of GS recorded during the survey (10 in one glade and 7 in the other). This is a traditional site close to other areas within the Broxbourne Woods complex, which have a history of GS records.

Frogmore Hall is a disused and unrestored gravel pit at Hooks Cross near Stevenage (access by permit only), which has supported GS consistently now for 3 years. A record for that tetrad in 1984 may indicate that the colony has been persistent there over this whole period. GS were also recorded this year again at Waterford, although the numbers were lower than recent years. The early heavy rain this year caused a rapid growth of vegetation at Waterford, and goats rue in particular seemed to be widespread and luxuriant, overshadowing the wild strawberry in key locations.

Plans for 1999 It is intended that the survey should continue for 2 more seasons, although 1999 will be the last for inclusion of records in the Millennium survey. There are currently numerous tetrads in Herts that need to be covered for this survey (see John Murray's earlier article in this newsletter), and it is important not to distract from our efforts to cover all the 'orphan' tetrads. Therefore, it is proposed that for 1999 the priority should be the Spring Butterfly Survey for Orange Tips, Green Hairstreaks **and** Grizzled Skippers in the uncovered tetrads, and potential GS sites within these orphan tetrads will be notified to recorders.

I would like to thank all the recorders who took part in the survey this year, without whose help this report could not have been produced. Any readers who would like to participate in the survey this Spring (or who would like a more detailed version of this report) should write for a survey information pack to:

Christine Shepperson, Room E130B, University of Hertfordshire,
College Lane, Hatfield, Herts. AL10 9AB.

Herts & Middx Branch Field Trips 1999

Date: Sunday May 9th Time: 11.00

Location: Hunsdon Mead SSSI

Grid Ref: TL 405105 (Roydon station car park)

Special Conditions: Waterproof footwear if wet. Bring lunch.

Target Species: Butterflies of ancient hay meadow.

Contact: Gavin Vicary 01279.771933

Date: Saturday May 15th Time: 20.30

Location: Stanmore Country Park, Middx.

Grid Ref: TQ 172927 (car park in Dennis Lane, opposite recreation ground). Special Conditions: None

Target Species: Moth trapping event.

Contact: John Hollingdale 0181.863.2077

Date: Sunday May 23rd Time: 10.00

Location: Aldbury Nowers SSSI, Herts.

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Grid Ref: SP 950128 (lay-by). Special Conditions: Bring lunch if staying for afternoon visit to Tring Park.

Target Species: Green Hairstreak, Grizzled & Dingy Skippers, possible Duke of Burgundy.

Contact: Alan Downie 01992.650829

Date: Sunday May 23rd Time: 13.30.

Location: Tring Park, Herts.

Grid Ref: SP 924094 (Hastoe cross roads – parking)

Special Conditions: Follow-on from morning visit to Aldbury Nowers.

Target Species: Green Hairstreak and chalk grassland species.

Contact: Brian Jessop 01442.824907

Date: Saturday June 12th Time: 21.30

Location: Millhoppers Pasture (BC reserve), Herts.

Grid Ref: SP 903142 (Wilstone village hall – 15 minute walk to reserve). Special Conditions: None

Target Species: Moth trapping event.

Contact: Rob Souter 01438.214663

Date: Sunday June 13th Time: 11.00

Location: Millhoppers Pasture (BC reserve), Herts.

Grid Ref: SP 903142 (Wilstone village hall – 15 minute walk to reserve) Special Conditions: None.

Target Species: Grassland species. Also Black Poplar and dragonflies/damselflies.

Contact: Margaret Noakes 01296.660072

Date: Sunday July 4th Time: 11.00

Location: Westbrook Hay, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

Grid Ref: TL 028054. (at road junction by school).

Special Conditions: None.

Target Species: Marbled White & grassland species.

Contact: Norma Dean 01442.252435

Date: Saturday July 10th Time: 21.30

Location: Symondshyde Woods, Welwyn, Herts.

Grid Ref: TL 199106 (car park). Special Conditions: None.

Target Species: Moth trapping event.
Contact: Rob Souter 01438.214663

Date: Saturday July 17th Time: 10.00

Location: Cheshunt Marsh, Lea Valley Park, Herts.

Grid Ref: TL 374007 (Northern end of Highbridge Street car park).

Special Conditions: Note: National Dragonfly Sanctuary adjacent.

Target Species: Small & Essex Skippers, grassland butterflies.

Contact: Alan Downie 01992.650829

Date: Sunday July 18th Time: 10.30

Location: Stanmore Country Park, Middx.

Grid Ref: TQ 172927 (car park in Dennis Lane, opposite recreation ground) Special Conditions: None.

Target Species: Summer butterflies.

Contact: John Hollingdale 0181.863.2077

Date: Wednesday July 21st Time: 14.00

Location: Therfield Heath, north Herts.

Grid Ref: TL 348405 (in car park, adjacent to sports pavilion).

Special Conditions: None.

Target Species: Chalkhill Blue and other chalk grassland species.

Contact: Brian Sawford 01462.672287

Date: Sunday July 25th Time: 11.00

Location: Broxbourne Woods, Herts.

Grid Ref: TL 325071 (car park). Special Conditions: None.

Target Species: Woodland butterflies. (Purple Emperor possible).

Contact: Gavin Vicary 01279.771933

Date: Sunday August 8th Time: 08.00

Location: Three Valleys Water Environmental Centre, Clay Lane, Bushey, Herts.

Grid Ref: TQ 153942

Special Conditions: To view results of overnight moth trapping followed by visit to specially created butterfly garden and tour of large area of mixed habitat. This is a high security area – contact Alan Downie for details of access.

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Target Species: Purple Hairstreak and many other species. Also dragon/damselflies.

Contact: Alan Downie 01992.650829

Date: Sunday August 15th Time: 10.30

Location: Old Park Wood, Harefield, Middx.

Grid Ref: TQ 049913 (parking area in SW corner of grounds of Harefield Hospital). Special Conditions: None.

Target Species: Purple Hairstreak and woodland butterflies.

Contact: John Hollingdale 0181.863.2077

Date: Saturday August 21st Time: 20.30

Location: Stanmore Common, Middlesex.

Grid Ref: TQ 159935 (car park off Warren Lane).

Special Conditions: None.

Target Species: Moth trapping event.

Contact: John Hollingdale 0181.863.2077

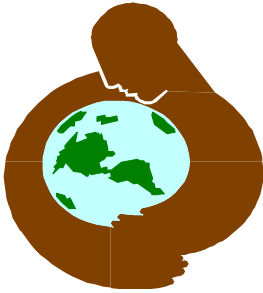
Date: Saturday 21st August Time: 21.00

Location: Broxbourne Woods, Herts.

Grid Ref: TL 325071 (car park). Special Conditions: None.

Target Species: Moth trapping event.

Contact: Rob Souter 01438.214663.



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 - 4th Sunday of the month, January - April. Come along and help us with our own butterfly reserve. Details are available from John and Margaret Noakes (01296 660072).

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

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

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