

Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



**HERTFORDSHIRE AND
MIDDLESEX BRANCH**

**NEWSLETTER
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Chair's Report, by Malcolm Hull

Spring has arrived and with it all the excitement of a new butterfly season. The UK has just experienced its warmest winter ever. Will this lead to an increase the numbers of butterflies and moths? Or will the warm winter cause problems by encouraging parasites and diseases? Both are possible and different butterfly species are often affected by such influences in different ways.

There are many early flowering plants, but so far the evidence for butterflies is less clear. As in most recent years there has been a steady trickle of sightings of hibernating butterflies reported to our website through the winter months (<http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/sightings-new.php>). "Brimstone Day" when these butterflies first emerge in numbers was on March 13th, not particularly early. The most unusual sightings have been two Speckled Woods, one on the last week of December and one in the first week of January. And I was surprised to find Large Yellow Underwing caterpillars active on my allotment on Christmas Day.

2016 So Far

Andrew Wood and Leslie Williams talk on Butterflies in North and West London showed what dramatic improvements have taken place in the last 30 years. Virtually all species have increased their range, several new ones have moved in and only one (the Wall) has declined. More details are on page 4.

Our Members Day in March was well attended with fascinating talks by Jim Asher and Roger Gibbons. Congratulations to Roger, Mandy Floyd, Mim Wright and Paul Busby who have all joined our Branch committee. Thanks also to John Hollingdale who is standing down as our Treasurer after 22 years. John was presented with a print of the Wall butterfly as a thank-you present. A full write up is on page 7 and contact details for the new committee members are on the back cover.

25 people attended our conservation task at Millhoppers Pasture at Wilstone village, Tring. We successfully reduced the invading Blackthorn that surrounds the reserve, to help pave the way for the reintroduction of grazing, which is expected this year. Join Reserve Warden Jez Perkins for a guided walk round the reserve on 24th July

(see the Events leaflet with enclosed with this newsletter for details).

The Season Ahead

Our programme of butterfly walks is included with this mailing. All walks have an experienced leader to guide you round a site and help with identification of different species. Walks are fairly short and easy and all are welcome, whether or not they are members. These are informal friendly events and you don't need to be a butterfly expert to attend. There is no charge or need for prior booking, unless stated in the leaflet. If you've not been before, please have a look through the programme and give us a try.

Our publicity stall will be attending a number of public events, including the Rickmansworth Environmental Festival and the Herts County Show.

As usual we are keen for members to record their butterfly sightings, which should be reported through to our Records Officer Andrew Wood. Details of how to submit records electronically are provided in the recording section of our website (<http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/recording-new.php>). Recording sheets can also be downloaded from the website and submitted by post. We are not providing hard copies of these to all members this year, but if any member is unable to download one from the website, then please contact Ian Small, who will send you one in the post. Interesting sightings and observations can be shared with all members via the website, please send to Liz Goodyear (all contact details on rear cover).

Save Butterfly World

Many of you have expressed concern at the closure of Butterfly World near St Albans and the likely fate of its Small Blue colony, the largest in our two counties. At present the future of the site is unclear. It remains closed to the public, but it is not for sale and the owners have agreed to allow the weekly transect monitoring undertaken by Mandy Floyd to continue. A campaign to Save Butterfly World has been established and the chair John Horsefield spoke at our Members Day. For more information visit their Facebook page and read the article on page 21.

The Butterflies of North and West London – Joint Meeting with Harrow Natural History Society – 7th February 2016

(This is a slightly edited version of the meeting summary posted by John Brooks to the Harrow NHS website.)

The first part of this joint meeting was a double-act between Andrew Wood and Leslie Williams who described a tour through a fictional part of Middlesex recording every butterfly that occurs and comparing the situation now with that in the mid-1980s. In 1987, using records from 1980-86, reports were published on *The butterflies of the London area* and *The butterflies of Hertfordshire*. The presentation covered all London boroughs north of the Thames and west of the Lee Valley, which formerly formed parts of London, Hertfordshire and Middlesex. The area has a lot of very good habitats with a lot of green space including old cemeteries, brownfield sites and areas never built on such as parkland, woodland and farmland.

Beginning in the winter, the first butterfly on the wing would be the **Red admiral**, which probably winters in Britain and each year's butterflies are not all new immigrants as previously thought. It undergoes a diapause rather than hibernation, sheltering in ivy and other creepers and is active on warm winter days. It was fairly well distributed in the 1980s and is now more common virtually everywhere in north and west London. In late February-early March, the **Comma** is the first of the true hibernators to emerge. It is active till late October-early November, feeding up for hibernation. Its distribution has not changed much, being common in the 1980s and common now. Also emerging by mid-March are the **Peacock**, **Small tortoiseshell** and **Brimstone**, which is now well distributed in London but had very few records in the 1980s.

Early April sees the emergence of the **Orange Tip**, easily recognised by the male's distinctive orange tips to its wings, while the female has black tips. It has moved further into the urban area since the 1980s. The **Speckled Wood** likes shady areas and flies throughout the summer. It had very much a western distribution in the 1980s with a large area where it was absent but there are now very few areas where it does not occur. The **Holly Blue** is probably the most urban butterfly we have, with its food plants being holly and ivy. It was fairly scattered in the 1980s but now occurs pretty well everywhere.

Towards the end of April, the **Large White** is very common. There were few records in the inner urban area in the 1980s but it is now everywhere, possibly due to warmer temperatures and/or to park maintenance with less spraying. The **Small White** remains well distributed while the **Green-veined White** in the 1980s was absent in the urban centre but has now moved in except for a large gap in its distribution in the Barnet/Borehamwood area.

The **Small Copper** appears in May. It was not widely distributed in the 1980s and is more common in the western half of the area now but has not really moved into the urban centre yet.

The **Brown Argus** was absent from north and west London in the 1980s but it is now more widely distributed in the west side of London. It is now a specialist of neglected areas where wild geraniums occur. The **Small Heath** lives in relatively short grassland. It was not in the urban centre but well distributed elsewhere in the 1980s. Its distribution is now reduced but there are still some in the west and some in the north in the Trent Park area. The **Common Blue** is pretty well distributed and shows little change in its distribution. The **Green Hairstreak** had just scattered records in the 1980s. It has reappeared in the Hounslow area on Hounslow Heath and on brownfield sites such as a disused railway marshalling yard.

Now into the summer, the **Large Skipper** frequents long grass in hedgerows and woodland edges. It is still widespread but has declined in some areas. The **Wall Brown** was widely distributed in the 1980s but declined in the 1990s, with 13% of its 1990 numbers in 1991, 4% in 1993 and 2% in 1995. There have been no records since 2000. It has also declined nationally. The **Small Skipper** also frequents long grass in woodland edges and hedgerows. It has suffered a decline in population since the 1980s, as has the **Essex Skipper**.

The **Meadow Brown** is probably the most common butterfly nationally but its population has reduced. Adults emerge in mid-June so it is vulnerable to early cuts of meadows. It has had some decline due to loss of habitat. The **Ringlet** frequents hedgerows and woodland glades. There were hardly any in the 1980s but it is now more widely distributed and becoming more common each year. The Welsh Harp (= Brent reservoir) has a well-established colony but only 2-3km to the west, the Fryent Country Park has very few. The **Marbled White** was very rare in the

1980s but it is now more common in distinct colonies such as that at the Welsh Harp.

There were no **Purple Emperors** recorded in the 1980s but it is now moving into London. It is on the wing in early July. It had been recorded but there was some doubt attached to the early records, though we now know it is still in those areas. It is now clear that they are not as rare as we thought they were and it is possibly becoming more common. It can be seen at the top of oak trees or on the ground sipping salt from animal faeces or urine.

The **White Admiral** is a woodland butterfly to be seen, for example in Ruislip Woods. The **Silver-washed Fritillary** frequents woodlands and hedgerows and although its population is increasing, it is still fairly sparsely distributed. The **Clouded Yellow** is a migrant from North Africa, which arrives in May-June. Its numbers vary from year to year but it has seen little change in its distribution. The **Painted Lady** is another migrant from North Africa, covering up to 150km/day during its migration. It is now much more common than in the 1980's and is present every year but numbers fluctuate. Some years, such as 2009, have large numbers.

The **Purple Hairstreak** frequents large oak trees. It is probably under-recorded because monitoring is by transects in daytime and it flies in the evenings. There is a good population at Horsenden Hill and the Brent Reservoir. The **White-letter Hairstreak** is dependent on elms. There is not a lot of information on it prior to the arrival of Dutch elm disease in the 1970s. There were a few recorded in the 1980s and it has recovered to a certain extent. The **Gatekeeper** has moved into London since the 1980s. It is probably the most common garden butterfly in the Harrow area in August.

Following on from this talk, Malcolm Hull then took the opportunity to provide the Harrow NHS members with information about Butterfly Conservation and its activities. Malcolm talked about gardening for butterflies, walks and talks, getting to know your local sites, education and publicity, and encouraged those present to join us in our activities.

Members' Day, 5th March 2016, by Ian Small

Our annual Members' Day was again held at the civic centre in Welwyn. Attendance was slightly reduced from last year, perhaps on account of the early-morning snow, and later rain or the clash with an important football derby! There were 50 people present for the AGM, rising to 60 afterwards.

The AGM itself was completed in record time, and was followed by a brief address from John Horsefield, who is leading the 'Save Butterfly World' campaign, in which he appraised those present of the current situation and appealed for their support (see John's article on page 21).

The first presentation of the day was by Andrew Wood, on the topic of 'Interesting Butterflies and Moths from 2015'. In addition, Andrew was able to show habitat videos, captured by drone camera, from a range of our better-known sites, e.g. Aldbury Nowers, Therfield Heath, Hexton Chalkpit, Patmore Heath and Hampstead Heath. Some of the species highlighted by Andrew were the Grass Rivulet, a day-flying moth associated with Yellow Rattle; the Small Blue, where Andrew had a great photo of a caterpillar feeding in the seedhead of Kidney Vetch; the migrant Vestal moth; Hornet Moths on the trunk of Black Poplar; Jersey Tiger moths, whose abundance has increased and where our population appears to have a higher proportion of the yellow underwing, rather than red, than is reported elsewhere; and finally some great video of a Peacock butterfly being disturbed in its hibernation, where not only does it flick its wings open to reveal the large eyespots, but also makes a distinctive sound to add to the deterrence of any would-be predator.

Following Andrew's talk, some members shared a selection of butterfly and moth images from last year. Those sharing were Malcolm Hull, with photos from some of last year's field trips; Peter Fewell, with photos from Casiobury Park; Andrew Wood, with photos from Canada; Liz Goodyear, with moth photos from her traps at home and in Norfolk; and Ian Small, who shared a range of more exotic butterfly and moth photos from a trip to Borneo.

After lunch, our keynote speaker for the day was Jim Asher, the national Chairman of Butterfly Conservation. Jim gave a broad-ranging presentation on 'The Future for Butterflies' in which he addressed the

role of the Society, but also brought in the impacts of climate change and habitat loss through fragmentation and degradation. Throughout, the talk was excellently illustrated both with Jim's excellent photographs, but also with data demonstrating the changing distributions of many of our species over the past 20 years. The richness of the data collected for the original Millennium Atlas, and for each of its subsequent 5-yearly updates, provides a much more informative understanding of the rate of change affecting our butterfly species and stark evidence that the changes are not uniform across species.

In some instances, e.g. the Comma, the spread northwards has been remarkable, and is likely a clear reflection of climate change. Similar expansions in range have been noted for the Silver-washed Fritillary and the Specked Wood. That this is not reflected across many more species is accounted for by their more specialist requirements, making it impossible for them to spread because of the barriers imposed by habitat fragmentation.

In some instances, notably the White-letter Hairstreak, the apparent expansion in range is a reflection of targeted research and monitoring, not least by our own Branch's Liz Goodyear and Andrew Middleton. No less than 20% of the 10km squares where this species is recorded are due to their observations!

Climate change may not all be good news for butterflies, as most models predict an increase in stormy weather, as recent evidence over much of the country would support. The Wall may be one species adversely affected – the retraction in range of this once wide-spread species towards a coastal distribution may at least in part be explained by a disruption in its lifecycle. The future for butterflies is therefore far from certain, but we know they will continue to face a variety of pressures. To ensure a sustainable future for them, we need to continue to expand our monitoring efforts to ensure accurate information, we must continue and expand habitat management, particularly at the landscape scale, we must influence landowners, continue to develop partnerships with other organisations and wield more political clout.

After a break for tea and cake, the final presentation of the day was by Roger Gibbons, our liaison with the European Interest Group (EIG) of

the Society. Roger provided a lot of information about the EIG and the information and support it can provide for members wishing to expand their butterfly interests into Europe. (See also the separate article describing an EIG trip, on page 12).

Roger is an expert on the butterflies of France and has an extensive collection of superb photographs (see his website <http://www.butterfliesoffrance.com>) and used many of these to illustrate his talk. He cleverly broke the subject into 3 categories – i) species found both in the UK and in France, ii) species which are related or similar to those in the UK, and iii) species only found on the continent.

In the first category, there are, for example, the Adonis Blue and the Heath Fritillary, both uncommon and restricted in range in the UK, but abundant in many areas of France. In the 2nd category there are e.g. the White Admiral in the UK, but in the south of France this is replaced by the Southern White Admiral. A similar shift occurs with the Purple Emperor and the Lesser Purple Emperor. Examples in the 3rd category were the Two-tailed Pasha and the Southern Festoon.

After this presentation, Jim Asher drew the tickets for the raffle prizes – thanks to all who bought tickets, as just over £100 was raised.

This was then followed by the results of the members' photographic competition. About 100 photographs had been submitted in 5 categories, and those present recorded their votes in each category. The winning photos are all included in this newsletter. The winners are listed below and their photos are on the following pages:

- UK Butterflies – Andrew Steele with his photo of a Brown Hairstreak
- Non-adult stages – Phil McMurdie with his photo of a Dingy Skipper egg
- UK Moths – Ann Piper's photo of a Privet Hawk Moth
- Behaviour – Liz Goodyear's photo of Grizzled Skippers
- Non-UK – Ian Small's photo of a Blue-banded King Crow from Borneo



Above: UK Butterfly winner - Brown Hairstreak, by Andrew Steele
Below: non-adult stage winner - Dingy Skipper egg - Phil McMurdie





Above: Winner - UK moths - Privet Hawkmoth, by Ann Piper
Below: Winner - Behaviour category - Grizzled Skippers, by Liz Goodyear





Winner - Non-UK category
Blue-banded King Crow in Borneo, by Ian Small

European Interest Group (EIG)

The European Interests Group (EIG) is a branch of Butterfly Conservation like the county branches, but its focus is European butterflies rather than UK butterflies. Membership is open to all members of Butterfly Conservation at an additional cost of £10 a year. It is the branch to join if you want to learn how to identify butterflies that you see in Europe, to find out where best to see them

and to learn about conservation and survey projects. EIG circulates a newsletter to members twice a year, and the following article is reproduced from their May 2015 edition. For more information, for back issues of newsletters, and information on butterflies by country, please go to their website www.bc-eig.org.uk.

Butterflying in the Auvergne 2013 and 2014, by Bill Raymond

In late August 2013 I spent a week in the northern Auvergne in the village of Pitelet, near Thiers, on the northern borders of the Livradois Forez Regional Park. The area is traditionally farmed with conifer plantations interspersed with natural woodland which is mainly confined to the steep river valleys.

Exploring Pitelet, August 2013

A second brood **Map** (*Araschnia levana*) whizzing round the garden as we arrived was very encouraging - unpacking had to wait until a photo had been secured! However, my first few local walks were disappointing as all the hay meadows had been cut so I ventured further afield. I visited the wet meadows on the plain of Varennes and the dry hillsides near the town of Billom but again there was not much on the wing.

After these unproductive excursions I decided to get off the beaten track and make a detailed investigation of the land closer to home, finally discovering a small flowery meadow on a south facing slope bordered by deciduous woods and a stream. This fragment of isolated, unimproved land, about 250 metres long and 100 metres wide, was occasionally visited by a couple of cows who were reasonably happy to share it with myself and the numerous butterflies. For the remainder of the week I concentrated on this glorious spot finishing with an impressive species count for so late in the season of 24.

The steeper slopes were thick with thyme on which large numbers of **Meadow Brown** (*Maniola jurtina*) and **Sooty Copper** (*Lycaena tityrus*) were nectaring. The Sooty Coppers were magnificent to watch and were the highlight of the meadow with males outnumbering females by at least four to one. Other residents included a collection of skippers: **Mallow Skipper** (*Carcharodus alceae*), **Silver Spotted Skipper** (*Hesperia comma*), some of which were still in good condition, plus one tired **Small Skipper** (*Thymelicus sylvestris*). A single rather worn **Scarce Copper**

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(*Lycaena virgaureae*) was conspicuous on every visit, its flash of orange clearly visible from a distance. More colour was added to the scene by the Fritillaries: **Silver Washed Fritillary** (*Argynnis paphia*), **Knapweed Fritillary** (*Melitaea phoebe*), and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria selene*). **Great Banded Grayling** (*Brintesia circe*) also appeared one afternoon to nectar alongside several Maps.



Female Sooty Copper

I had hoped that **Purple Emperor** (*Apatura iris*) might be found in the area but no luck until the last day when our hosts showed me some, mainly fuzzy, butterfly photos taken by their young niece. Amongst this collection was an in-focus Purple Emperor posing on the wall of our gîte two days before our arrival!

Vic-sur-Cère, July/August 2014

In 2014 we decided to return to Pitelet in early August spending the week before in the town of Vic-sur-Cère at the southern end of the Cantal valley. This is an excellent base with very friendly and helpful people. The manager of the local Tourist Office delivered her own set of local maps to our hotel for me to use during our stay whilst the natives kept us up into the small hours playing a UK v France international pétanque match under the full moon!

The weather was unsettled with frequent thunderstorms but on the better days I explored the higher ridges above the town. The small road running north east from Col de Curebourse towards La Tuillère proved fruitful with frequent shrubby areas full of flowers interspersed with patches of exposed rock. **Large Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus alveus*) was on the wing along with **Spotted Fritillary** (*Melitaea didyma*), **Dark Green Fritillary** (*Argynnis aglaja*), and **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria lathonia*). Whilst pursuing the more photogenic subjects I kept ignoring what I took to be tattered unidentifiable fritillaries until one landed under my nose for a final bask in the setting sun. On close examination this proved to be my

first encounter with female **Spotted Fritillary ssp. meridionalis** (*Melitaea didyma meridionalis*). On a return visit I found specimens varying from almost colourless individuals to beautiful brightly marked examples. Unfortunately, I only managed to photograph the darker variety.

Spectacular Coppers

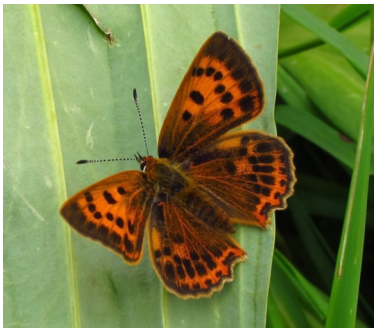
On the best day of the week I ventured further up the valley to the slopes of the extinct volcanic chain dominated by Le Puy Mary.

Alas, this was holiday time and the roads were chaotic. Down to one lane on the route to the summit with every manner of transportation parked or abandoned on either side of the road.



Spotted Fritillary ssp. meridionalis

Retreating in haste to the lower slopes I found a quiet spot with a path leading down through a tangled bank of vegetation to a meadow. This bank was home to a colony of **Scarce Coppers** (*Lycaena virgaureae*) who were feasting on a patch of Arnica - a spectacularly colourful display with several feeding on the same flowerhead.



Scarce Coppers Female (left) Males (right)

A Mystery *Erebia*

Whilst watching the coppers a small darkish moth or butterfly kept darting through the fence bordering the meadow, circling and disappearing back down the slope. Clambering over the fence I set off in pursuit. The meadow had been heavily grazed but on the steeper parts among the shrubs some nectar sources had survived. Here I finally managed to photograph this mystery flier which turned out to be an *Erebia*. Despite it never having been recorded in the Auvergne my amateurish attempts at identification kept leading me to **Blind Ringlet** (*Erebia pharte*). There were no black points in its orange markings whilst all the photographs/illustrations I could source of other possible suspects had some hint of a black spot. After some correspondence, expert opinion has now decreed it is a **Sudetan Ringlet** (*Erebia sudetica*) which flies in that locality (see photo). Other species of interest encountered in this meadow were **Idas Blue** (*Plebejus idas*) and **Meadow Fritillary** (*Melitaea parthenoides*).



Sudetan Ringlet

Pitelet, August 2014

We then moved on to Pitelet where the weather had been very mixed. A bit of a blessing as it had prevented some of the higher hay meadows being cut. When the sun came out these were alive with **Dark Green Fritillaries** (*A. aglaja*), **Mallow Skippers** (*C. alceae*), **Sooty Coppers** (*L. tityrus*) and **Scarce Coppers** (*L. virgaureae*). New records on this visit were **Large Blue** (*Phengaris arion*), **Chapman's Blue** (*Polyommatus thersites*), and **Mazarine Blue** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), plus my first sighting of the spectacular larva of the **Spotted Fritillary**. A fairly exhaustive search for **Purple Emperor** (*A. iris*) in suitable locations again proved fruitless but perhaps this is the Auvergne's way of tempting me back....

This is a delightful part of France and well worth a visit for its

dramatic landscape and friendly people. If your French is up to it and you want a deeper insight into the area's butterflies then try looking at the website of the Société d'Histoire Naturelle Alcide - d'Orbigny www.shnao.net/index.php Here you will find a link to an archive of Arvernsis, the Bulletin des Entomologistes d'Auvergne. The direct link to the archive page is www.shnao.net/arvernsis.php.



Spotted Fritillary Caterpillar



Mazarine Blue

After Dark....., by Ian Small

I have never counted myself as a 'moth-er'. While many of you, I know, are avid moth enthusiasts, regularly running moth traps in your garden or your 'local patch', I have always used the excuse of needing to go to work in the mornings as a reason not to run a moth trap. Those last few minutes in bed in the mornings are too precious, not to mention the time it now takes to get to work with our ever-increasing traffic levels.

Many of us love to see butterflies in our gardens, visiting flowers for nectar and, if we are lucky, laying eggs on suitable foodplants, soon to develop into caterpillars that we can watch grow. This past year, I have taken to adding a new dimension to this enjoyment, simply by going round the garden at night with a torch, and seeing the moths that come visiting those same nectar-rich flowers. It has long been known that many moths can be attracted by 'sugaring', or 'wine-roping', but for me it was just a joy to be able to watch them do what they do naturally, rather than needing to trap them.

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Of course, if you run a trap, you will certainly see many more species, but if you simply want to increase your knowledge about how wildlife uses your garden, then get out there with a torch and see. The range of plants attractive to moths for nectaring is very similar to those attractive to butterflies, or bees, so you will almost certainly know where to look at first. Not surprisingly, buddleia probably had the greatest drawing power in my garden, but was certainly not the sole attractant.

It was fascinating to find that some moths are creatures of habit. There were a couple of occasions where I noticed a moth with a particular mark, or damage on the wing, only to see the same moth on the same plant (often even on the same part of the plant) the subsequent night.

My moth list is not extensive yet, but this year I will begin my nightly sorties around the garden earlier in the year. Moth identification can be a challenge for beginners, but beginning your introduction simply by monitoring your flower borders is a lot less daunting than the potential challenge of identifying the contents of a moth-trap. I would certainly recommend this way of introducing yourself to moths and broadening your appreciation of your garden.



Varied Coronet



Golden Plusia



Red Underwing



Silver Y



Bordered Straw



Angle Shades



Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing

Outstanding Volunteer Award for Andrew Wood

Andrew Wood's contributions to Butterfly Conservation were acknowledged at the Society's national AGM when he received an Outstanding Volunteer Award from national Chairman, Jim Asher.

Throughout the 15 years that Andrew has been a Branch committee member, he has devoted many hours of his time to promoting and conserving lepidoptera.

Starting as Moth Officer, he then began maintaining the Branch's records data base and co-ordinating the Transect Monitoring Recording Scheme (our Branch has over 50 transects so not an easy task!). In 2011, he also became Branch Recorder; writing and

producing the Branch's Annual Butterfly Report. These reports, now in their twentieth year, clearly detail the distribution of our local butterflies and are recognised at a national level for being a highly professional production. Many people are enthused to record butterflies, especially filling unvisited gaps in our landscape after reading the reports!



Andrew receiving his award from national Chairman, Jim Asher

In 2011 he became our Branch Chair, only relinquishing the post of moth officer but remains involved with liaising between the Branch and the Herts Moth Group. He regularly runs moth trap events for other organisations enabling many members of the public to appreciate the beauty of moths and their importance in the natural world.

Andrew stood down as Chair in 2015 but continues to be involved with all aspects of Branch work. He is currently writing a book on the butterflies of our area for the Herts Natural History Society. Andrew contributes large numbers of his own records, many from unvisited areas, and walks two transects. One transect is an HMWT Reserve; and he regularly advises the Trust on many aspects of management to encourage butterflies and moths on all their Reserves.

Butterfly World – a Future, by John Horsefield

As so many Butterfly Conservation members already know Butterfly World I won't use this space to stress the importance of its conservation work, the value of the habitat or the value of it as a much needed tourist attraction. I also know that many members are amongst the 53,900 signatures on the petition. But if you have not already signed follow the link below.



Sadly the owner, Breheny Construction, is currently refusing to meet us and their plan seems to be just to leave the site closed to the public. Save Butterfly World is determined that this won't happen and are preparing plans to reopen the site.

One of the problems cited by the company was the relatively short season. We have exciting plans to open on a twelve month basis and to incorporate exhibitions, courses and other new activities.

We also want to develop further educational opportunities. Last year 12,000 children from 200 primary schools visited. The children showing their excitement as they watched the butterflies hatching and handled the insects. We are also looking at how to properly cater for secondary schools. More discussions are needed with St Albans Council. But the full potential of the site needs to be explored.

An advantage we would have over Breheny's is that as a charity we could work with other non-profit organisations. They also cited lack of obtaining grants. As someone who ran a national grants making charity for fifteen years I can only ask who would give a commercial company a grant to boost their finances.

In fact the more I learn of the way Breheny's ran Butterfly World the more questions come up. They are clearly a highly competent Construction Company, but a different range of skills and mind-set was needed to run an important conservation project.

It is such a waste of resources our having to fight to get Breheny to talk to us when we would rather start work on reopening the project.

But we have to bring pressure on Breheny's which is the largest privately owned construction company in the UK with an annual turnover of £75,810,336 and a pre-tax profit of £1,952,850. Their website maintains that "*We have respect for the community and environment*"; they must honour this and not let this vital habitat die. If they don't, their environmental credibility will be open to questions, not least from the Public Authorities to whom they will be tendering. These Authorities of course have similar environmental policies

If you have any ideas for activities or would like to be kept informed of our campaign please send your email address to contact@savebutterflyworld.com and we will send you a save butterfly world membership form. Don't forget to sign the petition <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/en-gb/takeaction/665/474/121>

Chilterns Duke of Burgundy Project, by Sarah Meredith, BC Project Officer

The Duke of Burgundy, *Hamearis lucina*, is a springtime butterfly that is associated with chalk and limestone grassland using Cowslips and Primrose as their food plant. In the past it was known as a woodland butterfly using coppiced woodland where their food plant grew. Due to the cessation of coppicing the butterfly moved out onto the grassland with 80% of the national population now present within grassland habitats. The Duke of Burgundy requires sheltered grassland with patches of scrub and well distributed Cowslips or Primroses.

The Duke of Burgundy is restricted to 8 colonies across the Chilterns and at the southern end (Bradenham) 3 colonies exist but are vulnerable to changes in climatic and management events.

In 2015 we were able, through the help of volunteers, to map the presence of Duke of Burgundy across the sites along with the location of eggs and larva. These maps showed that the Duke has been discovered in some new areas on Ivinghoe Beacon and in 2016 we will gather further data on

these new areas. The information gathered in 2015 helped guide site managers undertaking winter scrub management and grazing. Also in 2015 sites were identified that offer potential for the Duke of Burgundy in the future such as Pitstone Hill and Aldbury Nowers. Some of these sites are in good condition but many will need work such as scrub management and food plant propagation and planting over the next few years.

This year we will be carrying out further surveys of adult butterflies, eggs and larva and habitat suitability. Please contact Sarah Meredith at smeredith@butterfly-conservation.org if you are interested in helping with these survey



Duke of Burgundy Life-cycle: 1 Adult butterfly, 2 Mating pair, 3 Cluster of eggs, 4 Newly hatched caterpillars, 5 Mature caterpillar, 6 Pupa

Articles Wanted ! Please send your newsletter contributions, to
Ian Small (details on back cover).

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