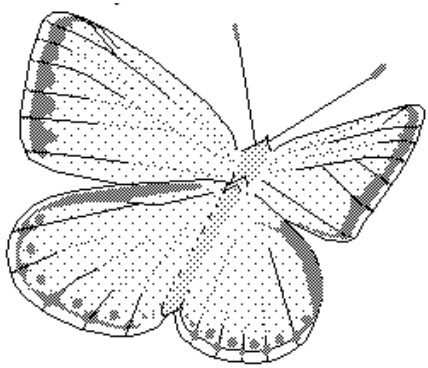


HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX

ISSUE 16 DECEMBER 1998

WINTER

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Encouraging Signs..
by Gavin Vicary

The recent AGM was well supported with 26 members attending. The members' slides were again of a particularly high standard. This year a high proportion were of moths and these included several that are fairly scarce in Hertfordshire and Middlesex.

The slides reiterated just how attractive many of our moths are and also showed just how adept many of them can be at camouflaging themselves. Of course you can still see moths at this time of year

when many of our butterflies are not on show. I often have a look around our porch light and recently found a December moth, which is one of my favourites and on another night there was another one called a Feathered Thorn. No doubt winter moths will soon put in an appearance and there are several others that might be seen before the butterflies are back on the wing in March or April .

The first work parties at Millhoppers have been very productive; large areas of grass have been cut and then raked clear and the margin of much of the blackthorn has been cut back some way to prevent further scrub encroachment. Work parties will carry on throughout the winter on the fourth Sunday of each month and I hope to see any members who feel they need some exercise to burn of those extra Christmas calories!

Details of forthcoming talks are given opposite and the field trips will be published in the next newsletter.

A merry Christmas and prosperous new year to you all

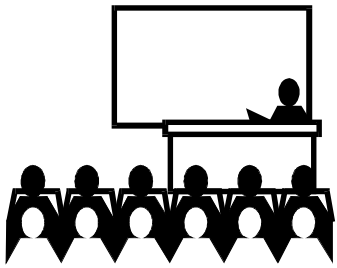
We have planned the following indoor meetings for the winter season. NOTE that we have a new venue - the Welwyn Civic Centre, Prospect Road, Old Welwyn village. **A map is provided on the next page**.

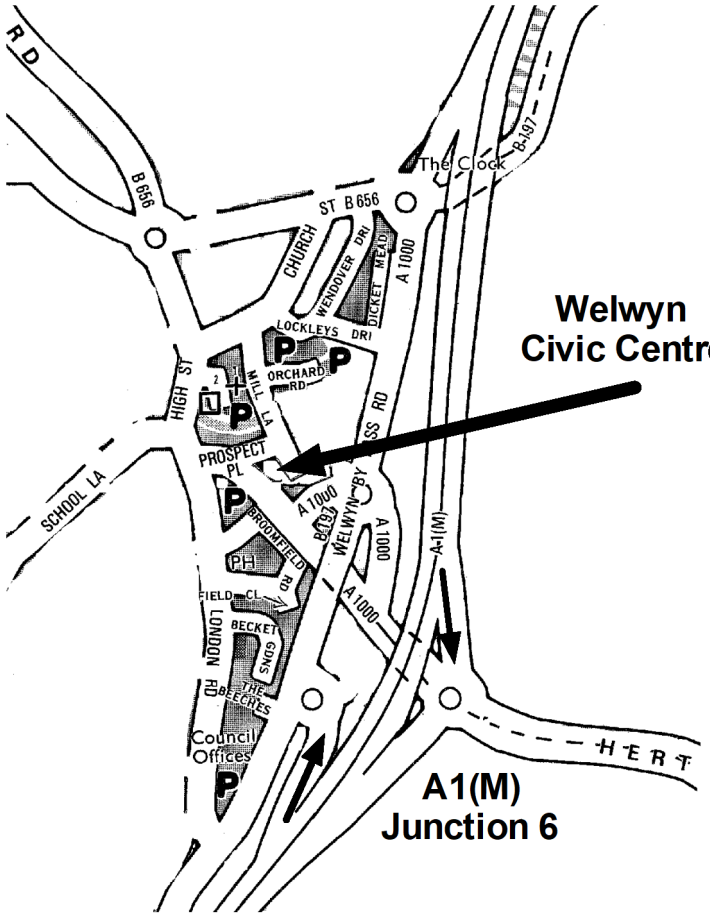
Saturday 30 January, 2pm. "Butterflies of the Picos - Spain's Northern Wilderness" by John Noakes (warden of Millhopper's Pasture).

Saturday 27 March, 2pm. "All you need to know about British Moths" by Rob Souter (Branch Moth Officer).

Refreshments will be available.

Please come along and support these meetings.





Copy Deadline for the March Newsletter will be

13 February 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

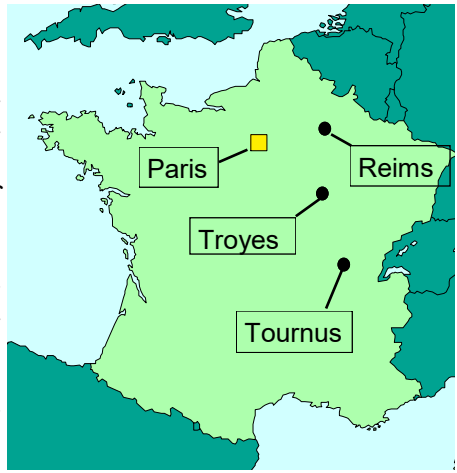
Five Sites in France, by Vincent and Betty Judd

Although our main holiday is usually much further abroad, we have for a number of years now made at least one trip to France, where many butterflies unknown in England can be found, and others rare here are numerous. With the opening of the Channel Tunnel we can be on French soil in a couple of hours or so.

My early memories of the French are of a nation that do not seem to like the British very much, and we used to encounter a fair bit of hostility, but they do seem to respect older people, and it is some years since pedestrians have spat on our car or hurled abuse. These days visits are a totally pleasant experience, and if you can speak a little French (not too much or you will be regarded as pompous) the locals soon warm to you, especially if you praise their food and wine.

The excellent cuisine is in fact our downfall in France. So good is the food in their restaurants that on occasions we have rather over indulged. I comfort myself with the thought that we will do a lot of walking the next day.

Reims is invariably our first overnight stay. It is also far enough south to see non-British species. Accommodation is plentiful, and by our standards cheap, and it is a beautiful city. It is the centre of champagne production. On the next morning, after the hangover has worn off, we set out for the Reims woods. These comprise a large area of assorted woodlands, deciduous and coniferous, partly grown commercially and some subject to regular coppicing. The area can be found by following the signposts from the city centre to Epernay, and are



about three miles to the south of Reims. There are numerous paths and rides through the woods although we have always found more butterflies on the west side of the main road than the east. Depending on the season, one can expect to see Glanville and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Large Tortoiseshell, Purple Emperor and Pearly- and Chestnut Heaths.

The rest of our stay is usually at or near Tournus, north of Macon, where again inexpensive accommodation is plentiful. It is an easy motorway journey from Reims. A word of warning: under French law, wine may only be served at motorway service stations with hot food, so if you prefer a salad and wish to drink and drive, you will be disappointed.

En route to Tournus, leave the motorway at Troyes, and travel east on the N16 trunk road for several miles to the town of Lusigny-sur-Barse. In the town centre, turn left following the signs towards Lac de la Foret d'Orient, and about a mile from Lusigny you will reach Larivour Forest. Along the paths you will again encounter Large Tortoiseshell along with Lesser Purple Emperors and White Admirals. Further into the rides, and Swallowtails, Marbled Fritillaries and again Glanville- and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. Commas are also particularly numerous here.

After the first night in Tournus, which produces some excellent local wines that seem so much more potent than the ones they export to Britain, a gentle drive a little to the north at Nuit St. Georges is the perfect cure. Leave the motorway at the turn-off for the town, and drive towards it. Continue right through the town and beyond it to the west are a number of quarries, woods and heathlands. Here can be found Black Veined Whites, Southern White Admiral, Marbled- and Lesser Fritillaries, the tiny Nickerl's Fritillary, Geranium Argus, Green Underside Blue, and a great many other species.

Our fourth site is south of Tournus, and really requires a whole day to visit. Travel south on the N6 trunk road for several miles from Tournus to the small village of Fleurville. Turn right here and

follow the slightly confusing route through Verizet, Vire and Peronne, then turn right just before reaching the village of Aze on the the Donzy-le-Pertuis road. Before reaching it, a lane from the right from Blanot village joins the road. Park here and follow the track signposted Notre Dame des Roches. This is in fact a giant statue of the Virgin Mary in woods on a hilltop. Its most notable feature is that her nose has broken off. On our latest visit the statue has been completely repainted, but the nose is still missing. On the way up the path from the road, you are certain to encounter Sooty Coppers and many Black Veined Whites. At the top of the track there is an expanse of heathland, to the left of which leads the route to the statue, but to the right across the heath you will find woodlands. The heath contains Chequered and Oberthur's Grizzled Skippers, outside the woods both Wall Brown and Large Wall Brown, the only site I know where both occur together. The Large Wall Brown sometimes occurs here is a form where the principal ground colour is bright orange rather than the usual brown. In the woods, Meadow-, Heath-, Small Pearl-bordered- and Glanville Fritillaries occur, and Swallowtails are numerous.

Our final site is in my view the best in France in terms of numbers of species. Again it requires a full day, although there is an excellent pub in the nearby village for a lunchtime break. It is however a little tricky to locate the site. Where the main road passes through Tournus, there is an open area with traffic lights at crossroads. From the north, one would turn left to the town centre, which is thus signposted. However, to reach the site, turn right here and pass under the railway and the motorway. After a few miles there is a lane to the left signposted Uchizey. Turn along this, and after twists and turns the road rises. On the highest point before it descends to a small village there is a disused quarry to the left, where you can park, and a track on the right leading to a large area of high heathlands. The number of species which can be found is huge: Green Underside- and Adonis Blues; Ordinary- and Scarce Swallowtails; Heath-, False Heath-, Meadow- and Marbled Fritillaries; Black-, Ilex-and

Blue-spot Hairstreaks; Clouded- and Pale Clouded Yellows; Rock Grayling and Nettle Tree Butterfly to name but a few. The site is also good for day-flying moths: Clouded Buff, Feathered Footman and Grass Emerald can usually be found, along with several Burnet species. The area beyond the quarry contains the largest concentration of Marbled Whites I have ever seen.

In a short article like this, we can only mention a few of the very large number of species that a few days will provide. It is not unrealistic to expect to see 50 or more in such a visit.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Whitecross Green Wood, 21/6/98, by John Hollingdale

It was a lovely sunny morning as a party of six set off in search of the elusive Black Hairstreak in this BBONT reserve. One had already been spotted a few yards from the small car park so our expectations were high, although the warden had not seen any when I rang her earlier in the week.

Red Admiral, Meadow Brown, Common Blue and Small Heath were seen before the party spotted the first of several Wood Whites. During the walk to the far end where the blackthorn was growing we also noted Large Skipper, Large White and Speckled Wood. Along the ride, several scallops had been cut in the dense woodland and in one of these, near the reserve's pond, we saw the target species. Although only two were seen on the wing at any one time we felt sure that there were probably between 5-6 at this spot. The butterfly was also seen nearby in the main ride.

Moths noted were Clouded Border, Silver-Y, Common Wave and Common White Wave, Spinach and Blood-vein.

The highlight of the day, however, was to have Clouded Yellow race past us as we returned to the car park. We retired to the village pub at nearby Oakley to discuss butterflies, fishing, moth traps and the stubbornness of Muntjac deer to round

off a very successful day.

Arnside Knott, Cumbria, by Alan Downie

The weather forecast for this trip sounded very unpromising, and so it proved. Leader Alan Downie headed north on the morning of 18/7/98 to arrive at the Hollins Farm camp site at 09.15, at the south -west side of the Knott. Conditions were bad, a gale force wind and lashing rain kept us in the car for the first hour. Soon the weather 'improved' to a force 6 NW, overcast with a temperature of 17.5°C.

A reccé up to the site soon revealed the butterflies, which seemed amazingly prepared to make the best of whatever chances they had to bask and feed. Meadow Browns were the first to show and a total of 40 were counted. The first glimpse of orange turned out to be a Comma, approx. 80 miles north of its range. Reaching a flowery meadow, the target species was evident – 7 High Brown Fritillaries were seen. The poor conditions proved to be an advantage with the fritillary much more docile than usual. Close observation could be done, indeed the High Brown Fritillaries were quite happy to crawl up on the back of a finger stretched out before them. We moved further up an area in which we had photographed the Scotch Argus the previous year. Soon, 3 male Scotch Argus were seen in pristine condition, basking in light rain or nectaring on bramble.

A single Speckled Wood was added to the list as we descended to the campsite. With hopes high, but with a bad forecast, we awaited the Sunday.

Sunday morning dawned dry but overcast. As we headed for the car park, Scotch Argus, Meadow Brown and High Brown Fritillary were seen. By 10 am the rain set in. We waited and waited but no-one turned up for the trip, and the rain continued heavy and unabated until 7 pm. No more butterflies were seen that day.

Monday 20/7/98 – forecast again bad,

too bad to risk the climb to see the Mountain Ringlet above the Honister Pass. We contented ourselves to look at Arnside Knott again. The butterflies again surprised us, showing whenever there was a slight improvement in the rain, basking and feeding even in light rain. A Grayling showed amongst the High Brown Fritillaries and Scotch Argus. Despite the appalling weather the butterflies gave us excellent opportunity to look closely and photograph. Such a pity that no one took the chance to come and see.

Stanmore Common Moth Evening, by John Hollingdale

This was a combined event between Butterfly Conservation, Harrow Nature Conservation Forum and the Harrow branch of the Herts. and Middx. Wildlife Trust. About 15 adults and children came along to see what moths could be attracted to our light and wine ropes.

As with most outdoor events the weather is very important and a clear sky did not bode well for seeing any moths. In fact we attracted less than 30 moths to the light. However, 17 were identified including four new records for the site. The most outstanding were two specimens of the Red-green Carpet (category 4 in Colin Plant's book but reasonably common in Harrow), Barred and Pink-barred Sallow, Lesser Treble-bar and a Spruce Carpet.

Simon Braidman, the site warden, also came along with us with his bat detector and so I discovered the names of the varmints that had been disrupting my recording programme for months. He identified both Noctule and Pipistrelle bats in the woods and Daubenton's over the nearby ponds. We tried both Simon's and my wine ropes but failed to attract a single specimen to any of them. Hopefully the next moth evening will be blessed with warm, cloudy weather (and no bats!!).

Observations on Gardens for Butterflies, 1998 by Malcolm Newland

Although every year is "Gardens for Butterflies" year as far as I (and many others) are concerned, ironically fate intervened to prevent me participating as fully as I would have liked. However, every cloud has a silver lining and I have had greater opportunity to

observe the butterflies in my own garden.

There have been several highlights and the one which will undoubtedly stick in my memory occurred on the 13th of February (Lyndsay's birthday). It was a gloriously warm and sunny day and my early records for Brimstone, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock were all bettered by over a month. A total of ten butterflies were seen and some nectared on Crocus, Snowdrop and Viburnum fragrans. Lyndsay was overjoyed by this completely unexpected "birthday present".

Another early record fell on the 19th of March when a Small White was seen on a Leucojum. On the 24th of the month another Small White alighted on a dwarf Narcissus flower head in deteriorating weather and didn't fly away until the rain stopped on the 27th!

On two different occasions in the Spring I saw Comma and Holly Blue spending long periods on damp trays of Arthur Bowers "New Horizon" multipurpose compost. No doubt they were taking advantage of some essential minerals.

Twice in May female Brimstones oviposited on Purging Buckthorn despite the unwelcome attentions of male Large Whites who clearly didn't know that they were attempting to achieve the impossible.

I had never seen Orange Tips mating, but on the 15th of May I was looking at a female on Lady's Smock when a male approached her and was not rejected. They remained paired for the best part of an hour giving me the opportunity to take some photographs.

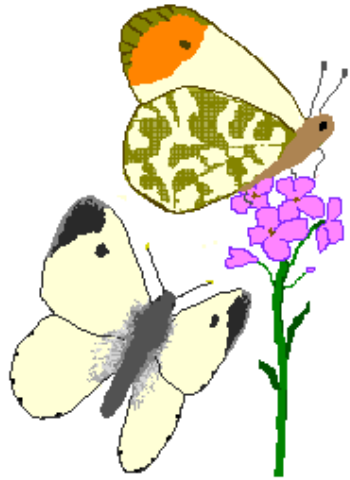
At the end of June I saw a Red Admiral managing to exist without any hind wings whatsoever. Two Hummingbird Hawkmoths arrived, one in June and one in July, the former nectaring on Lavender Dwarf Munstead Blue and the latter on Hardheads.

A Ringlet made a welcome return to the garden on the 10th of July as I hadn't seen this species since 1994. On the 20th of July I saw a white butterfly in the front garden. Going outside to identify it I was amazed to see the unmistakable markings of a

Marbled White. Unfortunately it was very restless, although I was willing it to settle, and it flew off down the Close, never to return. Nevertheless, it was number 26 on my life list for the garden and the direction from which it came together with other local reports leads me to believe that it was a wild wanderer and not a release.

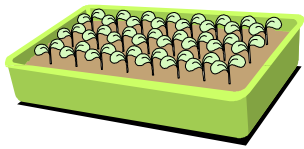
The Peacocks peaked on the 14th of August with 13 individuals recorded. Amongst them was one so worn and tattered that it could only have been one of 1997 vintage or a migrant. This is not the first year that I have seen this and I have always wondered if the odd Peacock rivals the Brimstone in the longevity stakes.

Disappointingly, Common Blue and Painted Lady failed to put in an appearance but I recorded a total of 636 butterflies (I wonder how many I missed?) of 17 species, and they used 85 different types of flower as nectar sources.



Large Whites, Green-veined Whites, Orange Tips and Brimstones all bred in the garden. I was lucky enough to observe both Orange Tip and Brimstone caterpillars changing into pupae. One Orange Tip pupa has since vanished but another is intact, and I watched a female Brimstone emerge on the 6th of August. This was another memorable first. A male Brimstone with a damaged wing was caught by a wasp and I found a further two empty Brimstone pupae when I was removing some spent plants.

It was a pity that the Gardens for Butterflies project didn't get the weather it deserved and unless we get a decent "Indian Summer" I will be struggling for viable seeds of some plants for next year. Ah well, you can't win them all.



Carlsberg Rules OK, by John Noakes (Report from Millhopper's Butterfly Reserve)

Part of the work of managing any reserve is the monitoring of activity throughout the year. October is a bad month for butterflies but not apparently for drinking. My personal view is that any month seems a good month for drinking and October proved no exception.

As if I had nothing better to occupy my Sunday I decided to wander along the stream from the site entrance, by the newly erected gate, to the footpath style. I had equipped myself with wading boots and a large black plastic sack.

I was instantly rewarded with a rich and varied haul of beer cans. Empty of course, but emptied by whom? In all along this stretch about 120 cans were retrieved! I might add that this stretch had already been cleared within the last month, so this represented intensive recent drinking.

Within this short list, readers might like to compare their own habits against this spectrum of streamside drinking activity.

Carlsberg lager	-	out in front with	29 cans
Tenants Super	-	a fair way back at	15
Stella Artois	-	almost level at	14
Heineken lager			9
Fosters beer			9
Pilsner lager			6
Starberg bière blonde French lager			6
Guinness			6

XXXX, the Australian classic, really nowhere at 3

The rest were in 1's and 2's.

Price-wise this would indicate, in the main, low end of the market drinkers and clearly does not represent the high standards of village

imbibing.

Further speculation on those involved was highlighted by the low incidence of condoms – only 2. This could be explained by the fact that condoms are more aquatically mobile than beer cans and now may be well on their way downstream to Buckinghamshire. However, it maybe that the drinking clientele involved had not reached a sufficient lifestyle maturity or indeed alcohol had stultified their performance. Whatever the reason, I was relieved only to be dealing with 2! If Viagra becomes more affordable the balance may alter but with these likely low end of the market drinkers it is unlikely to be affordable.

Seriously, what can or should be done about this? I am not so concerned about the right to have or where to have a drink, however I wish people would take their rubbish home with them.

Should we have a litter bin outside the site, or would this too end up in the stream?

Incidentally, within the same week a car was driven at the new gate breaking it open. The car was then doused in petrol and set on fire! By the time the police and fire brigade arrived it was unrecognisable as a car. Although the major remains were taken away, the rest of the resulting mess had again to be cleared up.

It all seems to be happening at Millhopper's. What started as a potentially peaceful butterfly reserve now seems to be diminished by Carlsberg cans and car cremation!

Millhopper's was acquired as a butterfly reserve and a village amenity. Many people walk by and through the reserve. Perhaps extra vigilance, combined with their very presence, might act as a deterrent to this antisocial behaviour.

I would value any thoughts on how we can attempt to deal with this issue.

Editor's Notes, by Ian Small

The preceding article by John Noakes makes a number of very important points. I make no apology for 'decorating' it with images of empty been cans and bonfires - I hope this drew your attention and made you read what was written. John indicates that he would welcome your thoughts on these issues, and I echo that. I would be happy to print any (anonymous if you prefer) in the next issue of the newsletter, if you care to send them to me.

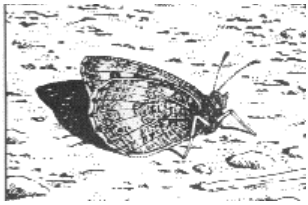
The article is also important because I am sure that many of you would not have envisaged the sort of tasks described by John as within the 'normal' remit of the voluntary warden of a butterfly reserve. I am sure that you would want me to convey on your behalf our gratitude to John for his selfless activities on our behalf, undertaken at a time when the rest of us were probably relaxing comfortably at home with the Sunday papers ! Remember, this is <u>your</u> reserve, and we should all contribute to its safeguarding. If you can't get along to any of the work parties (see advert on page 27), then at least let John and the other volunteers know that you care and support what they are doing, by giving feedback when issues are raised.

Now that we are in the season of long cold nights, I know that many of you will take the opportunity to sort out all those butterfly photographs you took this year. If you are like me, then that always brings back memories of happy, sunny days (there were some this year !). Why not write down a few of those happy memories and send them in for the next newsletter ??

Butterflies and Moths in Jersey, by Andrew Wood

During the first week of August we spent a week in Jersey, the largest of the Channel Islands. While we were there the weather became warmer and sunnier as the week progressed enabling us to get a good view of the high summer butterflies and day flying moths on the island.

One of the most reassuring sights was that the Wall was a very common butterfly appearing in the less manicured town parks as well as every few yards patrolling footpaths over much of the island. Although they frequently settled in the sun, they were very wary and despite many attempts I was unable to photograph one. Less surprisingly other browns, particularly the Speckled Wood and the Gatekeeper were also very common, especially the latter which was probably the commonest butterfly that week. Around the coast the Grayling is very easy to find, particularly in areas of dune and coastal heath in the west and north-west of the island.



There isn't a wide variety of Blues, Coppers and Hairstreaks on Jersey, but of these Small Coppers were very common and Holly and Common Blues were well represented. The most interesting of this group on Jersey, to my mind, is the Green Hairstreak. When we visited in 1986 we were intrigued to find them flying on the coastal heath near Les Landes racecourse in mid July. I thought that the chances of seeing them in early August were very low, but as we walked my son spotted a green "blue", and this proved to be a slightly battered Green Hairstreak. A little later we found a much better and easily photographed specimen. The Société Jersaise entomology section are intrigued by this and are of the opinion that the insect is continuously brooded over the summer in Jersey. Textbooks refer only to occasional late broods in southern Europe.

Migrants might well be expected in this area and Red Admirals were, indeed, frequent however we found only one Painted Lady but several Clouded Yellows as single specimens in very different habitats such as beach, a hilltop and a garden centre. Hummingbird

Hawk moths also appeared in single numbers, again in a variety of habitats.

One place we always visit is a disused dump at Les Quennevais in the south west of the island on the edge of a large dune system and next to a disused railway walk and large sports centre. It is a most unprepossessing site but in 1986 housed a Sand Martin colony. In 1992 we found a Swallowtail butterfly and on our third visit we wondered what we would find. It looked like nothing special, until we spotted a small moth flying rapidly across the site. Chasing it to a patch of ox eye daisies we found a smallish blue/grey, white and brown noctuid we had never seen before. We were able to photograph it and, when we got the pictures back, compare it with various guides. The original Skinner does not figure it but we eventually found it was a Pale Shoulder, found a few times in the 19th century in Kent and since then a handful of times in southern England. Again we wrote to Société Jersaise who confirmed the identification and the fact that one had been seen at virtually the same location in 1985 and two had been seen at the other end of the island the next day. Breeding is now suspected for Jersey.

There are two other distinctive large day-flying moths. The Oak Eggar is widely found, though difficult to see properly as they dash and dive wildly seeking a scent of the hidden female's pheromones. The other is the Jersey Tiger which was surprisingly scarce though the opposite of the Oak Eggar in that they calmly nectar on plants such as ragwort, partly exposing their red and black hindwings below the zebra patterned black and white upperwings.

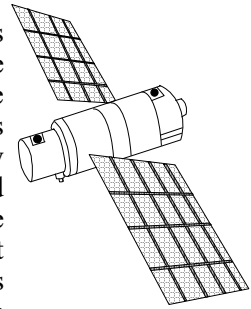
Although the fauna of the island is limited, Jersey is a good place to get round by foot or on the comprehensive bus services which can get you to all parts of the island. There are enough differences from our familiar mainland environment to make things not quite British.

Butterfly Distributions and Habitats in Hertfordshire -

A Landscape Scale Analysis Using Satellite Imagery. by Brian Miller and Stuart Warrington,

Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Hertfordshire.

Introduction



A major influence on butterfly distributions and their changes are land use patterns. The aim of this study was to try to relate the distribution patterns of some butterfly species in Hertfordshire, as revealed by Butterfly Conservation's atlas work, to the types of land use present in the county. Land use can be determined to some extent from maps, but modern remote sensing technologies, such as satellite images, can allow land use to be investigated over wide areas to remarkable accuracy. This study used the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology Land Cover Map, which is a digital map derived from 1990 satellite images. From the satellite image it is possible to identify 22 land cover classes, of which 16 occur to some frequency in Hertfordshire, down to areas of 25 x 25 metres. From the digitised Map land cover in any area of the county can be given to 0.06 hectare accuracy (about one-sixth of an acre).

The Herts and Middlesex Branch of Butterfly Conservation kindly allowed us access to 1997 and 1996 records for 50 square kilometres in mid-Herts. The squares were selected at random from a 20 x 30 km region, but records for any squares with fewer than three visits were removed and replaced by another square. Butterfly species that are very widespread, like Small Tortoiseshell, or rare, like Chalkhill Blue, were excluded from the study. Analysis was carried out on the 15 species that had sufficient records and occurred in at least 20% of the squares.

Results and Discussion

Out of the total of 240 individual correlations calculated between

the area of each land cover type and the abundance of each butterfly species, there were 75 that were statistically important. The most significant correlations are summarised in Table 1. In this Table a + indicates that as that landcover increases so does the butterfly abundance, and the more +++ then the stronger the relationship. A - indicates that as that landcover increases the butterfly abundance decreases.

Table 1. Summary of significant correlations between the area of land cover type and the abundance of butterfly species.

It was noticeable that the land cover type grass/heath had the greatest number of correlations with butterfly abundance. Perhaps this should not be unexpected given the number of butterfly species which can exploit these habitats. It is also a limitation of the

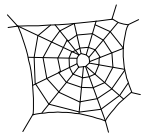
Land cover	Butterfly species
Grass/heath	Brown argus (+++), Common blue (+++), Small copper (+++), Small heath (+++), White-letter hairstreak (++), Meadow brown (++), Gatekeeper (++), Small skipper (++)
Mown/grazed grassland	Holly blue (++)
Meadow, verge, semi-natural grassland	Green-veined white (++), Gatekeeper (++), Meadow brown (++), Speckled wood (++)
Deciduous woodland	White admiral (+++)
Scrub/Orchard	Brown argus (+++), Green-veined white (++), Large skipper (++), Meadow brown (++), Small copper (++), Small heath (++), Small skipper (++).
Tilled land	White-letter hairstreak (---), Gatekeeper (--), White admiral (--)
Suburban	Small skipper (--), Meadow brown (-) Large skipper (-),
Inland bare ground	Brown argus (+++), Common blue (++), Grizzled skipper (++).

satellite image that it cannot distinguish between these two habitat, so grass/heath have to be treated together. In other aspects the

satellite image is better, in that it distinguishes between deciduous and coniferous woodland, dense scrub and light scrub/orchards. The latter category, light scrub/orchards, was also important for a number of species (see Table 1). There were no relationships found for the land types; dense scrub/heath, inland water, marsh grass, ruderal, urban or conifer woodlands. This does not mean that these land types are not used by butterflies at times, but that other land uses are more important. Of particular interest was the clear relationships identified between the bare ground category and brown argus, common blue and grizzled skipper abundance.

There are limitations to this approach to analysing butterfly distributions but it does provide some clear patterns. Digitising the satellite images to allow such analyses is a slow process, but we now have 600 square kilometres processed, and so this preliminary study could be extended further. More species could be examined, over a wider area, and relationships between combinations of land cover types could be explored. This study is an example of how valuable the combination of information from different sources can be, whether it is from above the atmosphere or from field enthusiasts searching out and counting butterflies in each patch of Hertfordshire.

New Branch Web Site



For those computer-literate web-surfers out there, Rob Souter has been building a web site for the Branch. If you would like to check it out, the URL is

http://phoenix.herts.ac.uk/pub/R.Souter/H&M-Branch.html

The Names of Moths. by Rob Souter (Branch Moth Recorder)

If you have ever wondered about the origin of the varied and sometimes unusual English names given to moths then this piece may interest you. It is based on an article from the October edition of British Wildlife magazine entitled "The English Names of Moths" by Peter Marren.

Rob Still

The earliest names were based on folk-names and often referred to the caterpillars, whilst adults were simply known as 'moths'. The oldest English name for a moth is the 'walbode', or woolly bear, referring to the furry caterpillar of the Garden Tiger. Other names relating to caterpillars include the Goat Moth, named as such since the caterpillar smells like a billy-goat. The Drinker moth from its caterpillar's apparent liking for dew. The Oak Eggar from the oval, egg-shaped cocoons of this species. The Lappet moth from the flaps or lappets found on every joint of the caterpillar. And the Lobster moth whose caterpillar resembles a crustaceous fish.

The naming of adults began in the early Georgian period (rather than the Victorian period as many might have assumed) when the artist James Petiver began putting names to his engravings of moths from 1695. Eleazar Albin, who raised many moths from caterpillars, added more in his work 'A Natural History of English Insects', published in 1721. And by 1748 over 100 names were included with illustrations of moths by Benjamin Wilkes. The great increase in naming between these dates was likely influenced by the members of the Society of Aurelians. The Aurelians of the 18th century included artists and poets, and the names they came up with were the result of their admiration for moths, whilst basing the names on objects of the period. Quakers and rustics in their subfusc attire; satins and silks, worn by men as well as women; the Gothic arches of church naves; or the colours worn by contemporary foresters.

This verbal inventiveness reached its height with the publication of 'The Aurelian's Pocket Companion', by Moses Harris, in 1775, which listed 362 moths, most with their present-day English names. The Prominents were so called, according to Harris, because of a small piece projecting from the flip edge of the inferior wing (actually the forward wing) which is most obvious when the moth is at rest, and which helps break up its outline to assist crypsis (camouflage). Noctuids were named after distinctive wing patterns. 'Brindled' refers to flakes of a contrasting colour on a buff or tawny background; 'brocade' is a fabric with raised, often metallic, patterns. Darts have a distinctive sharp black streak, as have shoulder-knots. Moths with 'shears' in their name wear a pair of curved lines like simple 18th century gardening shears. 'Pinions' have notched markings like the cogs of mill-gears. The grainy wings of 'wainscots' reminded people of wooden panelling. The strips of different colours down the backs of Lackey moth caterpillars resemble Livery Lace, then worn by servants. Footman were also named after servants because of the stiff and elongated appearance achieved by wrapping their narrow wings close about their bodies. Geometers were compared to contemporary carpet patterns. Those found early and late in the season were named after months and seasons. The Spring Usher is an optimistic name for a moth that flies in February. The Feathered Thorn was the original November moth and later became the October moth to join the November, December and March moths. The resemblance of the pug moths to a small dog is not immediately obvious but was explained by Haworth in the early 19th century. The splayed hindwing is shorter than the forewing, just as the lower lip of a pug dog is shorter than its upper lip.

Several other species are named after their foodplant including the Sword-Grass (sword-grass is an old name for sedge), Mullein and many of the hawk-moths; poplar, lime, privet. The hawk-moths were named because of their swift flight, although the hovering ability of some species may have reminded people of a Kestrel.

Other fanciful names include Mother Shipton, a legendary witch whose profile is visible on the moth's wings. Clifden Nonpareil, which is now thought of as a French moth, was actually named after Cliveden in Buckinghamshire, where it was first found; whilst

‘nonpareil’ means a uniquely splendid object. Finally, the Mocha has nothing to do with coffee but is named after mocha stone, a variety of agate with moss-like crystals, which is echoed in the wing markings of this yellowish geometer.

By receiving English names before the adoption of the Linnaean system of naming species (which was based on Latin), the names for moths we are familiar with were already established. This was because the Aurelian names were used by A D Haworth for his landmark “Lepidoptera Britannica” (1803-1828), a practise followed by other scientific authors and which effectively stabilised them. Otherwise they might have received names translated from their Latin name, as were the Conformist and The Confused. Subsequent species were named following the earlier tradition and using the same vocabulary. Many new names have been constructed by just adding the original locality or discover’s name to an old name such as wainscot or rivulet. The process continues to this day with vagrant moths from across the seas finding such names as the Tunbridge Wells Gem or Dewick’s Plusia.

Of course, the naming of British butterflies followed a similar development during this period, but that is another story.

Butterfly Fortunes 1998, Compared with the Last 3 Years, by Nick Bowles.

The following was published by Nick on the LepList (an Internet newsgroup, in early September). Nick runs *Butterfly Line (0891 8840505)*

These are my feelings about the year (so far) and its effect on butterflies in the UK.. They are subjective feelings and the categories are a bit 'loose'. Well, very loose I suppose. There is no entry for species I am not sure about - I would welcome data on them.

Very Good:

Holly Blue (1st brood), Speckled Wood, Green-veined White

Good:

Chalkhill Blue, Essex Skipper, Meadow Brown

As Usual:

Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, Common Blue (1st brood), Green Hairstreak (SE England), Gatekeeper, Grayling, Marbled White, Ringlet, Wall, Brimstone, Small White, Large White, Orange Tip, Peacock, Purple Emperor, Brown Hairstreak, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (NW England and Scotland), Painted Lady

Poor:

Small Skipper, Small Copper, Green Hairstreak (W & N England), Holly Blue (2nd brood), Brown Argus (1st brood), Adonis Blue, Purple Hairstreak, Small Heath, Comma, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (S England), Silver-washed Fritillary, White and Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshell, Duke of Burgundy, Wood White and Clouded Yellow.

Dreadful:

Large Skipper, Common Blue (2nd brood), White-letter Hairstreak, Black Hairstreak.

Caterpillars Beware, the Plants are Fighting Back

The following is a Reuters Article, taken from the Internet, which

provides further insight into the article I wrote for the March 98 edition of this newsletter - Editor.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Caterpillars munching on corn may inadvertently contribute to their own demise by helping the plants summon aid, researchers said Monday.

Plants are known to send out chemical signals when they are under attack by insects and animals. Such signals may help other plants put up chemical defences, or may attract predators that eat the insects.

For example, acacia trees are known to send out a chemical signal when animals eat their leaves that stimulates neighbouring acacias to produce a foul-tasting chemical. And corn, when being chewed on by beet armyworm caterpillars, is known to send out chemicals that attract parasitic wasps that attack the caterpillars.

But how does the corn make such a specific plea for a predator that likes beet armyworm caterpillars? James Tumlinson and colleagues at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Centre for Veterinary Entomology in Gainesville, Florida, found that the caterpillars set off a chemical change that helps the corn identify them.

Writing in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Tumlinson's team said they discovered the caterpillars get a chemical known as linolenic acid from the corn. Their bodies metabolise this into another chemical that gets back onto the plant as the caterpillar chews and, essentially, drools.

This may be the “signature”" molecule that allows the plants to tell which bug is eating them. The corn can then send out the signal for the right predator -- in this case, a wasp that attacks the caterpillar, the researchers wrote.

^REUTERS@

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Indoor Meetings . See advert on page 3

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.

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

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

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

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