

Butterfly
Conservation

HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE *50*

SEPTEMBER 2007

Pastures New

by **David Chandler**

On Thursday May 3rd I joined Butterfly Conservation's Anglia Regional Development Officer Sharon Hearle, with about five local BC members & ten Essex Wildlife Trust members on a field trip at the Langdon Hills Country Park, near Laindon in Essex for a day in search of Grizzled Skipper (GS) habitat. After years and years looking at the same Chilterns butterfly sites I am looking at pastures new and I am finding it a very interesting personal exercise inspecting sites in adjacent counties in order to compare and contrast the habitat with that of the more familiar sites in my Home counties.

We all met up at the Countryside Park Visitors Centre at Dunton Hills.

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After a welcome briefing of our task by Sharon we split into three groups, each visiting a different part of the reserve. Our objective was to see some Grizzled Skipper habitats that currently maintain a population of GS and inspect some habitats that once supported the species.

To locate potential sites we looked out for the primary foodplants of the GS, Wild Strawberry, Creeping Cinquefoil, Bramble (young shoots) and Tormentil.

My group headed north towards an established Grizzled Skipper site east of a fishing lake in Lower Dunton Road. The weather was cloudy & cold and only the odd Red Admiral & Peacock sheltering on bare patches on the ground were knocked up by our footfall. We looked at the GS site and were surprised that it lacked nectar sources but this, it appears, doesn't seem to put off the local GSs. The site looked very similar to a patch of chalk downland on the Whipsnade Hills in Beds. that supports GSs, with rough pasture, scattered yellow flowers about 12cm high and bare patches of ground.

We continued up through the wood towards the Southend to London railway line and inspected a tract of habitat that ran parallel with the railway. Old records said that GSs



Grizzled Skipper
Photo © Ian Small

one were found here and the habitat was like “the curates egg” good in places. It would be nice if someone could get a permit from Railtrack to inspect the newly cleared railway cutting here, but I suspect this might be a difficult thing to obtain. The party moved on towards Laindon Station crossing the railway line three times. On route we inspected a roadside verge which at first seem

uninteresting but on second look had been seeded by a wild flower mix. This provided a moment of excitement as a brown GS sized object darted by. Sadly it was gone in a flash & disappeared. It may have been a Burnet Companion moth, which occurs locally, but I cannot be completely sure. I would like to go back to this grass verge on a sunny day as I'm sure it will support butterflies.

It was 1pm and the party headed back to Dunton Hills. I left them there and went off to the far east of the Langdon Hills where in three

meadows, Willow Park, Knights Field & Great Lodge [all part of the Langdon EWT Reserve], I was told GSs survive. These GS sites were larger scrubby fields, similar to the Duke of Burgundy release site at Roughdown Common in Hemel Hempstead, so looked potentially very good. I was told that Green Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Heath and Grizzled Skipper had been seen in Laindon in the warmer days before my visit but I was unfortunate not to see any of them.

I enjoyed my day over the border in Essex and will return to look at their Heath Fritillaries at Hockley Woods in June. Despite only seeing two butterflies during my day out, it was an education to just look at the familiar through different eyes for a day.

Annual General Meeting – Saturday 19th January 2008

This is the first announcement of an important date for your diary. The Branch Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 19th January 2008, at ~~Mill End Baptist Church Hall, Field Way, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire~~. Our guest speaker will be Ed Turner, whose talk will be entitled:

"Studying and Managing for the Competing Habitat Requirements of Duke of Burgundy, Small Blue and Chalkhill Blue"

"Chalk grasslands support a wealth of butterflies and other invertebrates. However, different species require different conditions, making management of chalk grassland reserves a delicate balance. The Wildlife trust has been running a project to investigate the requirements of three very different chalk grassland butterflies: the Duke of Burgundy, the Small Blue and the Chalkhill Blue. By understanding what the three species require, management can be tailored to keep all three species on small reserves as well as a wealth of other invertebrates with similar requirements."

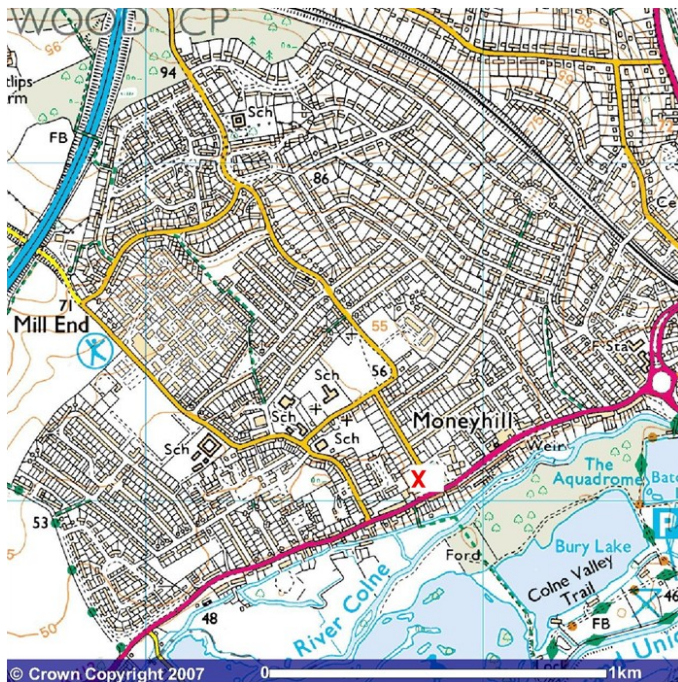
Mill End Baptist Hall, in Field Way is just off the A412 (Uxbridge Road) between Rickmansworth and Maple Cross. From the M25, exit at Junction 17 (Maple Cross) and at the roundabout take the first exit to Rickmansworth. Field Way is about a mile along the road on the left. (signposted St John Ambulance HQ) and the Church Hall is just a short distance along the road on the left. There is a small car park and on street parking is available. Public Transport: Rickmansworth Station (Metropolitan line) is about 1 mile away. From the station, take the

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Uxbridge Road (A412) following directions to Slough. Field Way will be on the right.

Full details of the programme will be in the next newsletter. The Spring Meeting has been booked for Saturday 15th March and will be held at St. Thomas's Church Hall, Oakwood, Enfield. More details for this event will also be available in the next newsletter.

We look forward to seeing you, and non-members are always welcome.



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Hertfordshire Moth Atlas to be Published in 2008 from Linda Smith, Herts Natural History Society

‘The Moths of Hertfordshire’ compiled by Colin Plant - national moth expert and our county recorder for moths -.will be published in Spring 2008 by Hertfordshire Natural History Society.

The book will cover all 1523 species of both macro- and micro-moths recorded in Hertfordshire and is based on the ten year county wide survey by expert volunteers from the Herts Moth Group. We are not aware of any other regional biodiversity atlas that includes both macro - and micro-moths treated at the same level of detail.

At over 500 pages, the book will be illustrated with colour photographs by Andrew Wood and other members of Herts Moth Group. Introductory sections will describe how moths are affected by the climate, geology and habitats in Hertfordshire and moth recording and monitoring in the county. Accounts for well known species will include: distribution maps by tetrad, analysis of status and conservation status, food plants, flight periods and flight chart and number of records. Information on other species will include status, number of records, distribution map and caterpillar food plant. Distribution maps in full colour - another “first” in invertebrate atlas publication – will allow you to distinguish modern from historical records and see changes over time.

Would you like to sponsor a page on your favourite Moth?

With so many species to include, the book will be large and expensive to produce; the cost of production, publicity and marketing of the book is estimated at over £30,000. HNHS does not have the resources to fund the project alone and is seeking up to £15000 in grants and sponsorship to underpin the production costs. This will also enable the book to be priced at a truly affordable level to reach a wide audience. HNHS has already raised almost £8000, including a generous donation of £1000 from Herts Butterfly Conservation – however more is needed.

You are invited to sponsor a specific species or group of moths appearing in the book. We know other societies have done this successfully. Each sponsor would be acknowledged and, where appropriate, a dedication included. Send pledges of at least £100 with the name of the moth you wish to sponsor to Linda Smith, Secretary to

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HNHS at herts.naturalhistorysociety@ntlworld.com or 24 Mandeville Rise Welwyn Garden City AL8 7JU or phone her on (01707) 330405.

Pre-Publication Offer: Butterfly Conservation Members will get the chance to buy the book at a special pre-publication discount – expected to be only £26 – the details will be announced in November.

HNHS Autumn Conference – Hertfordshire’s Biodiversity - Saturday 10 November, 2.00-5.30 at Rothamsted Research, Harpenden

Come to hear Andrew Wood talk about the Moths of Hertfordshire project and the book. Also on the programme: Alan Reynolds on his forthcoming book, Dragonflies and Damselflies of Hertfordshire, Trevor James on the progress with the Flora of Hertfordshire and Chris Dee launching the four year survey of breeding and wintering birds in Hertfordshire. The meeting is open to all (both members and non-members) cost, £4, payable at the door; further details from Linda Smith or HNHS website, www.hertsbirdclub.org.uk .

Membership and Millhoppers, by Margaret Noakes

I shall be going into more detail in the report that will be available for our AGM, but I just thought that a special welcome to our new members who have joined us over the last few months would be appropriate.

Earlier, in the Spring all our members will have received a leaflet about our Reserve, near Long Marston, and information about the exhibition that our Branch put on at The Natural History Museum in Tring over the Easter holidays.

That all seems a long time ago and what Summer we have had has passed us by. Sadly we have no longer a grazier on our reserve (our local farmer could no longer sustain caring for animals away from his farm) and, as a result, the reserve has suffered. A particular irony, having just completed an information board and produced a long awaited leaflet about that rather special place.

So for all members and particularly new members, what you will find there if you visit is not representative of all the work that has taken place over the last 10 years. We shall be trying, over the Autumn and Winter, to cut and rake, so if any new members or well established members would care to join us we would be glad to see you.

Meanwhile, if you haven't received a leaflet and would like one, please contact me. Millhoppers is a very special place and we want to retain that special quality that it undoubtedly has.

My Two and a Half Minutes of Fame, by Liz Goodyear

It all started with a phone call from Lester Cowling, Publicity Officer for Butterfly Conservation on the Tuesday evening. "Hello Liz", he said, "it's Lester here, can I ask you a question, do you have a moth trap?" I said "Yes." He then asked "Liz, do you have a garden?" Again I said "Yes," and started to wonder where this was leading as I replied yes to several more questions and then Lester said "would that be okay then?" As I said yes again I began to wonder what I had just let myself in for as the conversation had become a bit of a blur! I put the phone down and told the family that I might be on the Today programme on Radio 4 on Thursday morning or at least the garden and my moth trap might be!

And why was I rung up? The Publicity Team at Head Office were launching the National Moths Count Weekend, which was a way to encourage the general public into recording moths for the National Moth Recording Scheme. Several easily identifiable moths had been selected and the idea was that members of the public were being encouraged to leave their windows and doors open with a light left on so they could see what moths came in on a 'typical hot summers evening'. Butterfly Conservation was very keen to get the maximum publicity available and to get as many participants as possible.

Lester was hoping that Sarah Mukherjee, the BBC Environmental correspondent would cover the story, which would involve an early morning interview, so it was suggested that Butterfly Conservation find a location for the live radio transmission close to her home rather than close to Lulworth! My garden just happened to be an easy driving distance away, however it was a very long drive for Richard Fox, the project leader who was to be interviewed.

During Wednesday, I received several more phone calls from Lester and Richard and it was confirmed that the Sarah would arrive before 7 am for a slot on the Today programme at 7.20. At first it was also hoped that the TV cameras would be there but this wasn't definite (it was later confirmed that there were no spare satellite vans available). Several of the National Moth Recording Scheme project staff had been lined up for more interviews during the day including an 'on the

settee.' Breakfast Time TV interview. They were very keen to show that anyone could have an interest in moths, it wasn't a specialist hobby.

At 6.30, Richard arrived followed soon after by Sarah. I was surprised that she came on her own? Where was her recording crew? It soon became clear, she was on her own and that she would be doing all the work herself. She produced a satellite panel with its own battery, some head phones and a microphone. The first problem to be encountered was that there was no satellite signal in our back garden so the panel had to be put on Richard's car in front of the house, but the next problem was that the microphone leads wouldn't reach my trap in the back garden. So it was necessary to bring the trap down to the side of the house and my husband was enlisted to be the 'on site' producer with the headphones just down the side of the house where the leads would reach and Sarah could hear his instructions from the Today producer.

Richard had brought up some sample moths just in case I hadn't trapped any that night. The moths were left in pots on the lawn some distance away and before we knew it a hungry blackbird was trying to get to them.

Until this point, I thought I was just an accessory and Richard was going to be interviewed but Sarah in a quick rehearsal was asking me questions as well! Then my husband, head phones on, called out that the interview was imminent, that Jim Naughty was going to do the introduction and started the countdown. We were on Radio 4, and listeners across the country heard that we were live from Liz and Michael Goodyear's garden in Ware, Hertfordshire! The star of the show turned out to be a Buff Tip, a stunning moth that resembles a broken twig. Sarah was fascinated and the interview revolved around the Buff Tip, the Garden Moths Count discussed by Richard and my attempt to convince listeners that mothing was an easy pastime and anyone could participate!

Somehow, I managed to keep going with no ums, errs or pauses, but then suddenly it was all over and everyone was now listening to the Sports bulletin. The satellite panel was put away, the coffee drunk and Sarah had gone home. Richard and I stopped to talk for a short while before he drove back to Devon. Lester rang to say well done and I listened to the interview on line to hear what I really did say!

People still come up to me and say they heard me on Radio 4, but more amusing is that many of my husband's colleagues also heard the interview and that Sarah referred to the trap belonging to both myself and my husband. Some of his colleagues do have an interest in moths, something my husband doesn't share and to his horror (and my amusement) he's found people telling him about moths and the various butterfly species that I am interested in!



Buff Tip
Photo © Ian Kimber

It really was a morning to remember– the only disappointment was that the hot summer's evening that should have been common place at the end of June, never materialised. It was a wet, and thoroughly miserable weekend and despite all the fantastic publicity, it was not a weekend for leaving windows open and recording moths. However, over 400 reports were received and there's always next year – the dates have already been set and will be covering a longer time span of the 21st June to the 6th July 2008 with the hope the weather will be better! Full details of the results are available at <http://www.mothcount.brc.ac.uk/results.aspx>

Mobile Phones Help Conserve Butterflies...and Moths from Poppie Mackie, BC Head Office

In the UK, the average consumer replaces his/her mobile phone every 18 months. It is estimated that 15 million mobile phones are replaced each year in the UK, so there is huge potential for charities to raise valuable income from schemes that encourage the recycling of mobile phones!

Platinum, gold, silver and copper are all found in mobile phones. These precious metals, as well as various plastics, can all be recycled, reducing landfill and helping to prevent environmental damage.

We have teamed up with the recycling company, Greener Solutions so that Butterfly Conservation will receive £2.50 for every old mobile

phone that our members and supporters recycle – irrespective of the age or condition of the phone.

Greener Solutions have printed a supply of reply envelopes for us (at no cost to Butterfly Conservation). An envelope is enclosed with this newsletter. If you have an old mobile phone you no longer want, please use this envelope to recycle it, or pass the envelope onto a friend or relative. The income we generate from this scheme will help to fund our conservation work throughout the UK.

This scheme gives us an enormous opportunity to raise extra income (and to do more to encourage recycling). I would particularly like to hear from you if you think you could persuade any local companies or other public outlets – large or small - to support our scheme among their staff or customers. I can provide any quantity of reply envelopes on request!

If you think you can help me to extend this scheme, would like more reply envelopes or have any questions, please call me on 01929 406018 (direct line) or email me at pmackie@butterfly-conservation.org

Please support this worthwhile scheme if you can. Many thanks

What Is It? by Ann Piper

At the end of July our BC sales and plant stall was at the Chiltern Festival in Aldbury. I always enjoy helping out at these events because you meet so many interesting people and get to chat about all sorts of stuff, not just butterflies and moths! This time was no exception.

(I highly recommend anyone to offer to give a hand even if they've never done so before!)

Towards the end of the day a lady come up to us cupping her hands round a rather fat, brownish caterpillar and asked us if we knew what it was. She had rescued it from being trodden on. We looked in various books. We all tried to look knowledgeable but couldn't help her there. I offered to take it from her and look after it! She agreed. So we put it in a pot and I brought it home.

Then began the detective work. I put grass, rose leaves, birch and dandelion into a larger container as food plants to see if any would appeal. No luck. It didn't seem interested in eating. It just squirmed around a bit and looked pretty lethargic.

I wondered if it was affected by parasites. This is fairly common and has happened on other occasions when I've been rearing larvae.

Next I tried a proper identification. I searched through various books including Jim Porter's excellent "Caterpillars of the British Isles" but brown slightly striped larvae are very difficult to ID. The closest I could find was the Dark Mottled Willow – food plant various grasses OK - but a scarce immigrant species was not very likely so I was no further ahead.

Then after about a week I realised it had started to pupate in the leaf litter. Maybe I would have to let nature take its course and see what emerged!

I put it round by the shed outside and – to be honest – thought that was likely to be it until next spring at the earliest. Imagine my surprise a few weeks later to see a moth nestled amongst the leaves and sawdust in the container.

Now I stood a much better chance of finding out what it was.

Dark brown but with fine white lines like leaded windows. It must be a Gothic moth – but which one? There's the Gothic, the Feathered

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Gothic and the Bordered Gothic. A bit more detective work – this time in Waring and Townsend's Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland. There the flight season clinched it. The Feathered Gothic flies late August – September the other two are earlier in the year.

As luck would have it I was attending a moth trapping event at the Withey Beds in Rickmansworth the following evening so I took the moth along.

Jez Perkins was organising the evening and confirmed the identification. So there we have it.

If the lady who handed me the caterpillar at Aldbury is reading this then thank you for providing me with such an interesting investigation. You had a Feathered Gothic caterpillar and I'm sure the moth would want to say thankyou too for rescuing it!!



Feathered Gothic



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Trip to Mudchute, in the Isle of Dogs (A Tower Hamlets Reserve) on 16th May, by David Chandler

I went to Mudchute LNR today [May 16th] during my lunch-hour to take my first BC field trip of the year. Unfortunately the press release we sent out was not included or used in the London city papers this morning and so no city-facing workers joined me on my walk. However, after a dreadful start to the week weather-wise, the sun came out at just the right time and the butterflies began to appear. I was fortunate and saw a Holly Blue. I also then found six Speckled Woods, four Green-Veined Whites & twenty Small Whites. In summary the total number species sightings I have made at the Mudchute site during this butterfly season remains at seven.

Return Trip to Mudchute, on 11th July, by David Chandler

I went to Mudchute LNR today [July 11th] during my lunch-hour to take my second BC field trip of the year at the site.

As was back in May, the local press once again did not include the event in their editorials this morning, but never-the-less, one Surrey & SW London member Alan Shelley joined me on my walk. The weather was dull but warm, the sun came fleetingly and the butterflies began to appear. We walked around the perimeter of the site and saw two Essex Skippers, we also found twelve Speckled Woods, thirty Meadow Browns, eight Gatekeepers, six Green-Veined Whites, seven Small Whites, a Peacock and a Red Admiral .

Alan Shelley & I thought seeing a total of eight species on the day, considering the adverse conditions, was very good.

In summary the total number species sightings I have made at the Mudchute site during this butterfly season rises to eleven:-

Green-veined White, Small White, Holly Blue, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Essex Skipper, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Red Admiral.

Field Trip to Ruislip Woods, 24th June, by Dave Chandler

I went to Ruislip Lido Wood Sunday [June 24th] to take my second

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H&M Branch BC field trip of the year. After a wet journey to Ruislip, just before 2 pm the rain stopped.

Unfortunately, because the weather forecast was for heavy rain, only two members joined me on my walk. It was still very gloomy, muddy and wet underfoot but we decided to go for a walk in the wood anyway. However, our fortitude was rewarded, for, shortly after entering the wood, the sun came out from behind the clouds from time to time, the wood warmed up and the butterflies began to appear. We were very fortunate and Ann Piper saw a female Purple Hairstreak at ground level, which was warming herself up and periodically opened and closed her wings giving a great photo opportunity for Steve Pash. A little further along the main east-west ride we found White Admirals, one posing with Purple Hairstreaks at the top of an oak tree. We also then found Large Skippers, Small Skippers, Meadow Browns, Ringlets and a Red Admiral. Ann Piper kept a record of the species we saw and from her records on what was a poor viewing day, I estimate we saw at least thirty butterflies with the total number species sightings made on the field trip at seven.

SOME VEGETATION NEWS

Looking at the Cow Wheat in the wood we noticed that some plants had been killed off by what looked like a fire; but then we noticed that the extinction had occurred in several other places in the wood too. We did not know what had happened to the Cow Wheat but had to deduce that some other thing like the damp or fungus had effected it.



Purple Hairstreak
Photo © June Crew

Field Trip to Marshall's Heath, 14th July, by Trevor Chapman

Saturday 14th July was not a particularly warm and sunny Summer's day, however an organised walk around Marshall's Heath near Wheathampstead had been planned. Along with the leaders John

Murray, Trevor Chapman and Mark Carter from CMS another eleven people turned up for the 10:30 start. Initially moths from John and Trevor's garden moth traps were inspected. Of particular interest were the Lime and Poplar Hawk-moths which most people were happy to pass round and examine. Also interesting was the difference between the two catches, only a few miles apart but with different neighbouring habitats. This was followed by an introductory talk on the history, ecosystem and management of the heath and adjacent woodlands. We then ventured into the taller grassland and anthill area. Here Gatekeeper, Small White, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper and Ringlet were identified. Further along the walk into clearings in the wood we were able to see male Speckled Woods dancing together in territorial dispute. We managed to add Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Purple Hairstreak and even a possible White-letter Hairstreak to our list. Everyone enjoyed themselves and even though the reserve is only 3.6 hectares in size we managed to fill the 2 hour event very easily.



A Return to Grazing the Commons in Hertfordshire? By Mark Carter

The South Herts Commons Grazing Group is exploring the feasibility of returning four commons: Bricket Wood, Chorleywood, Colney Heath and Nomansland; to traditional management methods by grazing with animals.

Most of what we now know as Common land was historically waste land. It was often on the least fertile soil but it was suitable for supplementary grazing and fuel gathering. During the period of the Enclosure Acts (1767-1867), lots of this land (about 7 million acres) was taken into private ownership, though registered commoners had, and still have, certain other rights like grazing their animals or cutting turves, for example.

Today common land is still usually in private ownership, but most commons have been registered as 'Access land' which allows people the right to roam. Their modern function is partly as breathing space: wide open landscapes providing opportunities for public recreation. Because of the continuity of low key management, common land is an important nature conservation asset, so that 55% of common land in England has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

In Hertfordshire, some of the Commons contain rare and important habitats: patches of lowland heath and remnants of acid grassland. Hertfordshire heathlands support unusual species like sphagnum moss, heather, gorse, petty whin, harebells, heath spotted orchid and Small Heath butterflies.

Unfortunately, lowland heaths are under threat. 97% of the area of heath in Hertfordshire has been lost since 1940. Now that traditional management has mostly ceased, trees like silver birch establish themselves and shade out the heather, gorse and grass. To protect the commons so they maintain their landscape, recreational and wildlife value they need to be managed. Traditionally they were grazed, burnt or harvested by hand. However, burning can kill seeds and destroy habitats for ground nesting birds.

Fire can be hard to control and can spread. Controlling the invading trees by hand is hard work and it needs a large labour force.

Cutting by machine is difficult on uneven and often wet terrain. Also, the cuttings need to be collected and baled afterwards to keep the soil nutrient levels down.

Wiping with chemicals is difficult on uneven ground. Some of the chemical may fall on to the heather and rare plants and the dead material still needs to be taken away.

So the most sustainable way of maintaining these habitats is by a return to grazing.

Grazing

- helps to stop scrub and trees taking over
- develops a variety of vegetation heights and species because animals chose different plants to eat and they trample some areas
- reduces the competitive edge of grass species so other species can thrive
- provides niches for rare plant & insect species of bare ground
- helps to maintain low nutrient levels.

The South Hertfordshire Commons Grazing Group has representatives from the parish councils of Chorleywood and Colney Heath, along with St Albans District Council and the Countryside Management Service.

Monarch Holiday Memories, by David Chandler

It was mid-August and had been an awful summer; I'd become bored of all the rain and seeing so few butterflies. So, on a whim, one Saturday whilst out shopping, Kathryn and I went onto the travel agents and booked ourselves a late availability holiday to Corfu.

Three weeks later we arrived in Corfu town on our Monarch airlines flight from Gatwick and were transported immediately into hot dry Summer. In fact, it had been the hottest driest summer in that part of the southern Mediterranean for a long time, having not rained since May 2nd. The vegetation in Corfu was crispy dry and there were few wild flowers excepting around olive groves and citrus fruit orchards where the locals had been watering their crops, so I was a little concerned that I still would not see many butterflies.

My concern increased as I did not see a butterfly until late in the day on my first day in Kassiope, and that butterfly that was a first for me - a Cleopatra nectaring on a hibiscus in a front garden, but then most of the day was spent on the beach. The next day, escaping from the sea of beach umbrellas, I left Kathryn sunbathing and I walked around the bay to a rocky headland where some sea holly was still in flower and found it to be a magnet for butterflies. In this hotspot I found Common Blue, Grass Jewell, Idas Blue, Reverdin Blue, Painted Lady, Tufted Mallow Skipper, Hungarian Skipper and Scarce Swallowtail all in this one place.

The next day around the small orchard behind our apartment I saw a Two-Tailed Pasha, Southern Small White, a Hungarian Glider, Grey Banded Grayling, Clouded Yellow & Small Copper. We had hired a car and the next day we went to a beach near Aghios Illios. Behind the beach was a dry barren hillside with some olive groves; having got bored sitting under the beach umbrella I wandered off up the hill for a hour and found Scarce and European Swallowtails, Red Underwing Skipper and a Cardinal whizzing around the groves.

On the Saturday we took a long trip (it took all day) to travel the few nautical miles across the sea to Sarande in Albania. We visited a world heritage site at Butrint, which had impressive Byzantine, Roman and early Christian archaeological remains said to go back to the time of the Trojans. I did not have much time for butterflying but did see a Tufted Marbled Skipper, Common Blue and most impressively, a Monarch in the ancient ruins. I did not think that

Monarchs were seen that far north but our guide told me that since winters were getting warmer in Albania [apparently bananas now ripen there these days] more and more exotic butterfly species from southern Europe and Northern Africa are finding their way up into southern Albania.

Next day, back in Corfu, we found it had rained on the Saturday while we were in Albania and very quickly the place began to flush with flowers again, the brambles had flowers within a day and all the local Kassiope butterflies moved off the sea holly onto the new food sources. This flush of floral colour brought out the butterflies in numbers but I only added a Brown Argus to my species list.

Then, it was Monday and it was time to fly home to Old Blighty so we boarded our “other Monarch” to wing us home to rainy Britain



REMINDER

Please don't forget to send in your butterfly records for inclusion in the next Annual Report and for updating our Branch database and distribution maps. These should be sent to John Murray (contact details on back cover) to arrive no later than 10th November. A recording sheet was included with the March newsletter, but if you need more (or have lost one), it can be downloaded from the Branch website if you have access to the internet. The address for the Branch website is:

<http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk>

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD): BC Information Note

General Defra Advice:

The countryside remains open. However, footpaths on the infected premises and in the protection zone will be closed. There is no need for people to stop visiting the countryside and, at the present time, the only impacts on visitor attractions outside the Surveillance Zone are those which result from the restrictions on animal movements and events involving susceptible animals.

- Apply common sense precautions that are standard practice in most areas of the countryside:
- Do not stray from the right of way onto grazing land
- Avoid walking amongst livestock
- Never touch or handle livestock
- Keep dogs on a lead where there may be livestock (cattle, in particular, are curious and approach dogs).
- Take any waste, including food, home
- Use any disinfectant footpads or baths which the landowner provides

Guidance to BC staff and volunteers undertaking fieldwork

BC's survey and monitoring fieldwork does not provide justification for special dispensation on access restrictions. In fact given that we range off footpaths and might visit a greater range of farms and farmland than the general public we need to be more diligent.

Our approach should be more prudent than the guidance given to the general public, as we cover more farmland and do not stick to paths and tracks.

Within Protection Zone: Keep off all farmland and woodland - footpaths are closed there anyway.

In Surveillance Zone : Please avoid going onto any farmland- if you really must then strictly follow the advice above on bio-security measures and only go with the farmer's consent. It would also be prudent to treat woodland and other non agricultural land that adjoins

farmland in the Surveillance Zone in the same way.

For all other parts of the countryside - treat as ‘potential outbreak areas’ and:

1. Please be aware of this DEFRA advice to farmers on prudent bio-security measures.
2. Ensure that the farmer is aware that you are visiting the land, of the precautions that you are taking on cleaning footwear and vehicle tyres, and is happy for you to proceed in those circumstances.

The Relentless March of the Harlequin Ladybird, by Ian Small

Some of you may recall that I described the very first UK sighting of a Harlequin ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*) in Issue 40 (December 2004). This ladybird is a native of Asia which was introduced into the US in 1988 as a biological aphid control, and has multiplied to become the most common species there. It is also widespread over much of continental Europe.

The phrase ‘they breed like rabbits’ may seem rather odd in relation to an insect, but the principle is the same. They are able to out-compete many of our native species. They do this in two ways: firstly, they are able to squeeze in two generations a year over much of their range and, more concerning, in addition to eating aphids, they feed on the larval stages of other ladybirds, and even on butterfly eggs.



Harlequin ladybird
Photo © Ian Small

The rate of progress of these insects in colonising the UK is frightening: from a first sighting in October 2004, they are now recorded over virtually all of the South-East of the country, from Dorset to Lincolnshire, and with sightings already from the north of England and north Wales.

Why am I telling you all this? - because despite diligent examination of hundreds of ladybirds since I first reported on them here, it was not

until this year that I actually began seeing them. Not only have they been in continual presence on a birch tree in my garden, but I have also found them at other local sites where previously I had seen none. I am also conscious of the fact that I seem to be seeing far fewer of the common 7-spot ladybirds than would normally be the case at this time of year, when they often congregate to hibernate in suitable sheltered places. Is there a connection I wonder, or is the horrible Summer to blame?



Harlequin ladybird larva and pupa
Photos © Ian Small

**Copy Deadline for the Winter Newsletter will be
1st December 2007**

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



Conservation Dates

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

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

Millhopper's Pasture SP 900149. John Noakes is compiling a list of people to call on when help is needed. If you would like to be included, please let him know, on (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.

Hertford Heath TL 354111. For details ring Jackie Clark on (01992) 446609.

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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