

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Cumbria Branch

Newsletter No. 22

Spring 2011

Butterfly Conservation

DEDICATED TO SAVING WILD BUTTERFLIES

And MOTHS IN THEIR NATURAL HABITATS

MESSAGE FROM

..... our BRANCH CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the spring edition of our branch newsletter, there are a lot of articles to get through so I will keep my introduction brief!

Firstly I would like to express my personal appreciation to everyone who turned out to support our work parties during the winter, the weather was mixed but turnout was generally high and we did some good habitat management for our 'county specials' such as Marsh, Pearl Bordered, and High Brown Fritillary, Duke of Burgundy and Northern Brown Argus.

Looking forwards, I am pleased that we have been able to put together a programme of summer field trips to all corners of the county. Our AGM / members day which this year will be held at Haybridge Nature reserve near Ulverston will consist of a moth event in the morning, AGM followed by lunch after which we will have a walk around this lovely reserve in the afternoon.

Finally, may I draw your attention to opportunities for involvement in our Marsh Fritillary project and Mountain Ringlet survey as explained later in the newsletter. If you have a spare day during the summer and would like to help us in our work do please remember us and make contact with any committee member, your help will be greatly appreciated.

Have an enjoyable summer and best wishes to all

Steve Clarke

FIELD TRIPS – 2011

Several field trips this coming summer including two entirely new venues, three we haven't been to for a while and one which has become a regular favourite – weather permitting (unlike last year). They take us to all corners of Cumbria if you can look at it that way, except for the central area, but if you live in the centre it will be relatively easy for you to get to them all. So here they are :-

For all field trips bring lunch, appropriate clothing and stout footwear but for Finglandrigg wellies are essential.

Saturday 28th May - Finglandrigg, 11.00 am - Note Saturday NOT Sunday for this one. A new venue and to see the only Cumbrian species we have never before had a full field trip to see, the Marsh Fritillary. Take the B5307 west from Carlisle and pass through Thurstonfield and Kirkbampton. About a mile later see Haverlands car park on the left of the main road. Grid ref. NY283572. **Wellies essential.**

Contact: Steve Doyle, 01228 544059.

Sunday 29th May - Workington, 11.00 am.

Target Small Blue and lots more at this super site. Meet at the second car park and toilets (now closed) in the windfarm off roundabout on A596 just on the north side of the River Derwent. After the roundabout cross the railway bridge towards the port and turn right after 200 metres towards the windfarm. Grid ref. NY995300
Contact: Jackie Foot, 07752 379 803.

Sunday 5th June – Irton Fell, 11.00 am (where it will be dry this time!)

Target Mountain Ringlet at this scenic spot where the species emerges early. Park in the old quarry car park, 1 mile from Santon Bridge on the road to Eskdale Green. It is on the left just after a sharp left hand bend. Grid ref: NY122013.

NOTE: Some hill climbing so bring walking boots and warm waterproof clothing (just in case).

Contact: Steve Clarke, 01946 725828.

Sunday 12th June – Mireside Farm Ennerdale, 2.00 pm (Note later than usual start)

******* NO DOGS ALLOWED ON THIS FIELD TRIP, EVEN ON A LEAD *******

A short walk round the lakeshore followed by a farm visit with Andy and Judith Weston with the opportunity to maybe see a few late flying Marsh Fritillary. Leave A5086 Egremont-Cockermouth road and head for Ennerdale Bridge village. Carry through to Ennerdale Lake and meet at the Forestry Commission Bowness Knott car park which is about halfway down the north side of the lake. Grid ref: NY 110153. Bring WELLIES just in case.

Contact: Steve Clarke, 01946 725828

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by a guided walk around this lovely location.

Sunday 19th June – Hay Bridge Nature Reserve, 11.00 am

Before the AGM however there will be an inspection of moth traps at 10.00 am to see what arrived the previous night.

The AGM will start at 11.00 am with the butterfly walk after lunch – so about 1.00 pm 'ish. Please bring a contribution for a Jacob's Join lunch.

Directions – Turn off the A590 Barrow road just west of Haverthwaite railway depot and head for Bouth. In Bouth pass the White Hart and head north to Burn Knott where the minor road turns sharp left, but you take the right turn which is straight on onto an even more minor road for Low Hay Bridge. It is about a mile along that road and the car park is on the left as you enter the Reserve buildings and study centre.

Grid Ref SD 337876

Contact: Sarah Bradley, 015395 52340

Sunday 26th June – Yewbarrow, 11.00 am

Target Fritillaries including High Brown and Dark Green as well as Northern Brown Argus. Turn off A590 towards Witherslack, pass the Derby Arms and continue right through the village to Witherslack Hall. Turn right in front of the Hall main gates onto a rough track (the kennels) to park. Grid ref: SD436859.

Contact: Robin Eddleston 015395 32459.

Sunday 24th July – Barrow in Furness slag banks, 11.00 am

Another new venue for us. Target Grayling but also lots of other species including Common Blue. From Lindal in Furness follow A590 to Barrow through 3 roundabouts. Pass industrial buildings on both sides in 40 mph limit. Ignore left turning marked Ormsgill and see the two reclaimed slag banks on the right. Note the red sandstone wall ahead on the right, situated on a gentle left hand bend. Turn right to parking area before the start of the wall. Grid ref: SD192712.

Contact, Steve Clarke, 01946 725828 or Robin Eddleston 015395 32459..

Friday and Saturday 29th/30th July – Moth trapping at CWT Plumgarths.

Friday evening from 9.30 pm onwards and Saturday morning from 8.30 am for half an hour or so.

A series of moth light traps will be set around the gardens on Friday evening hoping to attract many species of attractive and interesting moths. Please wear appropriate outdoor warm evening clothing and bring a torch. We shall see and identify moths as they arrive but on Saturday morning all the traps will be opened to examine the night's catch prior to their release. Feel free to attend one or both events. The venue is the Cumbria Wildlife Trust HQ just outside Kendal near Plumgarths roundabout. As you come off the roundabout Plumgarths is about 300 metres on the right along the Crook, Hawkshead via Ferry road. Grid Ref: SD494947.

Contact: Martin Tordoff, 01539 735935 or 07981 348148 or Sarah Bradley on 015395 52340.

Booking in advance required by phoning Jamie Normington on 015398 16300. **This event could be cancelled if wet or windy weather so if in doubt please phone Martin Tordoff.**

Sunday 7th August – Smardale Gill, 11.00 am.

Target Scotch Argus at this great site. At 0.5 miles south of Kirkby Stephen station turn off A685 (Ravenstonedale to Kirkby Stephen road) by a small tree plantation onto a minor road signposted Smardale. Straight on, cross railway and turn left after about 2 km. Ignore sign for Smardale Hall, bear right and cross disused railway followed by immediate left turn and left again into car park marked Cumbria Wildlife Trust. Grid ref: NY738083.

Contact Peter Boardman, 01768 372063.

If you go to all those field trips you are more than likely to have seen the vast majority of Cumbrian butterfly species.

SUMMER 2011 WORK PARTY

Bracken bashing at Township Plantation, on Monday 13th June at 10.00 am. This is very important summer management work so please come along if you can to wield a big stick. Take the A5074 from Gilpin Bridge, take second left turn to 'The Howe' (no obvious signpost) along a minor road, cross carefully another minor road and climb to the centre of the hamlet. Turn left on a tarmac road then bear right along a rough bumpy track. Enter the wood and park at the first clearing in limited space. Grid ref: SD 454885.

Bring lunch, water appropriate clothing and stout footwear. Ticks may be present so cover your limbs (shorts not a good idea). Bashing rods will be supplied.

Contact: Sarah Bradley 015395 52340 or Steve Clarke 01946 725828

MOUNTAIN RINGLET SURVEY 2011

As reported in the autumn newsletter, a small group of branch members carried out felltop surveys for the Mountain Ringlet last summer. The survey concentrated on 'target 1km squares' that held old records or squares adjacent to them, and we had considerable success, in particular finding two large new colonies in the eastern fells.

We are continuing the project this summer and enlarging the scope and number of target squares; our objectives are three fold:

To map the current distribution of the butterfly in Cumbria.

We have identified further target 1km squares for survey in 2011 and have contacted a number of organisations and the local press in the hope that we can interest more people to join the survey. The feedback from organisations such as Cumbria Wildlife Trust, The Wild Ennerdale project, Lake District National Park, National Trust as well as a number of individuals has been very positive so we are hopeful of many more reports this summer, weather permitting.

To better understand the habitat requirements of the species

The exact habitat requirements of the Mountain Ringlet in Cumbria are not well understood or researched. We want to know why there is a very strong correlation between colony locations and igneous (volcanic) rocks and why large amounts of apparently suitable habitat are not occupied. To find out more, we will be doing some vegetation analysis and soil sampling / analysis from both occupied and unoccupied sites

To investigate dispersal capability

It is possible that the restricted distribution is more due to a poor dispersal capability than unsuitable habitat. Although investigating this will not be a priority for this summer, we are looking into a suitable method prior to a study next year and also looking into what genetic analysis may be able to tell us

If any members would like to help with the felltop surveys anytime during mid June to mid July please contact Martin Tordoff or myself or refer to the branch website where further information and survey report forms will be present by the end of April. Martin's contact details along with mine are on page 23 of this newsletter.

Steve Clarke

WIDER COUNTRYSIDE BUTTERFLY SURVEY (WCBS)

We are delighted to inform you that we have decided to continue the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) again in 2011. Once again this will be a collaborative project with BTO and CEH. We would like to thank everyone who took part last year and especially the WCBS Champions who helped promote the survey within the Branches. The survey had another successful year with nearly 700 squares sampled. We hope you will continue to survey the same squares in the same way as last year. Our priority is to re-survey these squares for at least the next 2 years so that we can determine trends in the wider countryside and see whether they differ from transect trends. We also welcome new participants either to help re-survey old squares, or to survey new ones for the first time. New surveyors will be allocated randomly selected 1-km squares in their Branch area. The squares need to be surveyed in July and August by two visits at least ten days apart. Anyone interested in taking part in the WCBS in Cumbria in the coming season should contact Steve Clarke (the Branch Champion) for further information. His phone and e-mail details are on pages 23 and 24 of this newsletter.

Best wishes

Dr Zoë Randle (who has taken over from Katie Cruikshanks)

Surveys Officer

zrandle@butterfly-conservation.org

www.mothscount.org

PURPLE HAIRSTREAKS

One of our members, Peter Boardman would very much like to know if anyone knows of a site, preferably in Cumbria, where Purple Hairstreaks readily make themselves visible for a decent photo. He says 50 feet up in a tree doesn't count! Peter is keen to add a decent Purple Hairstreak photo to his portfolio so if you know a good place he asks you to let him know please on 017683 72063 or e-mail telemark-hq@ktdinternet.c.uk Please include a six figure grid reference.

'PATCHES' 1km SQUARE SURVEYS

Within Cumbria Branch we are also continuing the 'Patches' butterfly survey. The WCBS survey mentioned above is very similar to Patches. WCBS is however a national survey which we in Cumbria participate in but 1km squares are allocated in random fashion and as many of those random squares were not appropriate for our volunteers we set up Patches so that all of our volunteer effort was being utilised. The other main difference is that Patches covers the entire 1km square whereas WCBS covers a set route within the square.

I will shortly be sending the 2011 recording forms to Patches people and they may well be issued by the time this newsletter 'hits the streets.' Although Patches people can stick to their existing square for continuity please feel free to change squares if by now you feel there is little of interest in your original square. If you decide to change however please let me know as I need to change my register and I also need to ensure your new square is not one of those already being done.

Enjoy the 2011 season and thanks for your valuable assistance which has resulted in a mass of new records being sent in to Tullie House Cumbria recording centre and onwards from there to the national database.

Steve Doyle, contact details on page 23.

A YEAR OF SOUTH CUMBRIA MOTHS

In the Autumn 2010 newsletter I urged butterfly enthusiasts to find time to study that much bigger group of Lepidoptera – the moths. I suggested that by running a garden trap regularly they could see a range of attractive and interesting moth species, at the same time providing a valuable input into county and national records. Perhaps the antithesis of the butterfly enthusiast's "all-species-in-a year tour of Britain", of which more elsewhere in this issue, but equally absorbing. Maybe some readers have already taken up my earlier suggestion of giving garden moth trapping a try? Below is a brief account of moth recording both in my Kendal garden and further afield in south Cumbria in 2010.

Moths in the garden

I ran my Skinner trap on around 155 nights in 2010, with catches ranging from nil on several occasions to over 160 moths of 60 species on a warm and cloudy 30 June. In total I recorded around 8,100 moths of 270 species over the whole season in and around the garden; this figure pleasingly included 34 new species for this my fifth season at the site. (I feel sure my list would be longer still were it not for two nearby

street lights out-competing my MV one!) My top ten garden moths in terms of abundance, with numbers counted in 2010 (and with 2009 ranking in brackets) were:

1	Large Yellow Underwing	1,103	(1)
2	Dark Arches	773	(3)
3	<i>Yponomeuta evonymella</i> or Bird-cherry Ermine	771	(12)
4	Heart & Dart	439	(16)
5	Common Rustic / Lesser Common Rustic aggregate	395	(2)
6	Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	222	(4)
7	<i>Agriphila straminella</i> – a micro “grass moth”	212	(8)
8	The Flame	148	(26)
9	Common Quaker	137	(23)
10	Buff Ermine	107	(28)

Just over half of the 8,100 garden moths I recorded in 2010 were included in the top ten above, but no fewer than 80 of the remaining 260 species had but a single example in the year. (The MapMate recording software which I use facilitates easy extraction of statistics like these.) The species’ changing positions from one year to another in the league table are striking, and this sheer unpredictability of what each new season will bring adds so much to the fascination of moth recording.

And moths out and about

I keep an eye open for moths and butterflies on our rambles around south Cumbria’s countryside. Many observations even of common species are from 1km squares with no previous records, so this helps to put more dots on distribution maps. But my main moth recording activity beyond the garden is on nocturnal sessions in the area’s woods and mosses. With my generator and MV lamp I made around twenty such excursions in 2010 on sites ranging from a roadside session at The Helm just outside Kendal on a damp March evening to a couple of evenings at my favourite oak-woodland spot at Roudsea - well away from the moss itself. Only eight species were seen at The Helm, mainly over-wintering or spring ones including Satellite, Grey Shoulder-knot and Yellow Horned. At Roudsea, by contrast, on a warm mid-August evening almost 60 species were seen; these included around 200 of Buff Footman and very much smaller numbers from a wide range of families including such beauties as Devon Carpet, Large Emerald, Coxcomb Prominent and Barred Chestnut. At a mid-May session at Cumbria Wildlife Trust’s excellent Barkbooth Lot site – its mix of habitats proving to be just as fruitful for moths as for butterflies – I recorded no fewer than nine Great Prominents, plus singletons of Iron and Lesser Swallow Prominents, among the many species seen. As always, I made far fewer such excursions than I’d hoped during the season, inclement weather putting paid to many planned sessions. The best-laid plans of moths and men, as they say. So that was 2010, and as ever of course I hope for still better things in the present year.

As can be seen elsewhere in this newsletter Butterfly Conservation Cumbria Branch is to hold moth events at Hay Bridge on 19 June (as part of the branch's AGM day) and jointly with Cumbria Wildlife Trust at Plumgarths on 29/30 July. Finally, if any readers would like to accompany me on other, more informal, mothing sessions in 2011 they'd be more than welcome to come along (contact details on back cover).

Martin Tordoff

Printing Error in Newsletter 21.

Apologies for not spotting the error before posting the newsletter out to members. You no doubt noticed that page 14 was omitted and page 15 was printed twice instead. I can assure you that page 14 was in the right place when it went to print but must confess I didn't check all the copies to ensure they were all present and correct before posting them out. As the missing page 14 was the second page of Martin Tordoff's excellent article on moth recording if any member still wants a copy of that missing page please let me know and I will send it on. My address and e-mail details are on page 23.

Steve Doyle

MOTHS COUNT – AN UPDATE

Readers of the thrice-yearly magazine of Butterfly Conservation "Butterfly" cannot have failed to notice the increased prominence given to moths in its editorial content in recent years. Alongside this the Moths Count project aims both to increase our knowledge of moth distributions and to elevate the profile of moths in the national consciousness through encouraging public moth events and offering training courses in moth identification etc. Launched in 2007, and with a small dedicated staff at Butterfly Conservation's Dorset HQ, the National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS) has been busy amassing records of all the 850 or so macro-moth species across the UK. (Incidentally it's good to see that one of Cumbria's iconic moth species, Argent & Sable, graces the Moths Count logo.)

The culmination of this work has been the recent publication of the "Provisional Atlas of the UK's Larger Moths". We were warned that the atlas wouldn't be a glossy book but in fact it's just that; though all but 20 or so pages of this hefty 450-page tome are of distribution maps of macro-moths – two species to a page – it's a quite lavish publication printed on high quality glossy paper. The maps are at 10k square resolution, the year 2000 being used as the cut-off between historical and current records, with the former as open circles, the latter as closed ones. From this it's easy to spot which species have suffered the most decline, or near-extinction in some cases. The contrasting fortunes of, for instance, Argent & Sable, whose range throughout England and Wales has declined dramatically, and the still ubiquitous Large Yellow Underwing are notable. We're told the oldest record in the database

goes back to 1769 and a lot of very historic content is included, but such has been the explosion in moth recording in the past decade that it's likely the post-2000 records will by now outnumber the historic ones.

Needless to say, there's an acknowledgement in the Atlas of the hard work of both the countless amateur moth recorders and the County Recorders (in the Cumbria case at Tullie House) who over the years have received and carefully vetted local records before passing them on to the Moths Count team. Over 11.3 million records, with all counties now represented, are included in the database, and the number continues to grow as the first stage of the project starts to wind down. An atlas like this is of course just a snapshot in time, and its maps will become progressively outdated; however, the latest position for each species continues to be readily available online at: www.mothscount.org. The atlas is not cheap at £25 including delivery but will I suspect be kept readily at hand by moth enthusiasts for some years to come.

See also the article by Lou Keeling later in this newsletter.

Martin Tordoff

Mountain Ringlet Envy and other matters.

I was filled with envy when I read Martin Tordoff's article about Mountain Ringlets in the Autumn 2010 newsletter. I last saw these butterflies in 1984 on the Langdale Pikes, NY287074, when I recorded that they were 'quite common along this little valley, all quite worn; between 2050 and 2125 feet in altitude, approximately 8th July.' Every single year since then I have made the trip from Sedbergh during the appropriate season to try and find them, often with my wife but sometimes on a BC planned outing. Locations ranged from the slopes of Grey Knotts above Honister where we shivered in a biting wind at 8 degrees C with a hopeful who had come up from London via the Langdale Pikes and the slopes of Red Screes to the fells west of Gatesgarth Pass. Sometimes the weather seemed to be suitable! I have asked somewhat bemused fell walkers. Nothing. Yes, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells right on the fell tops and Small Heath everywhere but never a Mountain Ringlet. The trouble is, time will soon be running out for me!

On a more cheerful note, I have never seen so many late summer butterflies in Sedbergh. Until early September Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells were about equally abundant, but most of the Peacocks disappeared fairly quickly then, presumably starting to think of hibernating. On the 22nd September our group of three Buddleias had over 50 butterflies feeding, mostly Small Tortoiseshells, several Red Admirals and two Peacocks. One large Ice Plant *Sedum spectabile* had 12 Small Tortoiseshells and a Red Admiral. I saw no Painted Ladies or Commas in Sedbergh this last year. The first Commas arrived here in 1996 but I haven't seen one in the last two years. Incidentally I used to see Holly Blues in Sedbergh fairly regularly until

1998 but none since. The highlight this last year was the sight of a Dark Green Fritillary on a Buddleia on two dates nearly three weeks apart (Aug 8th and 27th). I don't know where it came from because we are many miles from the nearest known breeding site.

I want another good cold dry winter.

John Mounsey.

How are we doing in Witherslack Woods?

During recent years the Branch have continued management work on this site, and over the past 2 years our endeavours have been supplemented by professional foresters employed by the Stanley estate and funded under the auspices of the Grantscape Landfill Tax scheme and Woodland Improvement grants. The opening up of overgrown rides now extends to a length of over 3 kilometers including the permissive path which runs parallel to the ride which we started work on several years ago.

'Our' transect covers approximately 2 kilometers of ride, and we have now completed 4 years of regular weekly transects over the summer months. It is probably still too early to draw firm conclusions from the figures, particularly as 2007 and 2008 were considered poor years for butterflies nationally. However there are some pleasing trends, notably with the 'target' species which are shown in italics in the table below; these are either species on the Red List of endangered butterflies or Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The figures for Pearl-bordered Fritillary are a little disappointing, although we know that in 2010 there were bigger colonies in nearby Howe Ridding and on the adjacent permissive path, and the management work that has been carried out will make it easier for them to spread to other parts of the wood.

One butterfly which has colonised very rapidly in the last 4 years is the Ringlet, and some other species which we can expect to find in the near future are Gatekeeper, Small Skipper and Dingy Skipper, all of which have been recorded very near to our site.

My thanks go to Sarah Bradley and Martin Tordoff who help with the weekly transect recording, and to the Stanley estate for permitting us to work on their land.

TABLE OF TOTAL NUMBERS RECORDED ON WITHERSLACK WOODS
TRANSECT 2007 TO 2010

species

2007

2008

2009

2010

LARGE SKIPPER	3	3	10	68
DINGY SKIPPER	0	0	0	0
BRIMSTONE	13	16	11	6
LARGE WHITE	4	4	6	1
SMALL WHITE	0	6	13	0
GREEN-VEINED WHITE	13	12	28	25
ORANGE-TIP	2	0	2	5
GREEN HAIRSTREAK	4	0	0	1
PURPLE HAIRSTREAK	0	0	0	2
SMALL COPPER	0	2	1	2
NORTHERN BROWN ARGUS	6	57	41	23
COMMON BLUE	5	18	12	15
HOLLY BLUE	1	1	1	0
RED ADMIRAL	1	1	4	1
PAINTED LADY	1	0	52	0
SMALL TORTOISESHELL	1	0	1	2
PEACOCK	88	55	73	105
COMMA	1	1	3	5
SMALL PEARL-BORDERED				
FRITILLARY	13	8	32	67
PEARL-BORDERED FRITILLARY	4	0	2	5
HIGH BROWN FRITILLARY	8	8	6	22
DARK GREEN FRITILLARY	114	80	137	110
SILVER-WASHED FRITILLARY	9	7	6	50
SPECKLED WOOD	135	235	259	247
GRAYLING	0	0	0	2
MEADOW BROWN	36	61	76	77
RINGLET	1	2	30	62
SMALL HEATH	0	0	1	0

Robin Eddleston

Grant received to support the Marsh Fritillary captive breeding project.

Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership has kindly awarded us a Grant of £750 towards the re-building of our Marsh Fritillary captive breeding cages.

This Grant has come at a very opportune time for various reasons but two in particular. Firstly our 'ring fenced' Branch Marsh Fritillary fund has all but run dry because of the fantastic financial support your committee have given to the captive breeding project – more of this later. Secondly, our breeding cages last about three years, maybe more in a succession of mild winters. They are built of untreated wood with special netting around the cages which come in two sizes, 1 metre by 1 metre

by 1 metre and also 2 metres by 1 metre by 1 metre. Several of our cages (we currently have 10 across Cumbria) were coming to their end anyway as netting decays and tears so can only be cleaned and repaired for so long. The last two winters however have seen some very icy weather coupled with high winds. This last winter particularly has wreaked havoc with several of our newer cages so that as well as those which were due to be renewed anyway we are also having to re-furbish and even replace the others. All this comes at a cost and although my time, petrol and so on and that of the volunteer breeders comes without charge it is the wood, netting, brass screws, stapler, staples and the odd nail or two which are costly. All told I estimated that to put things right this year our costs would be in the region of £920 which, frankly we as a Branch can simply not afford.

The Grant of £750 from *Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership* is therefore a lifeline for The Marsh Fritillary Project which is itself very dependant on the success of the captive breeding programme. We are still a little bit short of our target but are pleading with our suppliers and with a little bit of re-cycling of bits from the old cages we will hopefully be able to get through this critical period.

In Cumbria we have a rich variety of wildlife and equally a rich variety of habitat to conserve. The CBP in conjunction with various partners (Butterfly Conservation

Cumbria contributed) produced a Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan which sets out detailed proposals for local action to conserve and enhance Cumbria's most endangered and vulnerable species and their habitats. The Marsh Fritillary is one of those species hence the Grant from CBP towards our captive breeding programme.

The action plan has three principle objectives, to implement national biodiversity targets at the local level, to address local priorities not identified in the national UK plan, and to engender greater awareness and understanding of Cumbria's biodiversity and wider participation in its conservation. Various organisations take a lead role in connection with each species or habitat type and we in Butterfly Conservation play our role. That can be seen by the work we are doing with the locally as well as nationally endangered Marsh Fritillary, High Brown Fritillary and Pearl Bordered Fritillary to name just three species.

I could go on at much greater length (as you well know) about the work the CBP do but suffice to say at this point that they get on with their work in a quiet orderly way even if most of our members may not be even aware of it. The £750 Grant we have received from their Small Projects Contingency Fund shows they value the work we are doing towards achieving our objectives with a key butterfly species – the Marsh Fritillary.

The Marsh Fritillary Release Programme.

As you might recall we reintroduced many thousands of captive bred larvae to four carefully chosen sites in 2007. Mostly it was a huge success, certainly at any rate at two of the sites with the other two hanging on in there and one showing great signs of progress in 2010. In the early Spring of 2010 we released larvae at two further sites in the Ennerdale area which brings our metapopulation there to three colonies now. It is hoped to release to a fourth site at Ennerdale in 2011 weather permitting and assuming our captive bred stock successfully emerge from hibernation and thrive after a difficult winter.

The breeding programme is planned to continue indefinitely with the intention of building metapopulations around each of the four 2007 release sites. If we can achieve that and with the satellite sites able to connect with each other then we will be well on the way to success and at the same time we will be able to maintain genetic strength through inter colony breeding rather than breeding purely within single colonies.

So far so good then but a note of caution. We must anticipate and overcome problems which will inevitably arise as we navigate this journey. No doubt there will be set backs. In fact we've just had one – the captive breeding programme almost ground to a halt through lack of funding but thanks to the generosity of the *Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership's* Grant we will be able to maintain our momentum for the immediate future, but we must still look ahead to be able to deal with the next possible financial meltdown.

Steve Doyle

MARSH FRITILLARY MONITORING.

Following the re-introduction of this special butterfly to various sites in the north of the county, the Branch are helping the Marsh Fritillary Action Group in various ways with the ongoing monitoring work which is necessary to establish whether the re-introduction continues to be a success. To this end in the last couple of seasons a few of us have carried out counts at two of the sites of both adults and larval webs. However because of the large size of the site (and it goes without saying the intervention of inclement weather) the monitoring has not been as comprehensive as we would have liked. It has been decided that counting of adults has not provided a reliable assessment of numbers, and that in future we shall concentrate upon habitat monitoring ie recording abundance of various key flower species, and larval web counts. We would therefore like to invite any members who would like to help with this essential monitoring to register their interest with our Chairman Steve Clarke who will co-ordinate the work. The approximate dates would be mid-summer for the habitat monitoring and late August for the larval web counts. You would need to leave email or telephone contact numbers so we can get in touch at the appropriate time to arrange dates. Naturally these visits have to be arranged at short notice (a few days) because of weather

conditions and to achieve optimum coverage. I can strongly recommend this work as it provides an excellent opportunity to make a contribution towards a research project. Steve's contact details are on the inside back cover.

Robin Eddleston

MOTH ATLAS NEWS New national publications

Two major new publications were produced by the *Moths Count* project and *National Moth Recording Scheme* at the end of 2010 and are now on sale. All proceeds received by Butterfly Conservation for both publications will be used towards ongoing moth recording.

The ***Provisional Atlas of the UK's Larger Moths*** shows up-to-date distribution maps for 868 resident and immigrant macro-moth species. This is the first atlas to cover all the UK's larger moths and it includes the first distribution maps ever published for c.300 species (the Geometrids), as well as the first new maps for over 20 years for other species. As such it is a major step forward in our knowledge of moth distributions and a 'must have' for moth recorders. The maps include historical records (pre 2000) and current records (2000 onwards). The production of the atlas is a major step towards helping our declining moth fauna and analyses of the data will follow in due course. The maps illustrate under-recorded areas and will enable targeted recording and improved knowledge and conservation. The Provisional Atlas (455pp., softback) can be ordered for £20 (plus £5.00 P&P to UK addresses) by cheque to Butterfly Conservation Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Dorset BH20 5QP or via www.butterfly-conservation.org/shop.

British and Irish moths: an illustrated guide to selected difficult species (covering the use of genitalia characters and other features) aims to make available up-to-date information on the identification of difficult macro-moths, beyond what is currently available in the field guides. Written by moth experts Martin Townsend, Jon Clifton and Brian Goodey, 72 larger moth species (plus their subspecies and forms) are included. Much of the Guide is focussed on genitalia characteristics, although there are discussions of other characteristics such as wing markings. It provides the next step for those wishing to make definitive determinations of difficult moths such as ear moths, dark/grey daggers, copper underwings and the November Moth group. The Guide runs to 91 pages and contains over 130 superb colour illustrations. It is spiral bound to aid use and has protective plastic covers. Copies of the Guide are available from Butterfly Conservation (www.butterfly-conservation.org/shop or by cheque) and from specialist retailers. The recommended retail price is £20, but it is available from Butterfly Conservation at a special initial offer price of £15 (plus £2 P&P to UK addresses).

Lou Keeling
Senior Publicity Officer

Argent & Sable at Meathop Moss

The Argent & Sable moth (*Rheumaptera hastata*) is a strikingly marked black and white day-flying moth, found in a few very scattered colonies in the Midlands and southern England, but more frequent in the north and west of Scotland. It is designated as a Priority Species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. In Cumbria the only known site is Meathop and Witherslack Mosses in the south of the county. Each year there are a few records of flying adults (maximum 4 or 5 from an individual observer) between the end of May and early July, but no regular systematic surveys have been carried out. At Meathop which is a Cumbria Wildlife Trust reserve, individuals have been observed in a number of different areas near the woodland edge, and it has been assumed that young silver birch growing on the edge of the Moss were the preferred foodplant of the larva.

In July 2010 encouraged by Bernadette Noake BC's Conservation Officer (Threatened Species), a small group of enthusiasts joined Bernadette to look for larval webs. We searched areas where adult moths had been seen in recent years, looking in young birch foliage and also in bog myrtle, which is apparently the foodplant preferred on Scottish sites (the individual larva spins up to 3 terminal leaves together and feeds from inside the spinning). After initially drawing a blank inspecting some of the birch re-growth, where each potential site seemed to contain spiders, when we moved to the stands of bog myrtle and got our eyes accustomed to what we were searching for, the success rate improved and 6 definite webs containing larvae were found, all in terminal shoots of bog myrtle. Another 5 were discovered the following day, and 10 when another group searched in August, again all in bog myrtle. In addition, most of the plants containing larvae also contained 'used' spinnings, indicating the larvae move up the plant when the initial leaves have been consumed.

It is intended to carry out some habitat improvement in early 2011, to create areas of different age structure within the bog myrtle stands. It is also planned to carry out some more formalised adult searches in June, and larval searches again in August. To ensure weather conditions are suitable, dates will not be arranged very far in advance, so if any members are interested in helping with surveys this summer, please leave a contact phone or email with me, and I will get back in touch when dates are finalised.

Robin Eddleston

ANDY'S AROUND BRITAIN TOUR

..... butterflying of course.

In October 2008, whilst birdwatching on the Scilly Isles, I saw my first Clouded Yellow butterfly; I was so impressed that I recorded it in my notes, in spite of the fact that it wasn't a bird! My notes also reveal that I saw Speckled Wood during that trip. I didn't know it at the time, but those notes were to be the start of a new list, and thus a new challenge. For the first time, I started to

note the butterflies coming into my own garden. Things developed further in 2009, when I stumbled across the Cumbria BC website, and noticed that a series of trips had been arranged to look at the local butterfly species. I hadn't realised how rich our area was for butterflies but by the end of the programme I'd seen all of the Cumbrian species, except, perhaps, White-letter Hairstreak.

Eventually, I bought a copy of Riley's "Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland", and realised that there were still lots more to see so I started to make a bit of an effort outside the area. During a trip around the highlands in May, I noted Green-veined White and Speckled Wood. I took a day out to the Great Orme, Llandudno finding the Silver-studded Blue and Grayling subspecies there. Flushed with success, I diverted on the drive home to Prees Heath, Shropshire for the *masseyi* subspecies of SS Blue as well. My travels took me to Kent and Oxford, looking for more species – Chalkhill Blue and Brown Argus in the hills behind Snodland, and Silver-spotted and Essex Skipper at Aston Rowant, the latter being obliging enough to allow inspection of its antennae through a magnifying glass. At Aston Rowant, a butterfly watcher directed us to Whitecross Green Wood, where he told us that Brown Hairstreaks were flying. A quick dash up the M40 resulted in success there.

Using Riley's book as a basis, I drew up a list of all the British species and subspecies. Over the winter, I started planning to try and see as many of these as possible. The main target was to complete my list of all of the mainland species, but I wanted to see as many subspecies as possible as well so an itinerary began to develop. The first trip was set for the end of May. I decided to try Haugh Wood in Herefordshire for Wood White. My friend Sue was my companion. We found Haugh Wood without a problem and the rain had just about stopped. We'd barely left the car park when we saw our first butterfly – a Wood White drifting along the edge of the ride! Wonderful! We found another half dozen Wood Whites, as well as my first Speckled Yellow moths – a much better start than we'd dared to hope. The next morning took us to Martin Down in Hampshire where we had good directions to an area known as the Bokerley Ditch and we quickly found Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, as well as Adonis, Common and Small Blues, all in abundance. There was no sign of Marsh Fritillaries though until we noticed a number of guys with big cameras, stood chatting. It had to be worth a shot, so we wandered down, and spoke to a couple, asking if they knew the site for Marsh Frits. "Right here" was the answer, "I photographed this one only five minutes ago on the side of the track just here." So far, so good!

Back to the car for lunch, and then off to the coast and Hurst Castle which stands at the end of a long shingle spit – so long, that the castle is reckoned to be closer to the Isle of Wight than it is to the mainland. A small colony of Glanville Fritillaries were supposed to be here but no success so we decided to have a last try next morning. Hey presto – at least three and possibly four Glanvilles in the sunshine. Trip 1weekend had been a resounding success.

Trip 2 saw us driving up to Oban. Targets were Chequered Skipper, the Scottish subspecies of Small PB and Marsh Fritillaries, and the Hebridean subspecies of Small Heath. It was grey and drizzling but we pushed on to Glasdrum Wood but the weather was no different. Eventually, the sun did break through, and the wood was transformed. Small Pearl-bordered were everywhere, and we found two Chequered Skippers. Next day nearer home we went to Irton Fell for Mountain Ringlet. We needn't have bothered! Sunday was a complete wash out. We saw nothing of course but when Sue, my friend returned next day, she saw scores of Mountain Ringlets!

After a couple of days at work, we went to Glapthorn cow pasture in Northants for Black Hairstreak and had a single individual giving excellent views. Next morning it was off to Norfolk and on learning that the Swallowtails were still showing, we rushed up to a small private garden at Strumpshaw Fen where a notice invites you walk around, and found two Swallowtails still nectaring. A great way to end the day. Next morning, we took a much more relaxed stroll through the reserve finding a few more Swallowtails. Back on the road, heading for Portland and the *cretaceous* Silver-studded Blue. We'd had mixed reports of Portland, but had good directions to the site in Tout Quarry where we eventually found an individual which fitted the description. It wasn't in the best of nick but it was without doubt a Silver-studded. A better looking individual showed further along the track.

On the way to Sue's home in Portishead we made good time so did a short diversion to Collard Hill, and the introduced Large Blue colony. Here, I found my first Marbled White, as well as three or four Large Blues which were a bit of a bonus, and it left next day free to drive to Exmoor, and search for Heath Fritillary. The research had suggested a number of sites, and eventually we plumped for Haddon Hill. As we walked down the hill from the lay-by, the valley was protected from the wind, and the sun decided to shine properly. Soon, we were sitting having a brew, surrounded by dozens of Heath Fritillaries. Wonderful. Things were going according to plan. The next three weeks or so were fairly quiet. Sue went on holiday, and I was at work. I did manage a day trip to Rockcliffe in Kircudbrightshire where I managed to find a White-spot Argus, and unexpectedly, an early *scota* Grayling.

The third and final trip entailed another trip south to the Dorset coast on 15 July. It seemed right that we should look for Lulworth Skipper at Lulworth Cove, but the weather was against us. Dull, overcast, with a spattering of showers, but mostly, a howling wind coming in off the channel. Not good! It's surprising though how different the micro climate is below ankle level. We walked the cliff path until we found a narrow valley laying parallel to the coast, and therefore protected from most of the wind. We settled down here for a while, waiting for a break in the cloud, and as soon as it came, the grassland burst into life. First up were the Ringlets, followed by the Whites and Meadow Browns, and then the

Skippers. The valley bottom was a tangle of brambles, with poor footing, but eventually we found Skippers that were definitely what we were after – Lulworths.

Next up were Silver-studded Blues, of the subspecies *argus*, at Morden bog, just north of Wareham. We parked in a small car park at the south end of the reserve, the Silver-studded blues were along the banks of the water course and some fresh individuals were seen so yet another success.

Bentley Wood was to be our last destination; *valesina* Silver-washed Fritillary and *hutchinsoni* Comma would be a couple of nice forms to see, but to complete the list of mainland full species, I needed White-letter Hairstreak, White Admiral and of course, Purple Emperor. My research told me that Bentley Wood could deliver all of these. It was raining as we ate breakfast, but by now we'd learned that we had to do this in spite of the weather! We arrived about 09:00 at the southern car park, at the eastern end of the ride known as 'the Switchback'. Here in the car park, everything except the hairstreak could be expected. We settled down to wait. And wait. And wait. The seats around the car park were covered in rotting fruit – an attempt to lure down the Emperors for photographers. We waited. We had a brew, and waited, then we waited a bit more. Nothing! During the odd sunny interval, and there were precious few of them, the Ringlets were first up (always) followed by large Skippers and Silver-washed Frits. A Red Admiral set hearts racing for a moment. Enough was enough. Donning our wet weather gear, we set off along the Switchback, making for the hairstreak site. Some weird logic told us that if we used up the rain time walking, we'd arrive just as the sun broke through and the hairstreaks would come flooding down from the elms. It didn't and they didn't. We did see White Admiral along the ride, and once we'd seen one, they kept appearing. We also saw Hutchinson's Comma. We were debating a number of darker looking fritillaries, wondering how dark a *valesina* had to be, until one joined a group of a score or more Silver-washed, and all doubts were dispelled.

We returned to the car park and waited, then a people carrier drew up, and about a dozen people tumbled out. I'd barely time to exclaim "Hello, what's this?", when the leader of the new group pronounced "Purple Emperor"!and these people were still getting out of the van! There was a lot of rushing, shouting and gesticulating from the group, and the Emperor, instead of settling on the fruit, glided off into the trees, never to be seen again. We waited some more, but that was the only view we had of Purple Emperor, so it was with mixed feelings that we drove back home. We'd seen it, but only just, and we'd missed the WL Hairstreak altogether.

Next morning the weather still didn't look good, but we decided to set off for Slade Bottom, near St. Briavels, in the Forest of Dean. There were plenty of butterflies, but we'd been advised to look for Hemp Agrimony, and sure enough, Sue soon found a WLH nectaring. We never saw more than two at the same time, but the butterflies kept vanishing and reappearing, and there may have been more.

So that was it! I'd completed my list of all the mainland species, and seen most of the English and some of the Scottish subspecies. It hasn't made me an expert on butterflies by any means, far from it, but it has been an education as well as a lot of fun. I'd still like a good look at Purple Emperor, and the Isle of Scilly subspecies of Meadow Brown would be expensive to tick! The recent rumours of breeding Queen of Spain Fritillaries could also result in a gap in the list. There's Ireland still to look at, as well as some of the remoter parts of Scotland, so things aren't over yet!

Andy Senior.

Andy has also provided a list of all the species and sub species he saw and the locations but space prevents us this time. That list will be printed in the next newsletter but appreciating that will be after the 2011 season is finished, anyone wanting the list please send me a S A E and I'll send it on. (*ed. Steve Doyle, details on page 23.*)

WITHIN CUMBRIA and BEYOND

On occasions in the past I've mentioned the odd expedition outside Cumbria in search of butterfly species we don't have in our patch. One or two others, Avril and Brian Chadwick for instance have done likewise.

I thought therefore with the 2011 season not far away that it would be nice to mention a few good butterfly sites to look out for in Cumbria and a few not so far outside Cumbria. Anyway what's the harm in whetting the appetite for a good day out? I'm not going to go into detail about exact directions and so on but if anyone does want more exact information then I can be contacted – details on page 23.

Firstly a couple of exquisite butterfly places in Cumbria to visit. Arnside Knott is a must; it is simply a gem of a place. Well known as one of only two English sites for the Scotch Argus it also is good for High Brown Fritillary and Dark Green Fritillary. Northern Brown Argus and well over another 20 species of butterflies can be seen there. If you are lucky and up near the trig point on a mild dark summer night you might well see Glowworm as well. It is mainly, but not entirely National Trust but with open access and many footpaths. Whitbarrow Scar is another gem of a place but it covers a huge area. Because of that it has the same two big fritillaries as Arnside Knott but in addition also has Silver Washed, Pearl Bordered and Small Pearl Bordered along with Cumbria's largest Duke of Burgundy colony. Not all found in the same area of Whitbarrow so you need to search suitable places. Over 30 other species can also be found there. Most of Whitbarrow is open access but please be careful to observe those areas which are clearly private and avoid trampling i.e. stick to the well worn footpaths of which there are many. The raised peat bogs in the

Witherslack mosses are excellent for Large Heath and for sheer joy though nothing rare there is the small but exquisite Latterbarrow Reserve nearby.

The Langdale Pikes provide another stunning area for Cumbria's butterflies because that is the hot spot to find Britain's only true montane species, the elusive Mountain Ringlet. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find details of an extensive survey being undertaken this year. Moving over to the Cumbrian coastline there are gems of habitats all over the place from Barrow up to Maryport at least. In the Barrow area search out the relatively new but now maturing slag banks just off the new access road into town between Sandscale Haws and the town centre. Walney Island north and south is worth a visit too. Then move around to the coastal dunes of Sandscale Haws itself and around the corner to Askham Lots which I personally feel is a must to visit at least once a year late summer in the Gatekeeper season. From there the gems to find are almost endless. There's Hodbarrow Reserve at Millom, Eskmeals Dunes, Drigg Dunes both with Dark Greens and Small Pearl Bordered galore and the dune flora is exceptional. Moving up to Workington and Maryport the species to look out for is the Small Blue under the windfarm at Workington just on the northside or the Derwent estuary and just south of the harbour at Maryport.

So we've been to south Cumbria, the high fells, the coast, the Morecambe Bay area so what about the very north and east of Cumbria. You guessed it, there are gems to find there as well. In north Cumbria try Finglandrigg Nature Reserve on the Solway Plain for Marsh Fritillary season you won't be disappointed; good for Purple Hairstreak on the woodland edges as well. Try Scaleby Moss for the northern version of the Large Heath. In the east of Cumbria the magnet for me is Smardale Gill between Kirkby Stephen and Newbiggin on Lune. It's an old railway track bed now both a nature reserve in part and a long distance footpath. It is the other English Scotch Argus colony but also has good numbers of Northern Brown Argus and Dark Green Fritillary. Flora is exceptional.

I have missed out many other gems in Cumbria but you will all no doubt have your own favourite places – why not tell me about them or write a short piece for the next newsletter?

Looking outside Cumbria is also good because you can see species we don't have here. To keep it fairly simple I won't go into sites that are many miles away but stick to those which are well within a day out radius. Firstly there is Heysham Power Station Reserve just south of Morecambe. Open access which has good habitat for both butterflies and dragonflies as well as coastal flora and a good pond and wet area. To the very south end of the dog walk path there is a very strong colony of Small Skippers. A bit further afield try St Abbs Head just north of Berwick. It's a lovely area for a full day out. The speciality species there is the white spot version of the Northern Brown Argus which can fairly easily be found at the south end and along the east side of the small inland loch, called Mire Loch. Next try the Great

Orme at Llandudno and Prees Heath in Shropshire for Silver Studded Blue. And, when you have done those we can next time maybe move further afield for Chequered Skipper, Purple Emperor and White Admiral, but enough for now. Enjoy summer 2011.

Steve Doyle

QUIZ - A CUMBRIA JUMBLE

Below are thirty anagram clues to the names of ten each of butterfly species, macro moth species, and nature reserves / butterfly sites in Cumbria. They appear below in random order, so it's both jumbled names and jumbled solutions.

All names should be reasonably familiar to the local amateur naturalist – several of the butterflies and moth species are Cumbria specialities, and all the remaining ones are reasonably common there.

The number of words in each solution is shown in brackets, (-3) etc implying a three-word solution incorporating a hyphen. Moth and butterfly names are the vernacular, not scientific ones, and in the case of moths are as they appear in "Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland" (Waring, Townsend & Lewington), the answer sometimes including the word "moth", sometimes not. Any punctuation required in the solutions is omitted in the clues and punctuation in the clues does not occur in the solutions.

1	Migration tunnel	(2)	16	Camper's poll	(2)
2	Migrated hell	(2)	17	Arbitrarily deferred poll	(-3)
3	Elver took turns	(3)	18	Cross-cut hagg	(2)
4	Illegal drams	(2)	19	The real hag	(2)
5	A rodent stink	(2)	20	Woman rents pillow	(2)
6	Tired Grange	(2)	21	Ogling dwarf dingo	(2)
7	Switches workload	(2)	22	Can't deter pet	(2)
8	Horribly raw in flight	(3)	23	Hah – reedy hump	(2)
9	Hot sprint home	(2)	24	Hill farm's rarity	(2)
10	Narrower thongs burn!	(3)	25	Easy word – Ow!	(2)
11	Eat rare gherkins	(2)	26	So, dodo, Euro was madness!	(4)
12	Sad salsa wench	(2)	27	North metal	(2)
13	Alluring newly – wed ogre	(3)	28	Red bug fondu – Yuk!	(3)
14	Elegant bras!	(&2)	29	Acne-itch research	(2)
15	Franco's tough tor	(3)	30	Tea-shop moms	(2)

Sorry no prizes for this. The answers will appear in the next issue of this Newsletter, but if you can't wait so long or want some gentle hints feel free to email me at the address on the back cover. Best wishes!

Martin Tordoff

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