

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Cumbria Branch

Newsletter No. 27
Autumn 2013

Butterfly Conservation

DEDICATED TO SAVING WILD BUTTERFLIES
And MOTHS IN THEIR NATURAL HABITATS

22013

Message from **.....our Branch Chairman**

Welcome to our latest newsletter after what has been a better year for butterflies and moths. After a 'Siberian' April the signs were not good however a very warm and sunny Summer finally arrived and just in time to give most late Spring and early Summer butterflies a the boost they had been waiting patiently for for three years!!

At our May Annual General Meeting at Haybridge Nature Reserve it was announced that Steve Clarke would stand down as a committee member but remain an active volunteer and enthusiastic supporter of our Mountain Ringlet programme and also our Ennerdale Marsh Fritillary programme. Thank you Steve for your invaluable contribution and for continuing in active service.

Conscious that we have a small committee and in need of reinforcements I was delighted to welcome three new committee members this Summer. John Mounsey who recently moved from Sedbergh to Kendal has a lifetime of knowledge on all things natural history – he is also an excellent photographer and speaker. Wendy Nelson resides in Grange over Sands and is a dedicated conservationist with exceptional botanical expertise. Chris Addy from Penrith has the practical skills and know how of someone who works for the Environment Agency – he is also very handy with a chainsaw. Updated details of all our committee and other contacts are shown inside the back cover of our newsletter.

As I write this article our Summer field trip programme is about to end with our visit to Smardale, a wonderful site for natural history and home to the rare Scotch Argus butterfly. Most of our field trips have been well supported by people and fortunately by butterflies as well. April was 'Arctic' with very little in flight but May brought improvement and reasonable numbers of Brimstones, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells, but few Speckled Wood and Whites. It was not until June when, by now running four weeks late, there was a surge of decent Spring and then Summer species with good numbers of Orange Tip, Large Skipper, Ringlet and more locally colonies of Dingy Skipper, Large Heath, Holly Blue, Marsh Fritillary, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. Wall and Small Blue were also on the wing but continue to give cause for concern. The rare Duke of Burgundy and the less rare Green Hairstreak made a partial recovery from the cold Spring but Pearl Bordered Fritillary suffered badly.

By the time July arrived with its three weeks of warm or even hot weather most species had almost caught up though some, like Marsh Fritillary and Small Blue which emerged late had somewhat truncated flight periods. There were good numbers of Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Dark Green and Silver Washed Fritillaries, Mountain Ringlet and Northern Brown Argus. Second emergence numbers of Speckled Wood were good and the later Whites were spectacular. Grayling and Small Heath put in a good show in their core areas but struggled elsewhere. Small numbers of White Letter Hairstreak (relatively new to Cumbria) were reported from just south of Kendal and by August good numbers of Scotch Argus were flying at Arnside Knott and Smardale. The under recorded Purple Hairstreak and Small Copper were also on the wing as were good numbers of a second flush of Peacocks

and Small Tortoiseshells. Sightings of Red Admiral and Comma were less common though more of the former are now appearing late on and there are Painted Lady and the odd Clouded Yellow sightings now as well.

If you were wondering about the High Brown Fritillary – well, I've left the best to last. Arguably the UK's rarest butterfly the High Brown is alive and well and was reported from Arnside in the south of Cumbria to a 'new' site on the northern tip of Grizedale Forest. It was wonderful to see most of last years' sites recover from very low numbers. There's still cause for concern but after two dreadful years they have demonstrated that with good weather and habitat management these fragile creatures are remarkably resilient.

To keep members more informed the Autumn newsletter now includes details of our lat AGM as well as our other activities and Winter work party programme. You will see we have expanded our programme and invite you to come along not just to our traditional Sundas from September but also to alternate Wednesdays as well. If you have not been before, do come and join us even for part of our session, they are fun and very rewarding, and if you've been before, come again, we need you! Full details are printed below and on our website. Equipment, gloves and guidance are provided and you work at your own pace with a good team around you.

Finally 'thank you' to all those who completed the 2020 vision questionnaire sent out with the Spring newsletter. Your views really will help your committee plan better for the future. A summary of results was given at the AGM but we include a summary with this newsletter and any comments are very welcome. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible as we head into our busy Autumn-Winter conservation programme.

Best wishes.

Chris Winnick

2020 Vision Questionnaire

- 26 members responded of which 13 were happy to receive an Email copy of the newsletter, 2 would be happy with it just on the website and 10 want a hard copy as now.
- Regarding the newsletter comment was generally positive. 3 asked for more articles suited to beginners for example articles on basic identification, common species, butterfly gardening and more reports on work parties, field trips and transect recording. Generally most liked the balance between articles. One person liked the detail as they felt the National magazine was 'general.' 4 people offered to write articles.
- Newsletter layout. 2 asked for larger font size and more spacing. 3 people wanted colour photos.

- Branch website, 2 wanted more updates, 5 wanted a members sightings page, several wanted a reminder of dates for events and reports of, transect data should be reported, more moth features, Facebook option.
- Branch AGM. 80% had not attended an AGM but recognised that moving dates and venues may not help with attendance. 15% felt it should be held in the north more frequently and could be publicised better for example by Email reminder.
- Winter work parties. Most were positive about our programme but several said they could not attend as they lived too far away (many don't live in Cumbria) or dates and times were not suitable or they felt they did not have the skills. 3 people were put off by the weather. Other comment included a request for some work parties to be held outside south Cumbria.
- Summer Field Trips. There was a suggestion that some urban field trips could boost attendee numbers even if only common species were seen. There was also a suggestion that other more general wildlife should be targeted. 3 people said we should include ID training and transect walking training.
- Membership recruitment. More public and society talks. Publicise more in newspapers and magazines. More BC displays at public events. Information boards at key sites. Discounted membership offers. Schools visits, talks and displays. ID training sessions for the public. Ensure we use 'What's on' etc media coverage and use modern coverage such as Facebook.
- Fund raising. Send out specific targeted appeals like CWT do. Get sponsorship, sell merchandise, have raffles.
- Register of Specialists. 4 offered to write articles. 3 offered to do transects or timed counts and one offered help with our Mountain Ringlet surveys. We also had an offer to hold a moth event or a walk in the Keswick area. Other comments included offers of chainsaw help, possible creation of a mini reserve and one said we do a great job anyway and sent a donation of £60.

In response to all this at our committee meeting a bit later we said we were delighted to receive such positive and supportive feedback. Equally there were constructive comments for change and these will be discussed further and reported on. Meanwhile rest assured that we will continue to do our best and already some of it is happening, such as more illustrated talks to other organisations and more varied Branch programmes of activities.

Chris Winnick

Other News in Brief.

A Butterfly Conference will be held at Lancaster University.

Details are yet to be finalised but this is advanced notice that there will be a Butterflies of North West England conference at Lancaster University on Saturday 17th May 2014. We would love to see you there so please put a date in your diary. More details will be in our Spring newsletter.

We recently attended a South Lakes Aquarium Nature Week event with our publicity stand that proved to be very popular. If you would like to help us in any way for example by donating items for sale to help Branch funds, maybe butterfly books photos or home made produce then please contact me. Many thanks,

Chris Winnick

Work Parties – Winter 2013/14

Work parties are arranged for the second Sunday in each month (except November when it is the third Sunday) starting in September.

Meet at 10.00 at the places in the table below.

Contact in the first instance the named individual in the table for updates or Chris Winnick 01539 728254. It will be as well to check the status of the work party during periods of bad weather particularly ice and snow.

Day	Event
8 September 2013 Sunday 10.00	Braithwaite Moss Follow A66T from Keswick towards Cockermouth. Pass junctions to Braithwaite village on left and Braithwaite Moss is on right hand side by farm buildings (<i>ca</i> 1km). Parking available at entrance to farm and in yard. Grid reference NY 232248 Bring lunch, rainwear, warm clothing and wellingtons. Wellingtons a ' must ' Contact Chris Addy 01768 215773

<p>13 October 2013 Sunday 10.00</p>	<p>Fell Edge Either Turn off A590 towards Witherslack, continue on road to pass through the village to Witherslack Hall and continue northwards past the Hall (narrow, mostly single track road, with passing places, blind corners and dips) Bear right at road junction to Pool Bank hamlet (blind dangerous bend). Continue and keep straight on at road junction (to Crosthwaite). Take a right turn off road at a bend just past white house on right (Greenside, low wooden public bridleway sign). Follow gravel track over cattle grid uphill to farm and park at the farm buildings at Fell Edge Or Take A5074 from Gilpin Bridge and continue past The Howe turning, passing the Lyth Valley Hotel on right and turning left after 7km (sign posted Cartmel) on to single track road with passing places. After 1km, note signed Broad Oak farm on right. Shortly afterwards turn left (road actually bears right at a corner) before house marked Greenside Follow gravel track over cattle grid uphill to farm and park at the farm buildings at Fell Edge Grid reference SD 436890 Bring rainwear, warm clothing, lunch and stout footwear.</p> <p>Contact Robin Eddleston 015395 32217</p>
<p>17 November 2013 Sunday 10.00 <i>Note 3rd Sunday</i></p>	<p>Halecat Woods Turn off A590 towards Witherslack also signed Halecat. In village centre, turn left following brown Halecat sign, and continue to follow road around a couple of blind bends. Take the first turning left (brown Halecat), left again and park in the Halecat nursery car park, about 1 km. Grid reference SD 433838 Bring rainwear, warm clothing, lunch and stout footwear.</p> <p>Contact Sarah Bradley 015395 52340</p>
<p>8 December 2013 Sunday 10.00</p>	<p>Eggerslack Woods In Grange over Sands centre locate Pig Lane (by library) and Church Hill (by church with mini steeple) which is one-way traffic. In Pig Lane bear left into Hampsfell Road (pass BT depot on left) and follow road ignoring left turns eventually passing the Hampsfell House Hotel. Park at a dip in the road. Possible additional parking at Hampsfell House Hotel Grid reference SD 406786</p> <p>Contact Martin Wain 07773 431 420</p>
<p>9 February 2014 Sunday 10.00</p>	<p>Township Plantation Take A5074 from Gilpin Bridge, take second left turn to 'The Howe' (no signpost), cross minor road and climb to the centre of the hamlet. Turn left on tarmac road, and then bear right onto a track with concrete wheel tracks. Enter the wood and park at the first clearing--parking limited. Grid reference SD 454885. Bring rainwear, warm clothing, lunch and stout footwear.</p> <p>Contact Sarah Bradley 015395 52340</p>
<p>09 March 2014 Sunday 10.00</p>	<p>Township Plantation Details as for 9 February</p>

Morecambe Bay Task Force Work Parties 2013/14

Meeting place is the same as for the Witherslack Woods Work Party, as above, i.e. the kennels car park Grid Ref. SD436859, for both Yewbarrow and Witherslack. Start time also 10.00am.

2013		2014	
18 th September	Yewbarrow	8 th January	Yewbarrow
2 nd October	Witherslack Woods	22 nd January	Witherslack Woods
16 th October	Yewbarrow	5 th February	Yewbarrow
30 th October	Witherslack Woods	19 th February	Witherslack Woods
6 th November	Yewbarrow	5 th March	Yewbarrow
20 th November	Witherslack Woods	19 th March	Witherslack Woods
4 th December	Yewbarrow	2 nd April	Yewbarrow
18 th December	Witherslack Woods		

Dress for Cumbrian weather, boots, waterproofs, bring lunch, something to drink. Ring Graham Jones, 07583 209 231 in case of any last minute change of plans.

Grange over Sands Fell Care Day – 13th November 2013

Friends of the Lake District & Morecambe Bay Nature Improvement Area project.

Friends of the Lake District (FLD) have organised successful mass volunteering Fell Care days since 2011 for all ranges of experience and ability. In 2011 Helvellyn and Ennerdale and in 2012 Ullswater and Windermere were targeted. Volunteers joined in a range of practical conservation activities to help look after the fantastic Lake District landscape. Activities included footpath work, drain clearance, coppicing and woodland work, walling and wildlife surveying.

In 2013 FLD will work with the Morecambe Bay Limestones and Wetlands Nature Improvement Area Project to run a Fell Care in Grange over Sands on Wednesday 13th November. Some of the work will continue the improvements already started in Eggerslack Woods this year to benefit Fritillary butterflies by increasing connectivity within the woods and with neighbouring Hampsfell. Tasks to suit most volunteers, whatever their age, fitness or mobility will be available and will include woodland work, path works and dry stone walling.

To register an interest to join the autumn volunteering day email sue-m@fld.org.uk.
More info at <http://www.floraofthefells.com/help-us/volunteering> or join us on our joint work party with them.

Wednesday 13 November 2013 Eggerslack Woods, Grange over Sands
Meeting place as above SD406786.

THE SMALL BLUE in WEST CUMBRIA

As with most if not all early flying species, the Small Blue flight period started very late this year due to the prolonged spell of wet, cold weather in Spring. That weather affected the growth of the larval foodplant Kidney Vetch needless to say as the two issues are connected and both are

temperature/climatic controlled and thus to some extent synchronised. A late start to the flight season does not mean a late finish however nor does it mean later emerging species will also appear later than usual. 2013 demonstrated that because both the Small Blue and the Marsh Fritillary both had somewhat truncated flight times. As our weather went from cold/wet to hot/dry in a relatively short space of time, then stayed hot and dry the insects had to be very flexible and I was wondering just how they would cope with it.

It's easy to follow with the Marsh Fritillary but not as easy with the Small Blue but in the last week of July the Small Blue surprised me somewhat. There was a second emergence. Nothing unusual about that you might say as there usually is a second emergence albeit much smaller than the main one in mid May. The surprising thing though was the timing of the second emergence. Bearing in mind the main emergence was not until the end of May and early June, the second emergence started only six weeks later. Think it through. If the second emergence is the progeny of the first emergence then how on earth can it grow through egg, larva, several instars, pupa and emergence in only six weeks? Just a thought but are the second emergence the progeny of the second emergence last year? Comments are invited.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

The Small Blue Network (Action Group) have very successfully created 10 scrapes at Oldside Workington and both have been seeded and plug planted with Kidney Vetch. The seeding was done in Autumn 2012 and backed up in Spring 2013 and has been remarkably successful. The plug planting has been done in 2013. The reason we are doing it is to increase the amount of larval foodplant on site. That should allow the colony size of the Small Blue to increase. Such an increase is essential on an extant site if we are to take donor stock in the future to re-introduce or introduce to other sites in West Cumbria to extend the range of the butterfly. No point in taking stock from an already depleted colony and risking losing it. At this point I should say that in creating the first ten scrapes we have worked closely with several primary and junior schools and it has been an absolute pleasure to see the joy on the faces of the children we have worked with. Special thanks go to Groundwork North East and Cumbria who have managed the work done so far with myself and Butterfly Conservation Cumbria. Julian and Emma at Groundwork are an absolute pleasure to work with and we all want to keep up the momentum already established..

Our recommendation to the Small Blue Network will be to create more Kidney Vetch scrapes at Oldside and consider where else similar work can be undertaken both in Workington and Maryport. The latter is an area we want to work on and hopefully we can muster some funds to allow us to make a start. Habitat management is a long term project of course and we have also made a start on scrub removal at Oldside which hopefully will continue in Winter 2013/14.

RANGE EXPANSION

In 2013 I found a single Small Blue at St Bees in the Copeland District. It was in a derelict area just behind the beach café and in amongst lots of Common Blues and an abundance of Kidney Vetch as well as Birds foot trefoil. Shortly afterwards Mike and Lynn Mills of Whitehaven sent me photos of two Small Blues they found at Lowca also in Copeland. These are very significant records and the probability is that

there are tiny pockets of Small Blues on that coastal/railway corridor where there is a decent amount of Kidney Vetch. Certainly worth a look in season even just to seek out the Kidney Vetch if you have time.

Those sort of records encourage us to keep on with our work of habitat management in an effort to boost numbers on core sites, firstly because we no longer have many core sites, secondly numbers are very low and thirdly because we desperately need to increase numbers to facilitate the taking of donor stock in the future.

Steve Doyle

Mountain Ringlets

The 2013 records are not quite complete or analysed yet but hopefully we can include a short report in the next newsletter, hope so anyway.

How it was in olden times.

I have just been looking at a diary which I kept in 1947 while on a camping holiday with a school friend and some extracts may be of interest to show what butterflies were about at that time. We cycled with canvas panniers made by my mother and a cotton crawl-in tent, and the roads were still blissfully clear of traffic. Unfortunately we were not in Westmorland/Cumberland, but you will get some idea of prevailing conditions. It is remarkable that the local chemist's shop was happy to make up a killing jar for a 16 year old lad, consisting of a glass honey jar containing enough potassium cyanide to kill a lot of people, sealed in with a layer of plaster of Paris and closed with a cork. Making a butterfly and moth collection was not frowned upon at that time.

“Tues. July 29th. On a fine sunny day with a fair breeze we cycled down to a spot just north of Market Deeping where we pitched the tent on the verge of a narrow lane. About ten o'clock butterflies began to become active. We stopped by the road south of Sleaford where there was a patch of thistles. On this spot there were large numbers of Gatekeepers, Peacocks and Common Blues and innumerable Small Coppers feeding. There were also one or two Wall butterflies and one Brown Argus. We had pitched camp on a lane off the main road, well from it on a broad verge and here we found Common Blues, Walls, Meadow Browns, Whites, Small Coppers, Gatekeepers, one or two male Brimstones, Holly Blues, Peacocks, Small Skippers, one tattered Large Skipper, Small Tortoiseshells, one or two tattered Ringlets, a few Speckled Woods and four Clouded Yellows, one of which was seen to be feeding on a dandelion. All the way along the road we had noticed that in a large number of small woods Speckled Woods and Holly Blues could be seen flying together and feeding on bramble flowers”.

“Friday Aug. 1st. Cycled through Wantage and, after getting rations to last us over the bank holiday week-end, on to Kingston Lisle. We saw one White-letter Hairstreak on arriving near the village. we caught a Dark Green Fritillary in the field.we reached Uffington Castle, an ancient British fort with deep dykes and earthworks. When slithering down the sheltered side of one of the ramparts we disturbed a male Chalkhill Blue. After this we found a large number of males, all

apparently in very good condition the males flew up readily when disturbed whereas the females stayed in the grass. Indeed when one of these was disturbed it merely wriggled further into the grass. When the sun came out there were also large numbers of Small Coppers and Small Heaths about, but not a single Common Blue”.

“Sunday Aug, 3rd.In the field itself were scattered oaks, elms, hawthorns, firs and a group of wych elms. On a large number of oaks Purple Hairstreaks were to be seen, but only one worn female came low enough to be caught for examination. On the other hand there were larger numbers of White-letter Hairstreaks sitting in the elms and oaks, and these very frequently came down to feed on thistles and ragwort”.

The elms mentioned will now have succumbed to Dutch elm disease and with them the White-letter Hairstreaks will have gone. It would be instructive, and I’m afraid not very enjoyable, to repeat the trip today.

John Mounsey.

THE MARSH FRITILLARY STORY

I reported last year that numbers of larval webs were very much down on the previous year but at the same time there were recognisable reasons for it on the different sites and at the same time numbers of larval webs doubled on two of our sites. This year, 2013 therefore was another ‘hold your breath’ year for the Marsh Fritillary because it was also a very late flight season so I was not seeing them as early as usual and you can imagine the doubts which crept into mind. Fortunately all was well and good numbers emerged on most of our sites. When I started web counting in early August the early signs were encouraging so it was a relief that the final results were very satisfactory as well because the web count is the best level of success indicator.

At the site between Carlisle and Penrith the count is similar to 2012 but the strange thing is that the majority of eggs and thus webs have appeared in an area of the field where there are usually very few and where there are usually loads, this year there are very few. We will try to establish why. It could be weather related, or to do with the growth of the larval foodplant, or the late flight period, or the grazing which has taken place, or even the hydrology factor bearing in mind the site has gone from very wet to very dry very quickly.

In the one (out of five) colony I survey in Ennerdale is a bit down on 2012 but better than 2011 so I’m happy with that overall.

Our public colony at Finglandrigg really took off in 2013 with loads of adult butterflies and not surprisingly a record number of larval webs in fact 150% up on 2012.

Our Keswick colony fared better this year with web numbers 60% up on 2012.

Out of interest I’ve included a chart below to show you how each site has fared since reintroduction.

Final point for now. We still can’t really open up all our colonies to the public as most are on private land but if anyone has yet to see Marsh Fritillaries flying at

Finglandrigg on the Solway Plain then please come along to one of our guided walks in the flight season or make your own way there, On a good day there are 100's flying – quite a sight.

Steve Doyle

Marsh Fritillary Web Counts

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Finglandrigg	48	109	241	178	295	144	343
Keswick site	113	104	163	218	542	87	147
Penrith site	1	10	6	38	97	189	157
Ennerdale 1	17	55	49	50	Different recorder		
Ennerdale 2	Introduced 2010			53	Different recorder		
Ennerdale 3	Introduced 2010			57	Different recorder		
Ennerdale 4	Introduced 2011				43	82	50
Ennerdale 5	Introduced 2011				18	Different recorder	

You can see there are number fluctuations in all those figures and we do our best to establish why. In most cases we have a fair idea and that is important both from a learning curve point of view and also to tell us how our conservation and habitat management work is doing. As a result we can tweak things a little here and there but one thing we can not tweak is the weather conditions – and I'm not just referring to the adult butterfly flight period – weather can seriously affect this species in the larval season as well, and it did with a vengeance on the Keswick site in 2012.

Steve Doyle.

News from S W Cumbria.

Following on from assessment last summer of the butterflies in SW Cumbria, and more particularly in my garden in the Whicham Valley, the following is an update for the position so far in 2013. Overall, it is looking somewhat better this year.

My view last summer was perhaps rather bleak, and things have improved, but it is far from a good news story across the board. Overall numbers in our garden improved greatly in July, and now even more at the start of August. Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Small Coppers are everywhere. Seeing a Small Copper beating up a Red Admiral is good to see! We have lots of good nectar sources here for butterflies, and a variety of habitats – woodland, small grassy meadow areas, sunny

slabs, brassicas (!), and untidy bits everywhere. My impression (though not measured in any exact way) is that within the locality as a whole, species and numbers are down. If you see a butterfly, it's likely to be white.

The details of first sightings, and related comments, are in the table. However, the table doesn't say it all, and masks several important facts. First sightings doesn't give a guide to numbers in the flush of the season. And when species are not plentiful, I may easily miss a single specimen. My garden isn't a good place to see the Common Blue, or the Large Skipper. I rarely see either of those two species, except when my wife and I do a specific butterfly survey at Millom Ironworks LNR.

First, the positives:

- The Ringlet has at last moved into SW Cumbria – I've seen it in July at Millom Ironworks, and during a survey at Gutterby (on the coastal plain west of Black Combe), and at last in my own garden.
- I've had the first ever sighting of a Grayling in my garden. It was nectaring on majoram (an excellent plant for insects), and showing some of its forewing colours, which confused me initially. My normal view (at Millom Ironworks) is of it basking, and angled to get the best of the sun.
- After a late start, many butterfly species seem to have made a good recovery from previous summer numbers.

The negatives:

- The Green Hairstreak has had a bad year, with just a single sighting in my garden, and subsequent very low numbers on Black Combe. The exceptionally cold spring was the problem. It's a serious setback for this local stronghold.
- The Vanessids (Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral) are all still doing badly, and the Wall is, in my opinion, at risk of dying out in this area.
- At the Ironworks, the Common Blue has been having a poor year, as has the Large Skipper. The Dingy Skipper had a bad year in 2012, and is only just hanging on this year. A few Walls were seen in June, but none in July. No Small Coppers have been seen there this year. Overall, results have been disappointing from the Ironworks, but that may be partly due to the lack of a grazing regime, so that rank grassland is now tending to swamp the flowers.

I see from the NBN map for Holly Blue, that I ought to be seeing it. But I'm not. Though I don't check every Common Blue when doing butterfly surveys at the Ironworks – surveys would become quite difficult if I had to check them all. There does seem to be part of SW Cumbria without the Holly Blue, especially subsequent to 2000. It's another little puzzle.

Butterfly species seen in my garden at Gateside.	1 st seen 2013	1 st seen 2012	1 st seen 2011	comments
Comma	-	-	27/07	scarce anyway

Common Blue	-	28/05	23/05	very low numbers normally
Gatekeeper	16/07	3/08	27/07	now plentiful
Grayling	19/07	-	-	1 st ever sighting at Gateside
Green Hairstreak	20/04 – just one	26/03	-	1 st 27/04/2011 outside garden, 1 st 14/04/2010 in
Green-veined White	20/04	13/04	9/04	most common butterfly
Holly Blue				not seen in this locality as yet
Large Skipper	9/07	4/07	12/07	always a single specimen!
Large White	30/04	19/04	29/05	numbers much less than GVW
Meadow Brown	5/07	27/07	26/07	plentiful
Orange-tip	20/04	5/04	10/04	adequate
Painted Lady	-	-	25/09	
Peacock	27/04	24/03	28/03	very low numbers
Red Admiral	25/05	11/08	7/04	very low numbers
Ringlet	23/07	-	-	
Small Copper	25/05	22/04	13/07	now plentiful
Small Heath	-	-	-	one strayed into garden from Black Combe in 2010
Small Tortoiseshell	15/04	18/03	25/03	appears to be locally scarce
Small White	19/05	27/03	19/04	adequate
Speckled Wood	20/04	16/04	19/04	adequate
Wall Brown	2/06	28/05	4/07	appears to be locally scarce

Nigel Gilligan

Travels with a generator

Following your committee's decision to buy a generator and Robinson moth trap Martin Tordoff ordered one from Anglian Lepidopteran Supplies and he and I were able to pick them up when attending the Garden Moth Survey annual conference in Cheshire. This saved freight costs and gave us an excuse for an interesting mothing geeks day out.

The cold easterlies and chilly nights of early spring gave us little incentive to use it but in mid June I set it up in Allithwaite quarry where my previous moth studies had been limited to daytime observations and occasional trapping with a portable actinic bucket trap. Moths were starting to arrive after about an hour when the spluttering started, first from the generator and shortly after from me as I struggled with choke and starter in the light of a fading head torch. We got only a handful of moths before packing in but at least I had a new species, Red-necked Footman, which I think made the effort of lugging our equipment down Quarry lane worthwhile. This infrequently recorded unmistakable moth is, like most footmen, a lichen or algal feeder in the larval stage. Infrequently recorded in Cumbria our example could have been either a rare resident or perhaps an immigrant from the continent. The next day with the benefit of daylight and the instruction book (yes, I know I should have read it first) I realised that the problem was operator ineptitude and not a faulty generator. On the next suitable evening I tried again and although the temperature was only 10C I caught 34 species in about 3 hours. Most numerous were Silver-ground Carpets and Ingrailed Clays but some glamour was provided by Ruby Tiger, Peach Blossom and several Beautiful Golden Y's.

In mid July when the warm still evenings had moth-ers salivating with anticipation four of us revisited the quarry and this time ran two traps off our new generator. The presence of Martin Tordoff with his micro expertise and Brian Hancock dusk-netting for pugs helped us to a total of more than eighty species. The highlights were probably Grass Emerald, Lime-speck Pug and Mullein Wave – a most delicate almost embroidered looking little geometrid. Moths were raining down on us as we reluctantly switched off at 1am. The chunkier beasts like Elephant Hawk and Poplar Hawkmoth were starting to arrive. Although our MV lights attracted a solitary visitor from the village we had not publicised this session. Allithwaite quarry is not a safe site to encourage the public in nocturnal wanderings.

A large appreciative audience was however guaranteed at Barkbooth Lot where Joe Murphy of CWT had arranged an evenings "entertainment" for Crosthwaite School. Twenty Key Stage 2 pupils, with some teachers and parents, were looking for owls, bats and glowworms and moths of course. Several traps were deployed and whilst setting ours up at dusk near some dense bracken stands I could watch the Map-winged Swifts dancing over the fronds. After their successful glowworm search the children surrounded my trap. Whilst well-behaved and asking intelligent questions, there was quite a crush and it was with some relief that afterwards I could ascertain that no equipment, moths or indeed moth-ers had been injured in the event. It was

several degrees warmer in the woods compared with my damp bracken patch and that's where most of the moths, audience and midges were attracted. An interesting array of tortrix moths included about fifty Green Oak Tortrix plus Small Yellow Waves from the alders, Light Emeralds and Satin Lutestrings amongst a host of divergent species that one would expect from this lovely reserve with such a mosaic of habitats.

A cunning plan of the moth enthusiasts on the committee was to arrange a session after our evening committee meeting in Witherslack. This had the desired effect of speeding up proceedings and allowing Martin and myself to sneak off early and nip round to Laterbarrow to set the traps. Selflessly not deviating to the Derby Arms for refreshment we quickly had three MV traps running from two generators. Pretty Chalk Carpet, 30 Brimstones, 10 Buff arches and some pristine fresh Green Arches were amongst the highlights of a long evening that again produced over eighty species.

Four traps including ours were set up at Township on the last evening of May. It was a cold night and despite the impressive array of MV light around Catcrag quarry only thirty or so moths and half a dozen members of the public were attracted. Our new equipment has also been deployed by Martin Tordoff at Hale Moss, Sunbiggin Tarn and Burnsbeck Moss, the latter being a joint CWT/BC public event. Another cold night depressed the catch but the five guests were very enthusiastic and seemed keen to start light trapping in their gardens. Amongst the highlights were 15 Drinker Moths in the trap together, a strangely nocturnal Ringlet butterfly and for the connoisseurs, a Dark Sword-grass.

More outings are planned but so far this summer the BC generator and trap have already been well used. Although not many members of the public attended events, the few that did enjoyed it and I think were inspired to learn more about moths and Butterfly Conservation.

Martin Chadwick

Ormsgill Slag Banks on 29th July

The Branch had a very successful field trip to the slag banks only two years ago but I thought that a repeat visit might help to introduce more local naturalists to the joys of butterfly watching on this rapidly "re-greening" Brownfield site. Once the largest of slag heaps in England they are the detritus from a century of Barrow smelting and steel making industries. Once an area of belching furnaces and Bessemer converters the scene is now relatively tranquil despite the nearby main road into Barrow and the presence of some light industry and a scrap yard. From the top of the banks turn your back and look over the Walney channel to the very close North Walney or north to the Duddon estuary and the nineteenth century landscape is difficult to imagine. Restoration began on the southern slag bank in the nineties and consequently this is very well grassed with extensive scrub and sea buckthorn on the landward side. Restoration and landscaping of the northern section began only

about five years ago and this is the most attractive for our target species of Grayling and Common Blue.

This was a joint event with Grange Natural History Society with their members and guests being in the majority of the party although several of us were commendably members of both societies. Sixteen of us set off in sun and blue skies that were definitely not forecast. Our primary target was of course Grayling and they did not disappoint. The circular route around the north of the site suits them as there are large tracts of bare rock and ore scree with small patches of emergent vegetation. The grey and mottled under wing of a resting or basking grayling on a slag bank is even better camouflaged than on limestone pavement. Nevertheless it wasn't long before we had good views and in our two and half hour slow ramble we found about 20. Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers were numerous. Ringlets were present in small numbers most being in the field between the car park and the tunnel or on the top of the southern bank. We also found 10 Common Blue, which was a relief to me, as on my previous trip 11 days earlier I had found none. Two Small Coppers were my first for the year and together with Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood and large numbers of Small Whites we reached a list of nine species (my total for two visits was 13). Admittedly not a lot, but most were netted giving the group opportunities to better appreciate some gorgeous butterflies. Day-flying moths such as Silver Y, Shaded Broad-bar and Yellow Shell were also procured. It helped that three of us had nets and that the youngest was only nine years old and therefore much more fleet of foot than those sixty or so years older!

Although slag banks don't sound a very promising habitat I can recommend a visit to this site. Parking and access are straightforward and there are lots of lovely butterflies to watch.

Martin Chadwick

Wartbarrow and it's Butterflies.

Brian and I responded with great enthusiasm to the article in the Spring newsletter, again a wonderful edition, very interesting. We have thoroughly enjoyed three productive visits to this sheltered ex quarry known as Wartbarrow which is right on our doorstep at Allithwaite.

Early June, a very warm afternoon rewarded us with Common Blue 7 male, 2 female, 2 Small Whites, 2 Large Whites and 2 Small Tortoiseshells. A real treat when garden butterflies were few. The access to Wartbarrow was good compared to our failed attempt 10 years ago when it was so overgrown. The paths around the floor of the quarry were very manageable thanks to all the hard work which volunteers have undertaken. This wildlife haven is now accessible to all ages.

Early July on another beautiful afternoon we enjoyed lots of Meadow Browns, Large Skippers, Common Blues, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries amongst others and many different wild flowers.

On 4th August having just returned from another visit overflowing with enthusiasm I just had to ring Martin Chadwick who has done so much there. The Summer grasses, thistles, nettles were naturally at their height of growth so a walking pole was helpful. On entering the site the fragrance from the density of Buddleia was quite intoxicating. The grassland was alive with bees, hoverflies, Small Skippers, Large Skippers, Green Veined Whites, Cinnebar caterpillars on Ragwort and lots of ladybirds. As I drew nearer the Buddleias it was butterfly heaven with 15+ Red Admirals, 15+ Peacocks, 10+ Small Tortoiseshells, wonderful.

I've tried to encourage others to visit this 'free gift' in our village – could it be included in a Field Trip in 2014?

Avril Chadwick

Butterfly Referee !

We now have a 'state of the art' records centre in Tullie House Carlisle staffed by three very capable, knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff members. Records of all wildlife species are kept so please send in your butterfly and moth records but also remember to include that other thing you saw the other day – what was it? Oh, yes that Red Squirrel. Write it down and send that as well.

So what's all this about a Butterfly Referee? Well, state of the art systems require a good standard of records as well. Looking at older records already in the system it was clear to me that a fair proportion were more than likely incorrect but were in the past entered into the system anyway. For example 18 High Brown Fritillaries on the Solway coast ?? And, I doubt if Mountain Ringlet will be found in Barrow. They might be extreme examples but I now go into Tullie House each year to scrutinise incoming records to look for obvious errors which might be the record itself or a mistake by an inputter. Things like The Big Butterfly Count encourage ordinary members of the public to send in records, which is great but also we must expect identification problems – and it happens.

The sort of things I look out for are records for species well out of the usual geographical range (e.g Brimstone just north of Carlisle), out of flight period though with some flexibility, who the recorder is i.e. a known experienced recorder or a casual recorder, number of a particular species seen (again an example is 14 Brimstones just east of Carlisle). The number of each is important to look at anyway because it can be an early indicator of decline or the opposite, and we do have good news stories as well as the opposite in Cumbria.

Without boring you any further then, I thought you might like to know that there is a reasonable level of filtering of records nowadays but don't get the idea we are knocking things out wholesale, we are not, just the highly unlikely ones. That way we are trying to ensure that what goes in now is as clean and accurate as possible.

Do keep sending records though – they really are important not just for conservation management but also for Planning Authorities and ecologists to establish if there is an important or protected species present before planning permission is granted. If we don't know, then we risk losing it.

Steve Doyle

Hunting for Upland Species – Mixed Fortunes

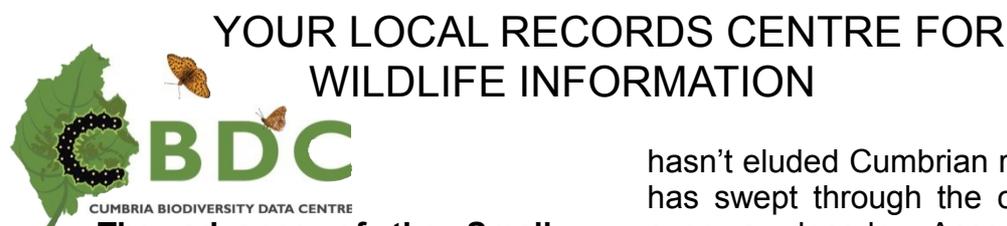
The Large Heath butterfly's distribution in south Cumbria is centred on the county's lowland bogs and mosses, Meathop and Roudsea being classic sites for the species. But it is also known to frequent upland blanket bog, though there are relatively few recent Cumbrian records from such habitat other than in the border uplands in the far north east of the county. A trusted source's single 2004 record of this species from near Skeggles Water on the plateau between Longsleddale and Kentmere so intrigued Chris Winnick and me that we duly set out to search this area on a dull day in early July. There proved to be less of the species' ideal habitat – Cotton-grass with Cross-leaved Heath – than we'd expected to find, though eventually we flushed up around six adults of the Large Heath's dark *davus* form from a spot close to that of the 2004 record, at around 320 metres above sea level. I revisited the site the following day under much more favourable conditions and found that the occupied area in fact covered a wider range than I'd expected, extending far into a hitherto unrecorded 1km square north of the original record. But even then I saw fewer than a dozen individuals. I suspect there's nothing at all notable about any of this but would suggest that, despite the extra effort involved, the occasional search of this kind of habitat across the county could be more rewarding than repeatedly revisiting the known lowland sites year after year, and could also help to further our knowledge of the species' current distribution. Small Heath and Green-veined White butterflies were present in the area in good numbers, and Oak Eggar moths were seen zigzagging low over the bog. A pleasant find was the Tortrix moth *Philedone gerningana*, a generally upland species but bearing a superficial resemblance to the much commoner Light Brown Apple Moth which can turn up in garden moth traps at almost any time of year. There are very few Cumbrian records of the former species however, but that probably simply reflects the lack of search effort in upland areas.

By contrast, a recent search in Cumbria for the elusive Northern Dart moth proved unsuccessful. This Noctuid species of the high fells and moors has the unusual feature of flying only in alternate years, the larvae taking two seasons to develop. More curiously, the adult moths are believed to fly only in odd-numbered years in northern England but even-numbered in Scotland (though to cloud the picture there's an old even-year record from Skiddaw). This feature of *synchrony*, where the whole population emerges in the same year rather than emerging evenly across two, is considered by some both to be a defence against parasitism and to give better mating opportunities.

There are no positive Cumbrian records of Northern Dart since 1981 and almost all other records on the database are from odd-numbered years, so 2013 was the year to go for it. And where better a site to search than the source of the 1981 record?

This was Moor House National Nature Reserve in upper Teesdale lying at around 560 metres above sea level on the eastern slopes of Cross Fell. The site has a long history of scientific research though there are no longer any residential facilities there. Five of us – Gary Hedges of Tullie House’s Biological Records Centre, Chris McCarty, Natural England’s Manager of the Moor House reserve, Mike and Betty Clementson and myself– met in the village of Garrigill on the evening of 6th August then trundled in our four vehicles up the long, steep and largely unsurfaced track to the site and set up no fewer than twelve moth traps as darkness was falling. There appeared no shortage of the main larval food plant, Crowberry, and it seems strange that the Rothamsted trap which has been operated at Moor House over much of the past thirty years has not produced recent records of the species. So we set up the traps in a range of locations, some up to a kilometre away from the Rothamsted site. After a beautiful sunset the evening cooled rapidly, and we turned in for the night in our respective tents, campervan and car, lulled to a shivering and fitful sleep only by the hum of generators. The first hint of daylight saw me up at 0400 hours to start rounding up my four traps. A light frost covered the nearby meadow and my thermometer showed minus 2C – minus 2 in August! By 0600 hours our traps had all been rounded up and assembled together, and with eager anticipation we went through their contents one by one. Sadly, no Northern Darts, in fact very few moths at all. Twelve traps produced only twelve species and around 80 moths, the majority of these being of four species characteristic of the habitat; Antler Moth, Grey Mountain Carpet, Red Carpet and Haworth’s Minor. Perhaps with that overnight temperature we were lucky to have seen any moths at all. But where does that leave us in our quest to find the Northern Dart in England? Too late to search again in 2013 since we were already in the latter part of its presumed flight season. Do we wait until odd-year 2015, or could a successful search in 2014 perhaps indicate that it had moved into line with its Scottish counterparts, maybe having needed a three-year larval stage once or more during those missing thirty years? Or should we mount larval searches - with a very much longer larval than adult stage there should theoretically be a much greater chance of finding them but it would almost be like hunting the proverbial needle in a haystack. We’ll no doubt discuss these many possibilities at length, but it’s a bit of unfinished business which may nag away at us until we find the answer.

Martin Tordoff



The advance of the Small Skipper

From a combination of its small size and relatively sedentary nature, I tend to think of the Small Skipper as a rather secretive species, but it certainly

hasn’t eluded Cumbrian recorders as it has swept through the county in little over a decade. According to the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) records, the butterfly had been spotted in just three 2km squares before the turn of the new Millennium. Two of these were located in the

extreme south of the county, relatively close to Lancashire colonies, but the third was an isolated sighting near Egremont, suggesting that the butterfly may have made initial expansions undetected.

Thanks to the Cumbrian butterfly recorders we know that by the end of 2005, the butterfly had bolstered its foothold in the South of the county, even reaching Walney Island in the extreme South-west. A spate of records had also been come in from the Smardale area and a further isolated sighting from as far north as Penrith. If you fast forward to end of last year; the lowlands of Cumbria had been conquered with new populations springing up in the extreme north in the county (and beyond into South West Scotland) with many stepping stone populations in between discovered. The relentless advancement of the Small Skipper shows no sign of slowing down and there is anecdotal evidence to suggest certain Cumbrian colonies have increased by up to 5-fold since last year. So what next for this rough grasslands specialist? Will it make significant inroads into the Lake District, or has it already? If you can see a gap on the map where you know

you've spotted the Small Skipper, please do let us know. Perhaps the numbers in your local area are changing? It's always useful to make annual records in the same areas to show it's still there and as an indication of how it's fairing at these new sites.

Finally, a word of warning on Small Skipper spotting, particularly for

recorders in the north of the county; what you think is a Small Skipper on an initial glance may not be a certainty. As many of you may be aware, the Essex Skipper was unexpectedly found in Birkshaw Forest, Nr. Lockerbie in South West Scotland in 2007 and has been recorded there every year since (DGERC 2013). The arrival of this butterfly in Scotland is believed to be unnatural (the nearest colonies are 150km away in Yorkshire) and one mooted theory of how it got to Scotland is through the movement of soil for covering animal burial sites, following the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak (Birkshaw Forest was a mass burial site). This site is just 20km 'as the Butterfly flutters' from the Cumbrian border and the recording effort is low in South West Scotland so advances towards, and into North Cumbria, could go undetected. We would therefore like to ask that you to double check your Small Skippers! Essex Skipper can relatively easily be distinguished from Small Skipper but it requires a close-up look. Approach the butterfly from beneath and head-on (this may require going onto your knees!) and look at the undersides of the antennae tips. In Essex Skipper they are glossy black, whereas you will only see dull orange or brown on these parts of the Small Skipper. If you believe you've spotted one of these small butterflies, please report it as soon as possible!

Gary Hedges, Biological Recording Officer, CBDC
www.cbdc.org