

## MESSAGE FROM ....

### ..... Our BRANCH CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the Autumn edition of our branch magazine containing the usual mix of news and articles.

We had a thoroughly enjoyable members day & AGM at Haybridge Nature Reserve in July, the highlight for me was the colourful array of 70+ different moth species trapped by Sarah Bradley and Martin Tordoff, if anyone thinks moths are boring brown things, just go to one of the branch moth events to have your perception changed! Whilst I am in 'moth mode' it is also worthy of mention that Martin has recently found a rarity in his Kendal garden moth trap, the Waved Black which is a new species to Cumbria.

Moving on to butterflies, the Marsh Fritillary flight season was plagued by poor weather, the first time this has happened since the start of the reintroduction project four years ago. The late summer web count results will tell us if this has had any significant impact on the breeding population. Two new sites in Ennerdale were populated in the spring, one of these is on privately owned land near the village and the other in a wonderful location a mile or so beyond the head of the lake on Forestry Commission land.

The Ennerdale valley is now being managed by the 'Wild Ennerdale partnership' in such a way that nature is given a free hand to shape the valley, the return of the Marsh Fritillary to the upper valley has been welcomed by the partnership and much practical help given by the project. My thanks go to the project partners, Forestry Commission, United Utilities and the National Trust and in particular the project leader Gareth Browning and his hard working team of staff and volunteers. For a thoroughly enjoyable day out, go there!

The other butterfly highlight for me has been the first season of the Mountain Ringlet project. The response to our publicity in the national BC magazine, local press and 'Cumbria' magazine has been superb. Thanks to Martin Tordoff and Peter Wilde for their efforts and to all the surveyors, especially Bill Wallace who has walked many miles across the fells and submitted a host of high quality records. There have been very few evenings when my email has not contained several reports from members and non members alike and it will take us a while to collate all the information and update our records. We have also carried out habitat surveys & soil sampling of both occupied and unoccupied sites in order to try and understand the current distribution of the species. My thanks go to NRM laboratories for funding analysis of ten site soil samples.

A full update will be placed on the website and included in the spring newsletter.

For one of the most fascinating butterfly related stories of the summer make sure you read John Mounsey's article later in this newsletter.

## Committee News

As required by branch rules, myself (Steve Clarke), David Eastlick (Treasurer) and Sarah Bradley (moth officer) resigned after our 3 year term.

Myself and David were re-elected but Sarah decided to stand down as Moth officer and Martin Tordoff was elected into this post. I would like to thank Sarah for all her work promoting moths for many years and I'm sure Martin will continue the good work.

Chris Winnick was elected to the committee. Chris is a great supporter of branch events and it will be a pleasure to work with him in committee.

### COVER PHOTO

I wish I could see a Camberwell Beauty like this in Cumbria.

I wish it would just settle in front of me at eye level.

I wish I could get a really good photo of it.

I wish.

## INDOOR PRESENTATION

Butterfly Conservation Cumbria and the Cumbria Wildlife Trust Kendal Support Group are holding a joint event. This will be an illustrated talk by **Steve Doyle** and entitled 'Conserving Butterflies in Cumbria.' Bearing in mind all the conservation work done by both organisations this is a great opportunity to come along and also express your opinions.

Date and time : Wednesday 04 January 2012 at 7.30 pm.

Venue : Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Plumgarths, Crook Road, Kendal, LA8 8LX

Suggested donation : £2.00 - no booking required.

Contact for queries : Martin Tordoff, 01539 735935

## WINTER WORK PARTIES - 2011/12

Work parties are on the second Sunday of the month from September to March. We meet at 10.00 am at the venues outlined below. If you have queries e.g. about the weather there is a contact person named for each venue or you can phone Steve Clarke on 01946 725828.

Bring a packed lunch if you are staying for the afternoon session and always bring boots or stout footwear (wellies for Braithwaite Moss), warm clothing and wet weather gear just in case. We provide tools and we have gloves if you don't have your own.

### 11<sup>th</sup> September 2011 at Fell Edge – Grid Ref. SD 436890

Take the A5074 from the A590 at Gilpin Bridge, past The Howe and the Lyth valley hotel and turn left after about 7km, signposted Cartmel on a single track road. After 1km pass Broad Oak farm on the right. Shortly after and where the road bears right, you turn up left (before a house marked Greenside) and follow a track over a cattle grid, up a hill and park at the farm buildings.

Contact person, David Eastlick, 015395 32076

**9<sup>th</sup> October 2011 at Braithwaite Moss - Grid Ref. NY 232248**

Follow the A66 from Keswick towards Cockermouth, pass junctions to Braithwaite village on your left, The entrance to Braithwaite Moss is about 1km further on the right along a straight stretch of road. Be very careful as you turn into the track leading to the parking area at the farm buildings as this is a very fast stretch of road.

**Wellies are a 'must' for this one.**

Contact, Steve Clarke, 01946 725828.

**6<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at Linsty Hall Wood near Ickenthaite, Rusland - Grid Ref. SD 326902**

This is a new venue for us at a recently discovered High Brown site which needs some scrub removal. At Haverthwaite crossroads on the A590 as you travel west take a right turn just past the Haverthwaite steam railway station. Your road soon comes to a 'T' junction, turn right then left fork soon after and head for Rusland village. At Rusland Cross (about 3 miles) the road bears sharp left (ignore minor turning on right to Crosslands) and then very shortly afterwards bears sharp right by Rusland Hall. At a 'T' junction (facing church) turn left. After less than half a mile keep left (ignore the two right turns to Satterthwaite) but soon after look for the sharp right turn uphill through woods to Ickenthaite. After less than 1 mile look to park on open grassland on the left, about 100 yards from the landowner's cottage on the left.

Contact, Chris Winnick, 01539 728254

**11<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at Linsty Hall Wood near Ickenthaite, Rusland - Grid Ref, SD 326902**

Details same as for the last session on 6<sup>th</sup> November, above.

**8<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at Fell Edge - Grid Ref. SD 436890**

Details same as for the previous session at Fell Edge, see above, 11<sup>th</sup> September.

**12<sup>th</sup> February 2012 at Township Plantation - Grid Ref. SD 454885**

Take the A5074 from the A590 at Gilpin Bridge and go up the Lyth valley. Yurn second left to The Howe, no signpost but follow a narrow road, cross another minor road and go up the hill. At the top of the hill in the centre of the hamlet bear left and soon bear right along a bumpy track. Enter the wood and park after 50 metres in a small parking area.

Contact, Sarah Bradley, 015395 52340

**11<sup>th</sup> March 2012 at Township Plantation – Grid Ref. Sd 454885**

Details and contact person same as above for 12<sup>th</sup> February.

**STOP PRESS :** Just prior to going to printers with this newsletter we've heard from Martin Tordoff that he had a remarkable moth in his moth trap recently. Martin had a rarity in his Kendal garden, the Waved Black, which is a new species to Cumbria. When Martin comes back down from Cloud 9 we hope to hear more from him about this exciting discovery.

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## **MORECAMBE BAY LIMESTONE WOODLANDS PROJECT**

We are now well into this four year funded Project, in fact nearing the end of it and plans are ongoing to do everything we can to ensure that the vital work continues. We had hoped to include a full update on the Project from Regional Officer Dave Wainwright but there is so much going on at present that the printing deadline for this newsletter meant we had to leave it until the Spring 2012 edition. Nevertheless, that gives more time to properly report not only progress so far but also progress this coming winter. It is also timely as we will by then be looking forward to the next butterfly season as well.

Just to recap though, this Project you probably know is a very important part of Butterfly Conservation's national strategy as well as our local strategy. Nationally Butterfly Conservation have embarked on several landscape projects aimed at conserving large swathes of habitat or at the very least, several pockets of habitat with direct or reasonable connectivity corridors between them. The South East Woodlands Project is one of the landscape projects ongoing and there is another in the culm grassland areas of the West Country. These and other projects are aimed at various species of butterflies and moths which are either nationally endangered, locally endangered or both. In many cases the habitat work done will also benefit other species as well as those primarily targeted so that is an added bonus. An important thing to remember at this point however is that when any habitat management work is planned we must always firstly carry out an assessment of the possible impact on other species of wildlife as well as Lepidoptera.

Personally, I am greatly encouraged by the efforts being made to manage habitat on a landscape basis. Awareness of all other factors is absolutely necessary but in general landscape habitat management is in my opinion the way forward and it is also pleasing to see that other organisations are embracing this line of thought as well. I won't go into all the reasoning here but I will say again that whilst flora might survive on or in postage stamp sized reserves or other similar areas of land it is unlikely that fauna will survive long term in similar small sized areas. The need to be able to spread out into nearby suitable habitat is important and connectivity corridors enable colonies to inter react and maintain genetic strength along with overall numbers.

Back to our own 'landscape' project, the Morecambe Bay Limestone Woodlands. To recap, we have work ongoing in over 30 broadleaved woodlands where woodland management work had either stopped completely or where we could work with estate managers to enable their work to better embrace the needs of wildlife within those woods. Vital for species like the High Brown, Pearl Bordered and Silver Washed fritillaries – need I say more?

**Steve Doyle**

## Small Blue matters

### in West Cumbria.

There is no escaping the fact that it has been an awful year for the Small Blue as far as numbers of adult butterflies are concerned. The weather in Workington and Maryport was poor throughout its flight period and during the time when pupae should have emerged so the likelihood is that many simply perished or did not stir enough to mate and lay eggs. These conditions must occur from time to time and hopefully enough will have survived to maintain a viable presence for this tiny creature known locally as 'the Allerdale' butterfly.

HOWEVER .....

It would be easy to simply blame climatic conditions for the poor showing in 2011 even though those conditions undoubtedly played a large part. Another significant reason is loss of or severe damage to the breeding colonies in West Cumbria. Our largest colony by far was on the old steelworks site but from a best day count of 1000 Small Blues just a few short years ago the count in the best day I had this year was below 20. This undoubtedly, albeit in my opinion, is as a result of habitat damage caused by the de-commissioning of the site by Corus. Since that work done over a year ago a great deal of the larval foodplant Kidney Vetch has re-grown but all the old breeding and roosting areas have gone and the vast majority of over-wintering larvae were buried below mounds of earth.

In time the colony could grow again but it will take a very long time and it is still doubtful that time will be allowed. We were in contact with the developers Eatonfield to try to secure part of the Small Blue colony but Eatonfield have now gone into liquidation and the site is now back for sale on the open market for a considerable amount. It is likely it will be bought by another developer and if so we will try our best to enter a dialogue with them the aim being to conserve a fraction of the huge site for the Small Blue and other locally important species of flora in particular. We are not against development but within that we, and others, feel there should be room for wildlife and particularly the Small Blue which is now on the UK highly endangered species list (meaning that local authorities must take it into account when deciding planning applications).

ELSEWHERE .....

In other parts of West Cumbria there are pockets of Small Blues on 'brownfield' sites either side of the River Derwent but the well known Maryport Docks colony had a very bad year – I only saw single figures on a perfect flying day for them.

On the positive side we held a meeting in Allerdale House of interested parties. That involved planners, developers, businesses, conservation groups and local ecologists with the intention of highlighting the importance of and the presence of the Small Blue in Allerdale. It was a very good meeting and helped to widen the understanding and awareness of the situation.

A small scale habitat translocation of habitat has been done as well. A tiny Small Blue habitat patch behind Workington Reds football ground was in the way of the very important new Northside Bridge so with the help and guidance of the County Council, a local ecologist Sam Griffin supervised the translocation to the other side of the river. Early signs are that it was fraught with practical problems as the habitat was clinker based and thus very brittle. Although the Kidney Vetch survived and Sam did a great job we saw no Small Blues on the new patch and in the event of a suggestion that we should ever translocate a much larger habitat/colony of Small Blues I think that would have to be a very last resort indeed.

During the Summer I re-visited all the habitat patches highlighted in Sam Ellis and Dave Wainwright's 2007 survey report and found Small Blues in differing numbers on each. Although that is good news it should be stressed that those habitat patches can not really be described as 'core' colonies as they are satellites which have no doubt sprung out of the now severely damaged core sites at the Oldside windfarm and at the ex steelworks site further down the railway connectivity corridor. All are also going to be under threat of development at some point no doubt and the real necessity is to retain as much of the aforementioned 'core' sites as possible as without them it is very doubtful the satellites which have sprung up, will survive long term and although habitat creation can and should take place, that takes time to mature.

A good news story to end with however is that a major business in Workington has agreed to retain as much Small Blue (occupied) habitat as possible within that business's boundaries. Major developments are taking place there for the good of the area in general so we work with them rather than against them. I'm very pleased to report that they have gone out of their way to accommodate the Small Blue butterfly and I'm sure that is in no small way due to the fact that we have done our best to survey their site and make recommendations which also accommodate their plans with a minimum amount of tweaking. Our thanks go to them and their ecologist neither of whom I will name as it is very much private land and not the sort of area where there should be speculative trespassers. Although numbers of Small Blues there are not huge nevertheless it is a most important habitat in the connectivity corridor.

Still a lot to do as far as the Small Blues are concerned but Butterfly Conservation Cumbria will do its level best to work with all concerned and be proactive in conserving the 'Allerdale' butterfly.

**Steve Doyle**

## MARSH FRITILLARY ....

### ..... the continuing story.

This really is a good news story particularly with our 'wild' colonies after years of decline. It used to be a very common butterfly in Cumberland, then turn your back for a few years and it becomes extinct. Knights in shining armour to the rescue – and quick! Just in time we rescued the very last larval batch, borrowed a similar number from tartanland and hey presto we now have 8 colonies back in the wild in Cumberland. Sounds easy doesn't it but I can assure you that many, many hours have gone into this Project both by volunteers and in the form of professional advice. Forgive the reference to Cumberland rather than Cumbria because there are no reliable records ever from Westmorland to my knowledge though I would just love to be proved wrong.

So, what's happening now? Our eight reintroduced or introduced colonies have all produced adult butterflies in 2011 mostly in very good numbers but with exceptions as discussed below. Five of those sites are in Ennerdale where we have completed our objective of reintroducing the species to a 'core' site and then built another 4 satellite colonies around it within reaching distance of each other so that hopefully through connectivity corridors there will be longer term mixing of those colonies and they will also find other suitable habitat for themselves along the way. On two of the Ennerdale sites we have encountered problems this year and the 'core' site is one of them. In both cases cattle grazing has been introduced and that's fine in principle, in fact exactly what is needed on those sites where the habitat was quite rank. It is the timing of that grazing and the level of grazing which might be a problem however. Both have been grazed during the peak Summer months of adult butterfly activity which might well have adversely affected the breeding behaviour of the butterflies and the quality of the host egg laying plant Devils Bit Scabious. What we need is a grazing programme agreed with the farmer in each case and also agreed with Natural England under an agri-environment scheme. In these cases something has gone awry in the communication thread. Hopefully this is a temporary problem and that longer term both sites will be much better for the grazing which will allow the Scabious plants to thrive and compete with the other vigorous surrounding plant species.

Our other three Marsh Fritillary colonies which are 'core' colonies reintroduced in 2007 are all doing extremely well. Our Solway site at Finglandrigg continues to produce huge numbers of adult butterflies and larval webs. Our Keswick site also produces huge numbers and the good news there is that the distribution is now seen over a wider area rather than concentrated on smaller patches. The Penrith site struggled for several years after reintroduction in 2007. We think that is because of the lack of habitat management through lack of grazing and lack of scrub removal but there may be a number of factors and we are certainly aware of one or two possibilities and are working on those. Having only produced a very low number of larval webs from 2007 to 2009 we introduced via Natural England, cattle

grazing and it either was just what was required or very coincidental that in 2010 we had 40 larval webs. In 2011 that has shot up to a remarkable 97 larval webs spread well over the site. We plan some scrub removal and cattle grazing again soon as this once again has become a very healthy Marsh Fritillary colony. Natural England are now hopeful an HLS Agreement can be agreed with the Estate owner and a liaison meeting will have taken place with us by the time this newsletter is issued.

All sounds like good enough news then despite the rotten weather we had during the Marsh Fritillary breeding season. It just goes to show how resilient this species is in the wild when the habitat is right.

#### OUR CAPTIVE BREEDING PROGRAMME

Our captive breeding programme this year did not go according to plan even though we re-built or re-furbished all but one of our breeding cages courtesy of a once only donation from the Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership. I suppose we were due a reality check and we got one this year. It is important to keep the captive breeding programme going of course because that is where our stock comes from for our introductions and reintroductions to the wild. So what happened? We have 12 breeding cages spread across Cumbria from Carlisle to Ulverston and Witherslack to West Cumbria. Eight of those cages produced very few larval webs in 2011. Fortunately the other four cages did extremely well so we still have a viable captive stock to re-distribute in 2012. This is such an important issue that neither I or anybody else should look for excuses; we should examine the possible causes and learn from them in those cages which effectively failed. In Spring 2011 we re-built or re-furbished 11 of our cages which were badly damaged in the previous severe winter conditions so that was a positive factor. More likely causes are that the very dry April did not help the larvae which need moisture to grow and pupate. That dry April also dried out the wooden cage frames and caused gaps to appear so quite a few larvae could escape. Then we had a very cold, wet and windy May and June almost non stop. That resulted in a late pupation time and a good number of larvae simply did not make it and died as larvae, did not fully pupate or died as pupae through being too wet and cold for too long. Those which did emerge successfully as adult butterflies found it hard to move as day after day the weather was awful. Very little mating took place and in fact in my cage many males died before the females emerged; females emerge up to a week after males in many cases.

We can't do much about the weather but we can learn from our experience in case of similar conditions in the future. Although we will discuss and agree a future strategy it is likely that the captive larvae which climb upwards and pupate on the top of the wooden frame, will be detached and laid in the hay at the cage base where they can be kept more moist in dry weather. Alternatively we will mist spray them occasionally *in situ* on the frame. The same goes for those larvae which pupate on the sides of the warmer plastic pots which



the plants grow in. After all the larvae in the wild do not have wooden frames or plastic pots to pupate on and stay to pupate near ground level where it is more moist particularly overnight. Those 2011 weather conditions were not experienced in earlier years but as I said 2011 was a reality check and a steep learning curve. The Marsh Fritillaries in the wild have done well so a re-think is required for our captive breeding programme so it replicates the wild as far as possible. We thought we had already achieved that – but nature taught us otherwise – as always. The good news however is that the 8 colonies in the wild are surviving and most are doing very well indeed. That's the main thing and gives us a bit of breathing space as we again try to get our captive breeding strategy right.

### **Steve Doyle**

Late News : I've just completed a larval web count at Finglandrigg and have found 294 webs so assuming I've missed a few that 300 or so figure is extremely good and credit must go to Colin Auld of Natural England and his staff for all the excellent management work they have done. Even better news is that our Keswick site produced over 500 larval webs, credit there to Paul Barnes the farmer. So for the first time we have over 1000 larval webs in total across our eight reintroduced sites. Fantastic by any standards.

## **RECORDING**

As the 2011 butterfly season unfortunately draws to a close, don't forget to compile your records and send them in to Teresa Frost, Tullie House Museum, Castle Street, Carlisle, CA3 8TP. Don't do as I do and leave them until later, do them now. Records are so important and help us with our on-going planning as well as other things. I'm turning over a new leaf, I'm going to do mine as soon as I've finished writing this.

### **'Patches'**

I'll be writing to all the 'patches' recorders towards the end of September to ask you to send in your records but if you have them ready earlier please send them earlier. You can send them to me as usual or direct to Tullie House but if the latter, do let me know so I don't chase them up.

### **WCBS**

Those of you who record under the WCBS scheme will have your separate instructions and of course all records end up on both our local County database as well as the National database.

## **MOUNTAIN RINGLETS - No longer envious !!**

In Newsletter 22 I was bemoaning the fact that I had been very unlucky in my attempts to see Mountain Ringlets. Not any more! The morning of June 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 dawned fine in Sedbergh, so my wife and I rushed breakfast, packed a picnic and set off for High Raise, above Haweswater. True to form, by the time we were driving through the Lune gorge the clouds were down. When we parked at the head of Haweswater there was no sign of Kidsty Pike or High Raise and it was blowing a gale from the SW, but it was quite warm, so I set off up the hill, not feeling at all optimistic. I had lunch on the top of Kidsty Pike, mostly in cloud but with the odd momentary glimpse of High Raise, and although I couldn't see the valley there was an occasional hole in the cloud above me and the temperature was 14° C, so I set off for High Raise. To my astonishment I hadn't gone far when I kicked up a MR which disappeared in a flash down wind towards Scotland. Success! However, there was more to come. When I was about half way to High Raise I saw a MR down in the grass and spent the next 20 minutes with it. It would climb up a blade of grass, wings sometimes open, sometimes shut, until nearing the top it would be battered back and forth by the wind like a flag and it retreated back down. This was repeated several times, but it never took flight. I found five more butterflies in the area, all down in the grass like the first. At that point the clouds came right down again and it started to rain so I set off back, but I had hardly started when I spied a wee pale green caterpillar. It looked vaguely butterfly-like, but I didn't think it could be a MR when the adults were around so I collected it for identification. I had only gone a few more paces when I came across another, which I also collected.

Back home I checked in the books and decided that the caterpillars were indeed MR. I had brought them back with mat grass in the jar, but I think they hardly fed until they pupated two days later, having spun an extremely flimsy silk hammock. By 08.30 on July 11<sup>th</sup> one of the adults had emerged, and I was sorry that I was out all day and also missed seeing the second. The next two days were committed, so I placed the MRs in total darkness so that hopefully they might sleep. However, when I looked on the third day they were somewhat worn, so they must have been moving around. Questions: do they move around without flying if it is sufficiently warm? Do they have an internal clock and know night from day even in continuous darkness? Luck was with me on July 13<sup>th</sup> when I was next free to take the MRs back to their home. The weather was fine although there was a brisk NE wind and the temperature as I neared the top of Kidsty Pike was 11°C as I saw my first MR, quite a fresh specimen. To cut a long story short I must have seen more than 50 MRs in the area

bounded by Kidsty Pike, Rampsgill Head, High Raise and Low Raise, so there was plenty of company for “my” two and the colony seems to be thriving. Some were very fresh and others very worn and the most favoured patch was about half way in a direct line between Kidsty Pike and High Raise, but that might have been because it was sunnier while I was there. Several were nectaring on Heath Bedstraw and on Heath Rush, and one very fresh specimen landed on the back of my right hand and sucked up sweat until I disturbed it in a failed attempt to get my camera into position. As I had lunch by the cairn on High Raise I had a MR and a Red Admiral for company. I didn’t have time or legs to check the limits of the colony below Low Raise or towards High Street, but by that time it had turned cloudy anyway. Incidentally there were Small Heaths also right up to the summits, and several Green Carpet Moths among the myriad of “grass moths” and cuckoo-spit. Key grid refs have been submitted to the proper quarters and I now have photos of MR larvae, pupae and adults. Success indeed!

**John Mounsey**

### **THE 2011 MOUNTAIN RINGLET SURVEY**

In newsletter 22 we mentioned that there was to be a massive Mountain Ringlet survey this Summer led by members of this Branch, notably Martin Tordoff and Peter Wilde. In fact it has been hugely successful and attracted loads of publicity as well as volunteers from within the Branch and from others outside. We intended to publish some results in this newsletter but there has been so much data coming in that Martin has nowhere near had enough time to analyse it and do a full enough report just yet. We will therefore defer that report until newsletter 24 in Spring 2012 which will be timely as the next survey will be almost upon us. Sorry about the delay but we hope you will agree it is best at present just to report that it has been hugely successful and that a more coordinated report will follow.

**Your Branch Committee.**

## **MOTH MATTERS**

Something really spectacular happened in the butterfly and moth season last year. A Painted Lady invasion perhaps or a Clouded Yellow invasion – no neither of these. Another Antler moth invasion stripping the grass from our Fells – no not that either and neither was it a rare discovery like the Rosy Marsh moth a few years ago.

It was in fact an invasion in some parts of Cumbria by the Bird Cherry Ermine moth which spins extraordinary and massive webs which can look quite ghostly in appearance over a quite wide area. The invasion was reported in the *Cumberland News* on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June and accompanied by several rather spooky photos. Their headline was 'Ghostly webs turn Cumbrian trees into haunting sight.' The article went on to say 'Walkers and cyclists are being stopped in their tracks by a ghostly phenomenon in the Cumbrian countryside.'

I'm sure the *Cumberland News* will not mind me copying the full piece in our internal newsletter because it makes fascinating reading. Here it is :-

Trees have been turning white after an infestation of caterpillars covered them in a silk web and stripped the leaves from their branches. Lines of white trees present an apocalyptic vision in the bright sunshine and yet the bird cherry ermine moth caterpillars are doing no harm, according to entomologist Stephen Hewitt from Carlisle's Tullie House.

He said: "They are always found on cherry trees where the larvae feed and they spin this webbing as a protection against predators. "They start feeding in the spring and the adult moths fly in August. There are many thousands on each tree."

The National Trust has had reports of web-covered trees across the county and clusters have been found elsewhere in the country. A number line the Latrigg walking route near Keswick where Teresa Bell has regularly strolled for the last decade but never seen anything like it. John Hooson, nature conservation adviser with the National Trust, said: "It is a really good year for these moths. They are everywhere on bird cherry trees. Trees have been turned silver by the web and they are quite beautiful in a strange sort of way, until you notice all the larvae wriggling around."

With rain, the trees should grow new leaves and they would only suffer from the infestation if they were already in poor condition.

Mr Hewitt added: "The hard winter may have been good for the moth. The trees can be stripped in just days. "It is a very weird sight."

The moth gets its name from the adult markings – it is light-coloured with black spots on its wings. Once the leaves are stripped, the caterpillars often move onto neighbouring hedgerows and even cover barbed wire fences in their web.

The strange sight is rare and only appears a few times in a generation.

My thanks go to the *Cumberland News* for their excellent report and to those who contributed to the article.

**Steve Doyle.**

## **Climate Change .....**

### **..... is it having an effect on our butterflies and moths?**

I will say firstly that I doubt if many, anybody even, reading this will have a definite answer to the above question although some no doubt will hold strong opinions one way or another. Certainly I'm not expert enough to pontificate about it. However it is something we need to be aware of in my opinion because we can't afford to be wrong if by ignoring it does turn out to be the wrong course of action. There are lots of opinions of 'experts' and some of them are poles apart and from one extreme to the other. Again, a personal opinion I stress, it appears to me that it is the views of those who lean to the doom and gloom direction that seem to grab most media attention. Maybe that's because it is more sensational and that's what the media like or think we, the consumers like. I don't mind that because with something as important as this it is surely best to err on the side of caution.

So where is this article leading us to? Our concerns are twofold surely. Firstly on the wider issue we want to do what is right for mankind and this planet of ours. In that respect we should all be heeding the warnings that increases in greenhouse gases are doing us no good – and so on. But that is a world problem so not to be tackled in this newsletter. That brings us to the second concern which is something we can be not only aware of but equally we can do something about in this Branch of Butterfly Conservation. That concern then is for all of us to consider what trends are changing in Cumbria and how our numbers of butterflies and moths are affected for better or for worse. Yes, the words 'for better' are appropriate as well; read on.

Records are an excellent way to recognise changes as trends emerge (or not) by looking at year on year records for the same area whether it is the county as a whole, a transect walk, a 1km patch you have adopted or your own casual records noted down as you navigate through the butterfly and moth season. Not only do records tell us about numbers but they can and do help us to spot trends as a result of which we can maybe take some corrective action or at the very least flag up the problem for more learned individuals to consider. Just as importantly these days trends which emerge from records can tell us that Climate Change might be the reason and certainly something we can not ignore.

I mentioned that there can be good points and bad points as far as our native Lepidoptera are concerned. In the last decade or so we have seen our list of butterfly species in Cumbria increase to 41 by the addition of Comma, Small Skipper and White Letter Hairstreak. The Ringlet is now found in South Cumbria as well as the North but is that a reverse climate change trend or have the South Cumbria ones found their way up from Lancashire? The Gatekeeper is now moving inland whereas for many years it was found only on the extreme coastal strip from the Furness area up to Workington. The Speckled Wood was confined for many years to one woodland in South Cumbria but is now one of the most common

butterflies in the Morecambe Bay area and has inundated the Furness area and is now being seen as far north as the Solway Plain. The Rosy Marsh moth is once again recorded in Cumbria but as a result of climate change or past under-recording?

There are not such good trends as well, no doubt about that. The Pearl Bordered and High Brown Fritillaries have in recent years had a horrific time, so too has the Marsh Fritillary. Holly Blue is now very hard to find. The Duke of Burgundy now has only one major colony in Cumbria though there are a couple of tiny colonies as well.

But how much of these goods and bads are down to climate change and how many can be put down to habitat change caused by a variety of problems such as land usage and pure neglect. Equally another cause of success of a species might just be natural expansion of range and I would guess that is probably the case with the Comma and now the Small Skipper for which I found 31 on a Marsh Fritillary site close to Carlisle in 2011. Beyond that I leave you to form your own conclusions.

Going back to the original question we should look at our Cumbrian species list to see which ones might be under threat from climate change and the most obvious one is the Mountain Ringlet. Questions have been posed already by others who suggest it might have to climb up and reside even further up our Cumbrian Fells to survive. It might have to go so far up that it can't go any further and will be lost from Cumbria and hence England. At present however that is not looking like it is happening just yet as records are found of more and more colonies each year thanks to the sterling efforts of Steve Clarke and his recording team of mountain goat like fell walkers. At present there is still enough of its larval foodplant, which is mat grass *Nardus strictus* in fact more than enough so the butterfly should survive shouldn't it? Or should it? After all mat grass occurs at much lower altitudes than the butterfly is found at so why does it use the higher up patches? That is the nub of the climate change poser for this butterfly. I think it is safe to say that climate change on the negative side is only likely to affect species at the southern end of their geographical range. In Cumbria therefore the only other butterfly which might be adversely affected is the Scotch Argus so there might well be a case for introducing this species to other suitable parts of Cumbria instead of solely relying on the as yet strong colonies at Arnside Knott and Smardale.

Elsewhere in the UK there is even more debate and speculation about how climate change might affect our Lepidoptera. One interesting species I investigated recently was the Queen of Spain Fritillary. It was found in reasonable numbers for a few years recently in an area of Sussex near the coast. One school of thought felt it could be a newcomer caused by climate change, after all it is a fairly common butterfly in mainland Europe.

But so too are many other species just across the English Channel. Equally it could have been as a result of an irresponsible captive bred release. I merely state the alternatives but thinking positive there were known to be genuine migrants in 2007 so it is very possible that some successfully overwintered a couple of times which would explain pristine condition individuals being seen in 2008 and 2009 in the same location. We had a number of successive mild winters so I wondered how it had fared in the hard winter of 2009/10 because even our friends in the south had a very cold winter as well. My source of information there reliably told me that the Queen of Spain did not make an appearance at all in Summer 2010. The natural thought was that climate change could have been the reason they came but that a single hard British winter felled them off. Well I'm going to partially take the romance (?) out of that theory. I think it is likely the originals came naturally to the UK shores in 2007 as a result of a favourable warm wind across the Channel as has happened in the past and that a hard British winter did for them again as has happened in the past. However it just so happens that the site where they were has been significantly habitat damaged so that also might be the reason for the non appearance in 2010. What a pity, now we will never know, but then it might happen again in 2011 but will they be new migrants or the produce of overlooked 2010 individuals. Well at least we should be able to sort that one out just by the condition i.e. fresh or partly worn travel weary individuals.

We might not have solved any problems here but hopefully we have posed a question or two and encouraged many more members to send in their butterfly records. Only then can we collate them and come up with trends which can in most respects be relied upon or at the very least followed up by further investigation. As for climate change I repeat, we ignore it at our peril but beyond that I can only leave you to draw your own conclusions.

**Steve Doyle**

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## IT'S BEEN A FUNNY OLD YEAR

Yes, it's been a funny old year. The butterfly season got off to a great start but seemed to go downhill rapidly, with few warm, sunny days through the summer. Now as I write in mid-August it seems to have gone so quickly and is over before I've even got used to writing 2011 on my cheques.



April was unseasonably warm and sunny, so much so that by the 4th May I was able to count 36 Dingy Skipper on the southern slag bank at Channelside in Barrow. This was both my highest and earliest record for the species – so early in fact that my computer recording software didn't believe it. At the same time, I was regularly coming across the fascinating Dark-edged Bee fly (with its long lance of a proboscis) while out looking for early butterflies. It is being increasingly recorded in Cumbria, including in my garden for the first time this year.

But then it turned cold and wet and Dingy Skippers were hard to find for the rest of May and June. One individual was still around though on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, completing a hat-trick of my highest, earliest and latest counts of the species, all in the same year. My impression was that numbers of other butterfly species were generally down on last year as they struggled to cope with the wet days. I found Peacock, Holly Blue and Purple Hairstreak difficult to find, counts of Dark-green Fritillary and Gatekeeper were lower than normal and I'm still awaiting the first Painted Lady of the season. Mentioning Holly Blue brings me to the field trip at the slag bank. Having suggested it as a good, if somewhat exposed, site for a field trip, I spent several months dreading the weather would be wet and windy. In the event it came up trumps with one of the few pleasant days of the summer and everyone seemed to enjoy what the site had to offer. I went back a couple of days later and found several Holly Blue on the ivy growing round the railway bridge. Sorry, everyone, we probably walked past them on the field trip! Equally, I forgot to mention the Bee orchids and the (very rare in Cumbria) Yellow-wort; apologies again.

As always, this year has turned up a surprise or two. I've lived within sight of Hoad Hill for nearly forty years. Those of you who have passed through Ulverston will know it as the site of the "lighthouse on the hill" – the recently refurbished monument to Sir John Barrow. My first surprise was discovering this year, on reading his autobiography, that amongst his many prodigious talents he was also an accomplished early 18<sup>th</sup> Century naturalist.

My second surprise was discovering on the hill just below the monument a single specimen of one of my favourite butterflies, the Grayling. I've never seen it here before but I've tended to regard Hoad Hill as a bracken covered sheep pasture and would never have expected to find this species there. It could be a vagrant, but from



where I'm not sure, or more likely part of a small colony on the rocky area known as the Devil's armchair or from the old quarry. Unfortunately, neither is very accessible and someone else will have to scramble up there to solve the mystery. Why, you might ask, would this, one of the brown butterflies, be one of my favourite species? It's not showy, or particularly rare, or subject to conservation effort despite being listed as "vulnerable". Actually, I think it has an understated beauty, a beauty that is better described by its first ever name of "Black-eyed marble butterfly", than by the currently used name. Close up, the underside resembles a piece of marbled rock; it is the master of camouflage for the rocky habitats it occupies. Tantalisingly, it rarely offers you a glimpse of its upper wing pattern, except during its delightful courtship display, when the male opens and closes its wings showing the female what it has to offer.

This display lies behind the Latin name of the species *Hipparchia*, which originates from ancient Greece. Hipparchia is often regarded as the first liberated female. Refusing her parents choice of husband, the beautiful Hipparchia wanted to marry the much older, impecunious philosopher Crates. Crates tried to put her off by opening his cloak and displaying his threadbare and much-mended tunic and lack of wealth. She still married him though, but whether he showered her with an aphrodisiac, as does the male Grayling his partner, I couldn't say. That's the wonder of wildlife – there's always something new to discover and you never know what will turn up, even in a funny old year.

## **Peter Wilde**

### **EMPERORS and ADMIRALS in Fermyn Woods**

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July with Brian and Avril Chadwick

A resume of another of Brian and Avril's crusade to see more 'off patch' British butterflies. This time they visit a superb woodland complex near Oundle in Northamptonshire.

Fermyn Wood along with adjoining Lady Wood is part of the ancient Rockingham Forest and on a beautiful warm sunny morning at 9.30 am thirty of us met Max Maughan our leader on a minor road near the Fermyn visitor centre. Good to meet a fellow Cumbrian also as we were warmly welcomed and checked in. Compared with the hilly terrain last Summer at our Large Blue visit to Somerset with David Simcox it was very relaxing this year to stroll along a wide level woodland ride.

Within a few minutes, what joy, we were delighted to see good numbers of White Admirals. For a large butterfly it has a very graceful flight. They were so obliging for the photographers as they glided around the sunny glades then nectared on the honeysuckle and bramble flowers. On we strolled, the sunshine enabling us to enjoy Purple Hairstreaks shimmering

like tiny silver coins over the canopy of young oaks. Several rested on outer branches so to prevent severe neck ache we were treated to excellent views through a telescope.

Along the main ride were many Ringlets and Meadow Browns, good numbers of Small, Large and Green Veined Whites, Red Admirals on the warm track, Comma, Small Tortoiseshells, Gatekeepers, a Holly Blue and a Southern Hawker dragonfly. Max told us he had been seeing Purple Emperors for the last two weeks (which indicates a much earlier flight season this year) so we were eagerly awaiting that exciting moment when suddenly two very large dark coloured butterflies bombed past our ears, whizzed over our heads and zoomed over the top of the canopy. As leaders have to be ever optimistic, Max suggested we stroll (we did enjoy this strolling!!) to the end of the ride. On our way back to the cars he was hopeful (hang on to that word) we would see one or two Purple Emperors on the ground probing the minerals on damp patches. This we did, enjoying many other butterflies but no Emperors as yet..... then, music to our ears, Max's voice announced .... One Purple Emperor on the ground, and it remained, unperturbed while 30 people quietly gathered around many with large cameras. It was a male Purple Emperor with his impressive 6.7 cm wingspan as he absorbed minerals through his curled proboscis. It allowed us to admire the shape and lovely markings on his underwing. We and some of our family from mid Wales who had shared our weekend strolled back to our cars, beamed at each other and said 'mission accomplished.'

#### **Brian and Avril Chadwick.**

PS. Max later told us he had visited Cumbria the previous week and was delighted to have seen over 50 Mountain Ringlets above Honister.

*Ed:* The behaviour of the Purple Emperor on the ground is usually just as Brian and Avril describe it. Females are much harder to find let alone see but when either sex does settle on the ground they can be there for quite some time so with care you can get very close to them. Again as Brian and Avril describe they usually have their wings closed but flick them wide open momentarily and you have to be quick to anticipate when if you want a wings open photo. Sometimes however they will settle on the ground with wings full open – but you have to be very lucky and probably on a partly shaded day when it is not steaming hot.

## Andy Senior's Butterfly Tour of Britain – Species and Locations

In Newsletter 22 we promised to print where Andy Senior had seen all his species in his 12 month 'Tour of Britain' - here it is.

<b>Common name</b>	<b>Subspecies</b>	<b>First date</b>	<b>Location</b>
Chequered Skipper	None	11 Jun	Glasdrum Wood, Argyll
Small Skipper	None	04 Jul	Heysham Power Station
Essex Skipper	None	11Aug	Aston Rowant, Oxfordshire
Lulworth Skipper	None	15 Jul	Lulworth Cove, Dorset
Silver-spotted Skipper	None	11Aug	Aston Rowant, Oxfordshire
Large Skipper	faunus	27 Jun	Glasson Moss, Cumbria
Dingy Skipper	tages	30May	Gait Barrows, Lancashire
Dingy Skipper (Burren Dingy Skipper)	baynesi		
Grizzled Skipper	None	30May	Martin Down, Hampshire.
Swallowtail (British Swallowtail)	britannicus	16Jun	Strumpshaw Fen, Norfolk
Swallowtail (Continental Swallowtail)	gorganus		
Wood White	sinapis	29May	Haugh Wood, Herefordshir
Wood White (Irish Wood White)	juvernica		
Real's Wood White	None		Craigavon railway cutting
Clouded Yellow	None	01 Oct	Carn Friars, St. Mary's, IoS
Clouded Yellow (Helice Clouded Yellow)	Form helice		
Brimstone	rhamni	06Aug	Magna Carta Lane, Berks
Brimstone (Irish Brimstone)	gravesi		
Large White	None	23 Jul	Burneside
Small White	None	21 Jul	Burneside,
Green-veined White (British Green-veined White)	sabellicae	27 Jul	Whitbarrow Scar,
Green-veined White (Scottish Green-veined White)	thornsoni	06May	Kyle of Tongue causeway
Green-veined White (Irish Green-veined White)	britannica		
Orange Tip (British Orange-tip)	britannica	11 Apr	Ham Wall, Somerset
Orange Tip (Irish Orange-tip)	hibernica		
Green Hairstreak	None	18 Apr	Lords Lot bog, Over Kellet,
Brown Hairstreak	None	11Aug	Whitecross Green Wood,
Purple Hairstreak	None	05 Jul	Arnside Knott, Lancashire
White-letter Hairstreak	None	17 Jul	Slade Bottom, St.Briavels,
Black Hairstreak	None	16 Jun	Glaphorn Cow Pastures, N
		30	
Small Copper	eleus	30Sep	On board Scillonian, Scillies
Small Copper (Irish Small Copper)	hibernica		
Small Blue	None	06 Jun	Workington wind farm,
Silver-studded Blue	argus	15-Jul-	Morden Bog, Wareham,
Silver-studded Blue (Southern Silver-studded Blue)	cretaceus	18 Jun	Tout Quarry, Portland,
Silver-studded Blue (Northern Silver-studded Blue)	masseyi	11 Jul	Prees Heath, Whitchurch,

Silver-studded Blue (Western Silver-studded Blue)	caernensis	11 Jul	Great Orme, Llandudno,
Brown Argus	None	09Aug	Snodland Hills, Kent
Northern Brown Argus	salmacis	28 Jun	Witherslack woods
Northern Brown Argus(White Spot)	artaxerxes	27 Jun	Rockcliffe, Kirkcudbright
Common Blue	icarus	06Aug	Magna Carta Lane,Berks
Common Blue (Irish Common Blue)	mariscolore		
Chalkhill Blue	None	09Aug	Snodland Hills, Kent
Adonis Blue	None	30May	Martin Down, Hampshire.
Holly Blue	britannia	13Aug	Burneside churchyard,
Large Blue	arion	18 Jun	Collard Hill, Somerset
Duke of Burgundy	None	30May	Gait Barrows, Lancashire
White Admiral	None	16 Jul	Bentley Wood, Hampshire
Purple Emperor	None	16 Jul	Bentley Wood, Hampshire
Red Admiral	None	28 Jul	Burneside
Painted Lady	None	21Aug	Oriel Cottage, Burneside
Small Tortoiseshell	None	27 Jul	Whitbarrow Scar, Cumbria
Peacock	None	16Aug	Oriel Cottage, Burneside
Comma	None	06Aug	Cottisford, Oxfordshire
Comma (Hutchinsons Comma)	hutchinsoni	16 Jul	Bentley Wood, Hampshire
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	selene	13 Jun	Whitbarrow, Cumbria
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary)	insularum	11 Jun	Glasdrum Wood, Argyll
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	None	30May	Gait Barrows, Lancashire
High Brown Fritillary	None	27 Jul	Whitbarrow Scar, Cumbria
Dark Green Fritillary	aglaja	27 Jul	Whitbarrow Scar, Cumbria
Dark Green Fritillary (Scottish Dark Green Fritillary)	scotica		Barkbooth Lot, Cumbria
Silver-washed Fritillary	None	25 Jul	Witherslack Woods,
Silver-washed Fritillary (Greenish female Silver-washed Fritillary)	Form		
Marsh Fritillary	valesina	16 Jul	Bentley Wood, Hampshire
Marsh Fritillary	anglicana	30May	Martin Down, Hampshire.
Marsh Fritillary	scotica		
Marsh Fritillary	hibernica		
Glanville Fritillary	None	31May	Hurst Castle, Hampshire
Heath Fritillary	None	19 Jun	Haddon Hill, Somerset
Speckled Wood	tircis	29 Jun	Leighton Moss
Speckled Wood (Isles of Scilly Speckled Wood)	insula	01 Oct	St. Mary's, IoS Boat of Garten RSPB,
Speckled Wood (Scottish Speckled Wood)	oblita	03May	Invernesshire
Wall	None	27 Jul	Whitbarrow Scar, Cumbria
(Small) Mountain Ringlet (English Small Mountain Ringlet)	mnemon	13 Jun	Irton Fell, Cumbria
(Small) Mountain Ringlet (Scottish Small Mountain Ringlet)	scotica		
(Small) Mountain Ringlet (Irish Small Mountain Ringlet)	aetheria		
Scotch Argus	aethiops	01Aug	Arnside Knott, Lancashire
Scotch Argus (Western Scotch Argus)	caledonia	02Aug	near Hightae, Lockerbie,
Marbled White	serena	18 Jun	Collard hill, Somerset
Grayling	semele	20 Jul	Whitbarrow Scar, Cumbria
Grayling (Great Orme Grayling)	thyone	11 Jul	Great Orme, Llandudno,

Grayling (Scottish Grayling)	scota	27 Jun	Rockcliffe, Kirkcudbright
Grayling (Atlantic Grayling)	atlantica		
Grayling (Burren Grayling)	clarensis		
Grayling (Irish Grayling)	hibernica		
Gatekeeper (Hedge Brown)	None	06Aug	Magna Carta Lane, Berks
Meadow Brown (British Meadow Brown)	insularis	27 Jul	Whitbarrow Scar, Cumbria
Meadow Brown (Isles of Scilly Meadow Brown)	cassiteridum		
Meadow Brown (Hebridean Meadow Brown)	splendida		
Meadow Brown (Irish Meadow Brown)	iernes		
Ringlet	None	27 Jun	Glasson Moss, Cumbria
Small Heath	pamphilus	27 Jul	Whitbarrow Scar, Cumbria
Small Heath (Hebridean Small heath)	rhoumensis	12 Jun	Kinloch, Isle of Rhum
Large Heath (Southern Large Heath)	davus	27 Jun	Meathop Moss, Cumbria
Large Heath (Northern Large Heath)	polydama	27 Jun	Glasson Moss, Cumbria
Large Heath (Scottish Large Heath)	scotica		

### Andy Senior.

### A PLACE TO GO.

Andy's places list above will give many of us ideas of what we want to do next year. Some of his places for seeing certain species may find you thinking why he went there to see something he could see in Cumbria. Well, if you went off patch to see something else would you just ignore everything you could also see in Cumbria? I think not and my best ever photo of a Green Veined White was taken in Gloucestershire. Seriously though, yes, many species can be seen in Cumbria and if anyone is in doubt or wants to see anything in particular here just get in touch and we can usually direct you to somewhere local to find a species of butterfly which can be seen in our own county.

A place to go ? Well, John Wilkinson and I had a day out at Llandudno this year. The seaside I hear you ask – well, yes, sort of as we did park near the beach and we did see the sea but it was the Great Orme, which was the main attraction. Without any great effort you can go there and see literally hundreds of Silver Studded Blues. But they are not the usual Silver Studded Blues on this site, they are the slightly smaller but exquisitely marked *caernensis* form. Honestly, we saw hundreds and that included many mating pairs.

We went on 20<sup>th</sup> June and parked on the south shore promenade near where the Orme road comes out. Walk a few yards towards the Orme and take the tarmaced footpath which overlooks the town and traverses the side of the Orme. You'll be tripping over them in no time.

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