

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION
Cumbria Branch

Newsletter No. 24
Spring 2012

**Butterfly
Conservation**

DEDICATED TO SAVING WILD BUTTERFLIES
And MOTHS IN THEIR NATURAL HABITATS

News12001

Message from

..... our Branch Chairman

Welcome to the spring newsletter and the start of a new butterfly season, lets hope the sun shines a bit after the mild and dreary winter and our butterfly fauna enjoys a good breeding season.

During the winter we have carried on with our programme of winter work parties but numbers have been somewhat depleted as a result of poor health suffered by a number of our regulars, I`m glad to say there is now much improvement on all counts.

Committee has taken a hard look at criteria for future work party sites and we have formulated a short list of site characteristics that we feel need to be substantially met before we undertake future management work, for information these are as follows:

- Sites with long-term commitment from both the branch and land-owner, production of a long-term management plan highly desirable.
- Noting that Cumbria is now custodian of several nationally rare species: HBF; PBF; NBA; MF; Wall, it was felt we as a branch had a duty to manage and protect sites containing these, especially if no other agency already involved
- Sites offering connectivity potential – including those not necessarily currently containing nationally rare species but adjacent to ones which do.
- Sites should be capable of long-term monitoring, either by formal transect or frequent visits in season, and only those with potential to succeed should be included in our programme
- Sites where land-owner`s primary focus is on conservation, rather than conservation being of secondary consideration to forestry or other commercial activities.

You will see later in the newsletter that we have once again put together a programme of summer field trips that give the opportunity to see many of our special butterfly species and to meet with other like minded folk.

Last years AGM at Hay Bridge nature reserve near Ulverston was much enjoyed by all, so we intend to repeat the popular mix of a moth event in the morning, AGM followed by a sociable lunch on the veranda, then an afternoon walk around the nature reserve.

After four years as branch chairman I have taken the decision to step down at this years AGM, I shall continue to take an active interest in branch activities whilst giving someone else the opportunity to lead our superb committee.

In conclusion, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to my friends in the committee, past and present for their unfailing support over the last four years and wish my successor well.

Steve Clarke
Branch Chairman

FIELD TRIPS 2012

Field trips are a great way to see many of Cumbria's very special species and what better way than with those who know where to find them. If you don't usually go along, why not try it starting with the Marsh Fritillaries at Finglandrigg. It rained there last year but we still saw loads of them so we are due a nice day this time around.

For all daytime field trips please bring lunch, appropriate clothing and stout footwear – in the case of Finglandrigg this means wellies! For the evening moth events bring warm clothing and a good torch.

Sunday 27th May – Finglandrigg, 1100 hours.

Another chance to see the Marsh Fritillary, hopefully thriving again, at this wonderful site. Take the B5307 west from Carlisle and pass through Thurstonfield and Kirkbampton. About a mile later see Haverlands car park on L of the main road. (Grid ref: NY283572) **Wellies essential.**

Contact: Steve Doyle 01228 544059

Monday 18th June – Township Plantation, 1030 hours

Bracken-bashing – not really a field trip, more of a work party, but we usually see some butterflies too!

Directions: From Gilpin Bridge on the A590 take the A5074 then 2nd L into The Howe village. Turn L in the centre at the top of the hill, then bear R on a bumpy track. Park at the first clearing in the wood. (Grid ref: SD453884)

Contact: Martin Tordoff 01539 735935.

Friday 22nd June (National Moth Night) – Moth trapping at Salthouse Pool, Barrow-in-Furness. 2200 hrs until late.

(Joint event with Cumbria Wildlife Trust's "Barrow's Wildside" project.)

Butterfly Conservation members will run light traps to see what moth species we can attract in this interesting habitat of reed-bed, grassland and scrub.

Directions: From A5087 Roose Road in Barrow, at crossroads by Coop and concrete-spired church turn into St Luke's Avenue. After 300 metres, go straight ahead at Sandgate Inn crossroads, along private road under low railway bridge, keep straight ahead at junction immediately after bridge, ignore "gate" sign and continue for 500 metres to parking area on L. (Grid Ref: SD217684) Please wear strong shoes, warm outdoor clothing and bring a good torch. Suitable for accompanied children aged 8 years and over.

Contacts: Martin Tordoff 01539 735935 or Sue Thurley 01229 471066 – **event could be cancelled if weather very wet &/or windy.**

Sunday 24th June - Hay Bridge Nature Reserve.

Annual General Meeting of Butterfly Conservation's Cumbria Branch, 1100 hours. Before the AGM there will be an inspection of moth traps at 1000 hours to see what arrived overnight (can we beat 2011's 73 species?). Please bring a contribution for the Jacob's Join lunch following the AGM, and then be appropriately shod if joining the butterfly walk on the reserve's mosses or woodlands from around 1300 hours.

Directions: Turn R off the A590 just W of Haverthwaite, signposted Bouth. In Bouth pass the White Hart and head N to Burn Knott where the minor road turns sharp L; here take the R turn (which is in fact straight on) onto an even more minor road for Low Hay Bridge. About a mile along that road you will see the car park on the L and Reserve buildings ahead. (Grid ref SD337876)

Contact: Sarah Bradley 015395 52340.

Sunday 1st July - Great Orme's Head, Llandudno, North Wales. 1200 hours

What should I see? Silver-studded Blue subsp Caernensis. Grayling subsp Thyone.

Getting there: Either (a) meet at site. Directions: A55 to Llandudno Junction, at roundabout take A546 to West Shore, at roundabout take first L into West Parade, park along promenade near to Marine Drive. Or (b) liaise with leader to arrange car-sharing from Cumbria. Walking fairly easy.

Contacts: Robin and Verity Eddleston 015395 32217

Sundays 1st July and 8th July – Mountain Ringlets, Haweswater

(Joint events with Cumbria Wildlife Trust.)

As a change from our traditional Irton Pike venue, this year's Mountain Ringlet walks will start from Haweswater Head car park (Grid ref: NY468107) at 1030 hours, with a walk up to Kidsty Pike / High Raise (around 4 miles each way with approx 650 metres of ascent) to see Lakeland's possibly most thriving colony of this butterfly. Either date may be subject to cancellation if weather unfavourable. Leaders: Martin Tordoff and John Dunbavin.

Contact if weather at all doubtful: Martin Tordoff 01539 735935.

Sunday 5th August Arnside Knott, 1100 hours

What should I see? High Brown Fritillary, Purple Hairstreak, Scotch Argus.

Directions: From Arnside railway station travel through village and up hill, take R turn into Redhills Road and continue following National Trust signs to The Knott, meet in NT car park. (Grid ref: SD451774) Walking fairly easy with a few short ascents. Leaders: Steve Doyle and Robin Eddleston.

Contact: Robin on 015395 32217.

Linsty Hall Wood, Ickenthwaite, Rusland Valley.

Three visits to this new and very promising site which Chris Winnick has agreed to monitor and act as contact for enquiries. We know the butterflies are there but need to fully explore this new site.

Saturday 16th June, 11.00 hrs to search for and count Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries

Saturday 14th July, 11.00 hrs to search for and count High Brown Fritillaries and Dark Greens.

Saturday 21st July, 11.00 hrs to search for and count High Brown Fritillaries and Dark Greens.

Directions: At Haverthwaite crossroads on the A590 take the road (to R if westbound) signposted Bouth. Shortly, at a T-junction turn R, then L fork soon after and head for Rusland village. At Rusland Cross (about 3 miles) the road bears sharp L (ignore minor turning on R to Crosslands), then shortly afterwards bear sharp R by Rusland Hall. At a T-junction facing church turn L. After less than half a mile keep L, ignoring the two R turns to Satterthwaite, but soon after look for the sharp R turn uphill through woods to Ickenthwaite. After less than a mile park on open grassland on L, about 100 yds before landowner's cottage also on the L. (Grid ref: SD326897)

Contact: Chris Winnick 01539 728254

**Friday and Saturday 10/11 August – Moth trapping at CWT’s Plumgarths gardens.
Friday evening from 2115 hours onwards and Saturday morning from 0900 hours for
half an hour or so.**

(Joint event with Cumbria Wildlife Trust.)

Local Butterfly Conservation members will be running light traps around the gardens on Friday evening hoping to attract many species of attractive and interesting moths. We shall see and identify moths as they arrive, then on Saturday morning the traps will be opened to examine the night’s catch prior to the moths’ release. Feel free to attend one or both events, and for the evening session please wear warm outdoor clothing and bring a torch.

Directions: The venue is the CWT HQ, Plumgarths, Kendal LA8 8 LX (Grid ref: SD494947). Around 300 metres on the R along the Crook, Hawkshead via Ferry road from Plumgarths roundabout.

Contact: Martin Tordoff 01539 735935 or 07981 348148 – **event could be cancelled if weather very wet &/or windy.**

Booking in advance required by phoning Jamie Normington on 01539 816300.

High Brown Fritillary project update

You may recall that four years ago Butterfly Conservation succeeded in obtaining substantial funding in order to manage woodlands and grasslands in the Morecambe Bay limestones for the benefit of the High brown fritillary. As well as this species, it was envisaged that other butterflies would benefit, most notably Small Pearl-bordered and Pearl-bordered fritillaries, Duke of Burgundy, Grayling, Dingy skipper and Northern brown argus, all of which are listed as Priority Species in the UK’s Biodiversity Action Plan, as is the extremely rare day-flying moth, *Anania funebris*, which also occurs in limestone woodland and grassland habitats and should also benefit from sympathetic management of its habitats.

As things wind to a close, it’s time to evaluate. In its early days, the project was boosted by Forestry Commission’s decision to augment our work by targeting the area with their Woodland Improvement Grant Scheme, meaning that more land, and more sites, were brought into favourable condition. Cumbrian sites managed using our own funds include Witherslack, High Crag, Low Crag, Hagg, Halecat, Flashbank, Durham Bridge and Brigsteer Park Woods, Lane End Plantation, Fell Edge, Wakebarrow, Yewbarrow, Middlebarrow Wood and Middlebarrow Plain, Arnside Knott, Heathwaite and Wart Barrow. Within these sites, over 4 hectares of woodland has been coppiced, 2.5km of rides have been widened and between 1 and 2 hectares of scrub has been cleared from grasslands. That’s without taking account of FC’s contribution.

How are the key species faring? Transect data suggested that the abundance of many key species has increased at monitored sites during the life of the project. Sadly, 2011 proved to be the worst year on record for high brown fritillaries although given that the species fared badly on managed and unmanaged sites alike, it seems probable that poor weather was causal. The previous three years had seen a year-on-year increase, with numbers in 2010 higher than in 1990. Some of these increases, for example that experienced by Pearl-bordered fritillary, have been marginal, although 2011 numbers were the highest for five years. Similarly, the Northern Brown Argus experienced its best year since 2003. Small pearl numbers are now at their highest for a

decade. Whether or not these increases can be attributed to management undertaken as part of the project is unclear. Weather will have inevitably played a part and the routes of many of the transects do not pass through rides and clearings that have been created or managed, meaning that counts may not be truly representative. In response to the latter concern, two experienced surveyors were engaged in order to survey, and re-survey if necessary, all areas managed under the GrantScape project as well as conducting habitat condition assessments for each ride and each coppice block.

The data collected by the surveyors revealed that 53% of the work areas were found to contain one or more of the species given High Priority status in the UK BAP. The project's target species, High brown fritillary, was present in 19% of work areas.

A brief summary of more notable findings is given below:

- High brown fritillary colonised a site from where it had never been previously recorded and recolonised a further 3 sites from which it had been absent for five or more years. Its presence was confirmed in at least 25 different areas where woodland management had been previously undertaken and was probably present in many more, as there were numerous sightings of large fritillaries that could not be positively identified.
- Pearl-bordered fritillary re-colonised two former sites from which it had been absent for five years or more.
- Duke of Burgundy was found at Durham Bridge Wood, a site from where it had not been recently recorded.
- The extremely-rare moth, *Anania funebris*, was recorded at two sites where it had never previously been seen. One of these yielded a double-figure count.
- Six and five UK BAP-listed species were found within managed areas at Fell Edge and Witherslack Woods respectively.

Lastly, what are the prospects for the future? The GrantScape project has been crucial to reinstating management at an increasing number of Cumbria's woodlands. Even at its inception, our greatest concern was whether a project with a four-year lifespan could deliver continuity of management – essential if short-term gains were not to be lost. The omens are bright: Butterfly Conservation, with support from Branches and other partners, has successfully secured funding for a further three years. This money has been raised from the landfill tax redistributor SITA (£120k), Heritage Lottery Fund (£47k) and the Co-op (£50k). Significant amounts of this will be spent on further management while reintroductions of the new project's target species, the Pearl-bordered fritillary, are planned. Our partnership with the Forestry Commission is set to continue – and a new partnership forged through the formation of the Morecambe Bay Nature Improvement Area looks certain to deliver still more in the way of large-scale woodland and limestone grassland management. Volunteers and landowners are playing an ever-growing role so it seems certain that exciting times lie ahead!

Finally, on behalf of Martin Wain and myself, I would like to express heartfelt thanks to the members of BC Cumbria Branch. The hard hours you've spent managing sites are genuinely appreciated, as is your interest and your support. We both look forward to continuing our work with you in future years.

Dave Wainwright, Senior Regional Officer

MOTHS FROM TWO WESTMORLAND GARDENS IN 2011

An account of some of the moths we came across in 2011 in our respective garden traps – we both run 125w MV traps but in two quite different habitats as described below.

Witherslack, Thornbarrow Hill (Sarah) The 2011 moth season began well with warm and fine weather in April and I averaged 16 species a night which is good for early spring. **Barred Tooth-striped**, a Nationally Scarce B species, appeared in small numbers. This is a wild privet and ash feeder on limestone and chalk. My garden is close to broadleaved woodland on limestone, and ash is abundant with a little wild privet nearby; honeysuckle and lilac are favoured too. Another limestone / chalk moth is **Pretty Chalk Carpet** (as its name implies) which flies in July and August. It is indeed "pretty" and I am always glad to see it in the moth trap! Two species that are becoming scarce both nationally and in my garden are the **V-Moth** and the **Garden Tiger**. The latter is supposed not to like wet Decembers / Januarys followed by colder weather in February, and many gardens are too tidy for it! They favour nettles, docks and burdocks and undisturbed ground. The V-Moth's foodplants are red- and blackcurrants and gooseberry, all of which grow in my garden, but the moth is becoming scarce for some other reason? Although I have been moth trapping since the early 1990s I still manage to add new species to my garden list, and 2011 produced a **Bordered Beauty** and a **Mouse Moth**. Of interest too last year was a variant on a fairly common moth **Treble Lines** – it was a much darker colour and had only two cross-lines instead of three.

Kendal, near Fletcher Park (Martin) I'm in a more urban setting between the Castle and town centre, but adjacent to gardens, parkland and allotments. Unfortunately my trap site is also in the glare of two sodium streetlights just over the garden fence, almost guaranteed to be a more powerful attraction to the moths! I run the trap almost nightly apart from around November to February where I'd choose only the milder nights. Around 240 moth species were recorded in 2011 of which 170 were macro or larger moth species, bringing the all-years site total to around 270 macro species and 145 micros. It was satisfying in this my sixth year recording here still to find over 25 new species, 15 of which were macros. The highlight among the macros undoubtedly was the first Cumbrian record of the Geometrid-like Noctuid moth **Waved Black** which turned up on 14th July. (But no "Cloud Nine" for me, as our Editor suggested in Newsletter 23 - I believe sparseness of moth recording in the county means many such rarities simply go undetected. A rare butterfly by contrast is probably much less likely to escape attention in Cumbria.) Other "firsts" for me in 2011 (but not county "firsts") included: **Spring Usher**, more a frequenter of oak woodlands, on 24th February; **Satin Lutestring**, again hardly a garden species, on 11th July; the spectacular **Eyed Hawk-moth** on 9th June; **Dark Brocade**; **Streak**; **Dark Sword-grass**; **Rivulet**; **Pine Beauty** to name just some. Lovely moths all and with quite delightful names to match, unlike the sometimes almost unpronounceable names of my ten or so new micro species in 2011. We'll leave the latter for another time – or perhaps not. The much-reported influx of migrant moths in autumn 2011 brought nothing new for me though it was good to get a second garden record of the **Vestal** on 1st October, with another on the 5th. But all in all I'd say a pretty average year for species numbers, and a feeling that the abundance of most species (ie the actual numbers of each counted) was generally well down on previous years.

Sarah Bradley & Martin Tordoff

MOTH IDENTIFICATION GUIDES

- A POPULATION EXPLOSION

Like buses, you wait ages then several arrive almost at once.

And thus it has been with popularly-priced UK adult moth identification and field guides. The relatively few people recording moths until the mid-1980s would normally rely on successive editions of Richard South's **The Moths of the British Isles**, a series dating back to 1907 illustrated with life-size colour paintings of set specimens. Then in 1984 along came Bernard Skinner's **Moths of the British Isles**, this time illustrated with colour photographs of set specimens, again at life-size, of the UK's 850 or so macro or larger moths. This best-seller is still in print, now in its third edition, and was followed closely by Barry Goater's **British Pyralid Moths** of 1986, a reasonably-priced field guide to a specific micro family, also still in print. There basically is where things at the popular end of the scale rested until 2003. And that was when the ground-breaking **Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland** with text by Paul Waring and Martin Townsend arrived, beautifully illustrated by Richard Lewington with life-size colour paintings of our macro moths, but this time portrayed in their natural resting positions. Also in 2003, **British and Irish Pug Moths** by Adrian Riley and Gaston Prior appeared, a very helpful guide to this difficult group of Geometrid macro moths.

The UK's 1,600 or so micro moth species are treated, along with some macro groups, in the multi-volume **The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland**, a major publishing project commenced in 1976 but still not completed; the full set to date would already set their buyer back several hundred pounds. And then in 2008 along came Chris Manley's **British Moths and Butterflies – a Photographic Guide** with its stunning colour photographs of all UK butterfly and macro moth species plus a good cross-section of micro moths and larval images. These are beautifully presented with useful accompanying text but are not portrayed to scale. A rather specialised yet affordable book, published in 2011 is Jon Clifton & Jim Wheeler's **Bird-dropping Tortrix moths of the British Isles**, a slim but very useful guide to identification of 60 of the tortrix moth species which, as the title suggests, mimic bird-droppings in their resting state – the book's title seems to have generated some mirth in the mothing community. Finally in late-2011 the long-awaited **British Plume Moths – a Guide to their Identification and Biology** by Colin Hart rolled off the presses, the first book to have covered this distinctive micro group since the 1950s and, like most of the ones outlined above, very reasonably priced by today's standards. And as if all that were not enough we're promised in the next few months a companion volume to Waring, Townsend and Lewington above, but this time devoted to the UK micro moth species, embracing all but the most difficult ones, again illustrated by Richard Lewington, with text by Phil Sterling. Our happiness will then be complete!

But to conclude I mustn't forget the internet, now a staple tool of amateur moth recorders, and if one site stands out above all others it would have to be Ian Kimber's **UK Moths**, <http://ukmoths.org.uk>, a resource embracing almost all macro and micro species and which has now been around for a decade or more but continues to evolve. Photos of live adults are supplemented by larval ones and distribution maps. A brand new resource in 2012 of especial relevance to Cumbria's lepidopterists is local man Brian Hancock's **Pug Moths of Lancashire and Cumbria**, a 70-page internet document full of useful month-by-month (and moth-by-moth) information, ID tips, excellent photographs and distributions of the 40 or so Pug species found across the two counties. Download from <http://www.lancshiremoths.co.uk>. So all in all, we moth people are remarkably well catered for now, but a question which continues to tax me is the proverbial chicken-and-egg one: is the recent

explosion in the number of moth recorders a consequence of the broadly simultaneous explosion in affordable and user-friendly guides and websites, or is the increasing output of literature a response to the rapid growth in the number of recorders? A bit of both probably!

Martin Tordoff

MOUNTAIN RINGLETS – WHAT WE FOUND IN 2011

Ever anxious to find an explanation for the restricted geographical range of the Mountain Ringlet butterfly *Erebia epiphron* to central parts of the Lakeland fells – its only known UK location south of the Scottish Highlands – in 2011 Butterfly Conservation's Cumbria Branch intensified its appeals for help with surveys in this butterfly's short flight season. A new appeal leaflet was produced, targeting conservation bodies, tourist offices, walking clubs etc, and this along with well-timed articles in national and regional magazines brought us an almost overwhelming response. The number of individuals supplying records increased from just a handful in most previous years to almost 40 in 2011. These ranged from Lakeland holiday-makers reporting casual sightings through to others who spent whole days making intensive searches of specified 1km squares. All very valuable data and gratefully received, whatever its source. As always, however, despite the season running over six weeks or so with what seemed like endless opportunities for surveys, in the end the weather played its usual tricks, and few of us were able to manage more than five days or so on the fells.

There was a total of 162 records in 2011, a record being defined here as a report from an individual recorder in an individual 1km square on one date. Of these, 74 (46%) were positive and 88 (54%) were negative. However, there were many cases of squares being covered by two or more surveyors: allowing for these, the actual number of squares from which records were received was 97, of which 40 (41%) were positive and 57 (59%) were negative. Of the 40 squares where Mountain Ringlets were found, 20 were new records, ie the butterfly had never been recorded there previously. In all cases these new squares were adjoining existing colonies and as such simply represented a more accurate record of the colony structure. This contrasts with the discovery of new detached colonies as were found on Hartsop Dodd and St Sunday Crag in 2010, though even here neither was much more than a kilometre or two from a previously known or existing colony. One interesting observation was the late date of July 24th of a still very healthy colony on High Raise (Haweswater); this led us to wonder if the butterfly could even fly right into early August, as the Scottish populations can, in the right weather conditions. July 24th is believed to be the joint latest ever sighting date in Cumbria – maybe people just give up looking if they follow the popular belief that it's all over by about mid-July, just as they don't look outside the known range because they've no reason to believe they're there. So that was 2011, which brought lots of very useful additions to our Mountain Ringlet database yet still leaves some key questions not fully answered.

Looking now to the 2012 flight season – in the main from early June to mid July – we'll again seek volunteers' help in tracking these elusive butterflies down. We'll obviously continue to welcome casual observations of Mountain Ringlets from fell-walkers and others, but this year we'd really like to intensify our targeting of 1km squares. In particular, we'll be not only checking out the health of known colonies and revisiting historic sites where the butterfly has not been seen recently, but also extending the search to include areas of promising looking habitat from which there have never been positive records. These would include both areas just beyond the fringes of the known range

and areas of lower altitude but adjacent to known colonies. All this needs a big human input, often working alone in areas far from the car park or bus stop. Anyone wanting to help but uneasy about working alone, or not too confident about their own recording abilities, can always be arranged to team up with one of our surveyors. Or join us on one of our Mountain Ringlet field trips from Haweswater on Sundays 1st and 8th July (details in "Field Trips 2012" elsewhere in this newsletter) to see what it's all about, and "get your eye in" as they say. Despite the sometimes rigorous nature of the job it's a great way to spend a day or two, often in areas high in the fells but off the beaten tourist tracks. And the information you provide is almost beyond value. And who knows, you may even have the ultimate thrill of coming across a previously undiscovered colony!

For more information about the Mountain Ringlet butterfly please see:

http://www.cumbria-butterflies.org.uk/species/butterflies/mountain_ringlet.htm

And for information on survey methods, along with downloadable survey forms please see:

<http://www.cumbria-butterflies.org.uk/surveys/intro.htm>

Martin Tordoff & Steve Clarke

The Marsh Fritillary in Cumbria – What of the future?

Those of you who have been getting copies of this newsletter over the years will no doubt have read about the highs and lows of our dalliances with The Marsh Fritillary.

The low point had to be in 2004 when it officially became extinct in the wild in Cumbria although it could well be said that the years before that were equally as low with the species spiralling into decline and the seemingly inevitable result. The high point for me at any rate was the late Summer of last year, 2011. The Marsh Fritillary had an awfully wet, cold and windy breeding season so we feared the worst for the population in the wild on our eight reintroduction sites. We already knew our captive stock suffered although we now have a fair idea why and can learn from that. As far as those in the wild were concerned however we had to wait until late August to see what had happened and as I say, we feared the worst. After all we had nothing but good news in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 so were we due a reality check?

We need not have worried. As Keith Porter our guiding light at Natural England in Peterborough keeps telling us 'this species is as tough as old boots.' That may be so but you can't blame us for worrying all the same. The best way to assess the success of a Marsh Fritillary breeding season is to get out there in the field and count the larval webs most of which can be clearly seen although whilst some are as big as dustbin lids some are only the

size of one leaf of Devils Bit Scabious, the larval and egg laying food plant. The variation in size by the way is mainly due to the age of the web, the larger ones have been growing for a while but the smaller ones were later egg layers although there are other reasons as well.

Our larval web count in 2011 across our eight sites in the wild was just over 1000 whereas our previous best count since our first reintroduction was just over 500. It is the more established sites which produced the bigger numbers of webs whereas the newer ones take longer to get going and establish themselves into a breeding colony. Hopefully that's the case but it is fingers crossed for a year or two as we see what happens and how the released larvae adapt to their new habitat. In the case of the longer established colonies an increase in numbers of larval webs gives an indication of two things. Firstly that we have got the habitat management about right (and can use that as a model for other sites) and secondly that the butterfly is expanding its range by itself and after all, it is better at finding suitable habitat than we are so long as there is such habitat nearby.

WHERE FROM HERE?

Our captive breeding stock took a knock last year firstly because we removed a lot for reintroduction to new sites. Secondly however we had a bit of a steep learning curve. An unusually warm dry Spring meant many larvae did not grow well enough to pupate and many of those which did pupate simply dried out due to lack of moisture. We hadn't experienced that before but soon realised that in our captive breeding cages many larvae pupated high up on the woodwork and dried out. In the wild they can't do that and pupate at ground level where even in dry conditions there is still some overnight moisture from Spring dew. From now on we will watch out for warm dry Spring conditions and if necessary we can mist spray the larvae and pupae or detach them from the woodwork and lay them in trays in a moist(ish) mixture of compost or similar.

We hadn't planned a new release in 2012 anyway as it is better to have a gap now and then to allow captive stock to recover in numbers and swap them around from cage to cage to mix them up and maintain genetic diversity rather than risk year on year inter breeding.

LOOKING WELL INTO THE FUTURE

At present we have eight breeding colonies in the wild. Five of them form a metapopulation in Ennerdale where we have managed to complete our objective of having several colonies within reach of each other. We need to see if habitat in between those sites is colonised naturally so that a connectivity network is created to maintain genetic diversity naturally. That was the case originally before the 1960's when the number of Marsh Fritillary colonies in Cumberland could be counted in hundreds. So we now have the opportunity to see what happens in Ennerdale although at this point it must be said that we are aware that habitat management on some of the Ennerdale sites is not at present as ideal as we would like it to be and we are working on that. It also does not mean we will not make further introductions

in that area if suitable habitat comes along. If it does then we are highly likely to develop that opportunity in what is an exceptional wildlife area.

Our other three reintroduced colonies are more isolated. One is between Carlisle and Penrith, another is on the Solway Plain and the third is near Keswick. The Penrith and Solway sites are intended to be 'core' sites around which we want to create satellite colonies within a five or so kilometre range i.e. within connectivity reach of each other. Finding other suitable habitat is not proving to be easy or quick however. The Keswick colony is on a huge site anyway and is more or less a metapopulation on its own but even so we want to know about other habitat in the central lakes area where the Lakes population of Marsh Fritillary could expand to and help adorn our Lakes fauna even more.

In the years to come we might have to rely on prolonged human assistance in moving larvae manually from one colony to another to keep genetic diversity going. We are not talking about huge numbers but it is something we need to be thinking about until the time comes that we are satisfied that natural connectivity between colonies is working and can be left alone.

There will understandably be those who feel that 'nurse maiding' like this should not be done and that nature should take its course. We should listen to those viewpoints but in the greater scheme of things we all need to ask the question 'Do we want Marsh Fritillaries in Cumbria or don't we?' If we do then it will require us to continue to give nature a nudge and after all if we had done nothing about it back in 2004 then the species would have been extinct then and still would be, at least we certainly would not have had over 1000 webs in 2011. In my opinion we should continue this Project as best we can even if it does need human assistance for some years yet. However some of us are not getting any younger and it would be good to see a younger, but not that young, person coming along who could work on the Project as a volunteer in readiness to take over in the next year or two so that a seamless change can occur.

In the meantime we carry on and for my part I'm very encouraged by the success and progress we have made so far – long may it continue.

Steve Doyle

News12005

The Small Blue butterfly in West Cumbria.

The second meeting of the newly formed Cumbria Small Blue Network met in Workington on 7th February. To recap this Group was set up in 2011 to investigate how the worsening fortunes of the Small Blue could be halted and how a viable network of colonies could be safeguarded into the future. It is a very iconic butterfly and is becoming increasingly referred to as the Allerdale butterfly. Allerdale is the only location where it flies in England north of a line between Gloucestershire and Bedfordshire apart from a recently introduced colony in Warwickshire just off the M40 motorway.

Represented at the meeting were Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership whose Graham Jackson-Pitt chaired the meeting, Iggesund Paperboard (who have Small Blue on site and are creating more habitat), Groundwork Cumbria, Allerdale Council, Cumbria County Council, West Lakes Engineering on behalf of the Port of Workington, Siddick Pond, Natural England, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and ourselves at Butterfly Conservation.

We met mainly to discuss how the money received (by Allerdale) from Tesco should be spent on habitat restoration following the withdrawal from their temporary Workington North premises for which urgent planning agreement was pushed through following the serious floods a few years ago. Firstly I gave a Power Point resume of the 2011 state of the Small Blue in West Cumbria and compared that to the state of the species just a few years ago. That highlighted the severe decline in numbers and the need for this forum to bring the issues more into the open and develop conservation plans. This note is not intended as minutes of the meeting but several action points were taken away to be progressed by various members present.

We all agree, and not just in that forum, that the Small Blue is under serious threat on most of its sites in Workington and Maryport. Planning Agreement is being sought on at least two of its sites that I know of and a third site is being 'altered' but in a way which should eventually be for the good but that merely highlights the fact that we brought the issue more to the fore and that we are willing to talk to all concerned to try to achieve a solution acceptable to all. Compromise and commonsense are by no means dirty words.

As I write this piece the destiny of the ex Steelworks site has just been established and I am presently attempting to make contact with the new developers in an effort to establish a rapport ahead of a potential planning head on collision. More on this as things move on. At Maryport I am meeting with Natural England shortly to walk/talk the site and see what might be done there to benefit the Small Blue. That meeting will have taken place by the time this newsletter hits the streets. At The Port of Workington we have established a very good working relationship on a give and take basis. Yes we will lose some pockets of habitat as the Port develops but they on the other hand have agreed not to work on the best Small Blue area and in addition they have offered to create more habitat on an area of disused land on their site. That looks long term very promising as it is a big site and south facing.

Persimmon Homes have agreed to create a relatively small piece of Small Blue habitat on their new development just off Moss Bay Road. They didn't need to do

that as it is not currently a breeding site but it all adds up to the development of a rapport/contact with third parties which can bring better results than direct confrontation.

Having said that, we must be mindful to protect ourselves as well. On a site where there is a 'core' colony we can not rely on tacit promises which might later not be adhered to. They must go through the full planning process but the point I am making is that it does no harm to build up a rapport first to a point where we can to some extent also build up some trust.

Iggusund Paperboard tell me that Small Blue has been seen on their site and have invited me to do a proper survey in 2012 which I will do. They are keen to create more habitat as well. It adjoins an area of Siddick Pond which itself has also recently recorded Small Blue so full surveys of both adjoining sites will be done and the existing and potential habitat thoroughly examined to see what else might be done to encourage expansion of whatever Small Blue presence is currently there.

Whilst much of the above is very positive we must not forget that the Small Blue has undertaken catastrophic losses in recent years in West Cumbria and the importance of conserving as much as possible of extant 'core' sites is absolutely essential. We are fully focused on that.

Steve Doyle

News12008

THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

Late last September, and throughout October, every time we went for a walk on our local Common (Birkrigg), we found the larvae of the Ruby Tiger moth crawling across the path. This happened about six times in different parts of the Common. The Ruby Tiger is a cousin of the larger Garden Tiger, whose larvae would have been a familiar sight of childhood (at least to older members) as "woolly bears". I also found there last year the "daddy" of all larvae – that of the Elephant Hawk moth – but what it was doing more than 200 metres from the only patch of Rosebay Willowherb, I'm not sure.



Larva of Ruby Tiger



Larva of Elephant Hawkmoth

The Ruby Tiger overwinters as a larva, so these would have been the second generation of the year looking for somewhere to hibernate. I was reminded of the

previous year, when we found about 25 larvae of the Drinker moth in the space of a few metres, all crossing the old Kirkby Moor slate road together, going in the same direction looking for pupation sites.

As these encounters with the Ruby Tiger were all purely chance encounters, it suggests a population of many thousands or even tens of thousands. The Common is an example of a scarce habitat – ancient calcareous grassland – and as such has probably never seen a drop of pesticide or artificial fertiliser in the four thousand years since the Ancient Britons built a stone circle there. It is a reminder of what things used to be like.

Unfortunately, about 80% of the grassland has disappeared to Gorse and Bracken – a far cry from the 1850's when the Commoners had to call a meeting and appoint a shepherd to deal with the problem of over-grazing. Now the Common is left largely to its own devices, although in theory it is managed by a Property Services Company in Norfolk for the Crown Estates. It is sad that a big site in public ownership is neglected, especially as it is home to many scarce species of fungi and lichen, not to mention a good selection of butterflies and moths and areas of limestone pavement. Both grassland and pavement have plenty of violets in the spring, already have a large colony of Dark-green Fritillary and should be ideal for the High Brown.

When you look at records from earlier centuries you realise more than ever just how vital wildlife conservation is today. An interest in local history often leads me to search old newspapers and inevitably, while looking for something else, my eye is taken by wildlife reports that show how abundant species used to be compared with today.

In early April 1836 the first ever recorded specimen of the "Azure Blue" (we know it as the Holly Blue) in Cumberland was taken, but what was probably more significant in the same report was the shooting of a Corncrake. This was a common occurrence; the report was only of interest because this one had wings that were half covered in white feathers. Any Corncrake around Carlisle would be good today, never mind a scarce variant.

In 1851 the trees around Colton were described as being "almost covered with Cockchaffers". Such a spectacle was said to be more common in the south of England, where boys and girls were hired to follow the plough, picking up the destructive white grubs. The same edition of that paper reported the need to call out the Otter Hunt, as "otters are so numerous near the head of Coniston Lake that twelve to fourteen could be seen at one time".

In 1862 my local paper reported that the "garden in front of the residence of Mr. J.S. Satterthwaite in Church Walk, Ulverston, is nightly illuminated by a vast number of glow worms, which shed their peculiar green light upon the tastefully arranged clumps of flowers, the effect being one of singular beauty and novelty. The glow worms were, as we understand, collected by a gentleman of this town, and a similar consignment sent by train to an acquaintance in London, the whole of which were gathered from the hills in the immediate neighbourhood". What a pity that street-lighting has since confused these wonderful beetles. They are something of a rarity in these parts now.

But I've wandered off the subject of Lepidoptera, so I'd better mention one special species to keep the Editor happy. In 1894 the "Greasy Fritillary was swarming in incredible numbers in a marshy swamp" and the writer "filled my box with specimens, simply picking each one from the leaves of the great burnet". BUT he went on to report "the dreaded ichneumon fly had evidently ravaged the caterpillars, many of the butterflies being deformed or imperfect in some respect". A collector managed to breed a black variant of the species from larvae collected at the site, for which he obtained the princely sum of £25 at a time when butterfly collecting was all the rage.

This brings us neatly back to 2012 and the Branch's conservation efforts. The Greasy Fritillary is, of course, our Marsh Fritillary and was so called because the markings are often smudged and indistinct, as photographers will know as they strive to get a nice sharp-looking image. In 2011 some of the Cumbrian breeders of the captive stock of Marsh Fritillary came across that "dreaded fly". A captive stock is a sitting target for this parasitic wasp (which attacks the pupae of butterflies), so we shall be trying out different methods this year to try to avoid a repeat of its damaging effects. Steve's dream is to get back towards the two hundred colonies that existed in Cumberland during Victorian times. He tries to raise stock for release in as near to natural conditions as possible, but providing dinner for the larvae of the ichneumon wasp is going a bit too far!

Peter Wilde

EXTRACTS FROM A BUTTERFLY DIARY

For several years I have kept a diary detailing visits to some of my favourite butterfly locations in the UK. Most are in the south and east I lived in Buckinghamshire from 1986 to 2011, but I also made numerous excursions to Surrey, Dorset, the Isle of Wight, Devon and Cornwall. In this issue I will look at the Isle of Wight, an absolute haven for the butterfly enthusiast!

How can a small island be home to 40 species of butterflies, many in abundance, and have so many good butterfly walks? The answer has much to do with location and geology – its location gives it one of the warmest and sunniest climates with a very long season and its geology is varied and includes flower rich south facing chalk downland and ancient woodland. Fortunately it is also a great place for family holidays and that's the reason I gave my family when visiting the island for the thirtieth time in twenty years!

A visit in late July or early August will produce variety and numbers but a Spring visit in May for Glanville Fritillary and first emergence Adonis Blue will also allow you to avoid holiday traffic. The following extracts will hopefully wet your appetite for your own visits.

25th July 2005 – West Wight.

Walk from Linstone Chine to Colwell Bay, Totland Bay, Headdon Warren, Alum Bay and onto Tennyson Down before returning via Freshwater Bay and by bus via Freshwater. Warm sun but cool breeze. Largely follows the coastal footpath. Butterflies seen, Small, Large and Green Veined Whites, meadow Brown,

Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Grayling, Small Heath, Comma, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Dark Green Fritillary, Small Skipper, numerous Small Copper, Common Blue and numerous Chalkhill Blue on Tennyson Down.

26th July 2005 – Newtown.

Estuary area to the north-west of the island walking the ancient ridge to Walters Copse. Then a loop through the wood down to the small estuary before returning to the National Trust car park. Then a second walk along the lane and footpath leading to the main bird hide on the main estuary before returning along the estuary and across meadows to the old town hall and NT car park. In the wood I saw the 3 whites, Brimstone, M. Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Comma, Peacock, Small Tort, Silver Washed Fritillary, White Admiral, Large Skipper, Small Copper, Common Blue and Purple Hairstreak. At the small estuary on the edge of Walters Copse I saw a Kingfisher and watched Osprey fishing. At the hide overlooking the estuary I had Redshank, Sandpiper, Lapwing, Curlew, Shelduck, and Hobby and I was told I'd just missed a Peregrine.

27th July 2005 – Newport area.

Walked around Mt Joy cemetery Newport and nearby Carisbrooke Castle. Both have super flower rich chalk grassland. Saw the 3 whites, M. Brown, Marbled White, Wall Brown, Small Heath, Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Large Skipper, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue.

28th July 2005 – Walked from Brook Down small quarry car park up onto the down – bearing west and then north following the edge of the woodland before turning right into the wood to join a glade running south and back to the car park. The quarry was alive with Common Blue and Chalkhill Blue. Also seen were the whites, M. Brown, Gatekeeper, Marbled White, Grayling, Wall, Small Heath, Peacock, Dark Greens and a second emergence Dingy Skipper plus a number of second brood Adonis Blue. Along the woodland glade I saw all the above except Wall, Dingy and Gatekeeper but in addition I had Brimstone, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, White Admiral, Silver Washed and Brown Argus. The glade is full of Hemp Agrimony and yellow fleabane that proved especially attractive to Chalkhill Blues. On one unforgettable visit I counted 3000 Chalkhill Blues settling to roost on 50 metres of fleabane – an incredible sight. Note Glanville Fritillary can also be seen in this glade in May.

During my week I also made butterfly walks to Mottistone Down and Bonchurch Down and at Ventnor Botanic Gardens I spotted my 31st species on that island visit – a Holly Blue. Other superb sites include Arreton Down in the east, Parkhurst Forest in the north (unfortunately just lost its P B Frit colony) and Wheelers Bay and Brightstone Bay for Glanvilles – but for those you will need to visit in May or early June.

Chris Winnick

News12007

The State of Cumbria's Butterflies going into 2012.

Firstly I stress that these are personal observations but if others disagree either on the plus or minus side it would be good to get that feedback. We can look at all our species of butterflies we might expect to see in a typical Cumbrian butterfly season as well as hoped for migrants which occasionally visit us.

THE WHITES

Orange Tip and Green Veined emerged early during the very good Spring and were fairly common throughout Cumbria where you would expect to see them. Small White I found to be rather scarce in the Spring but increased in frequency as the year went on although the usual influx of additions from abroad did not noticeably happen as poor weather patterns in Europe meant that for us it was a very poor year for migrants. The same can be said of Large Whites and although I saw decent numbers I suspect that was not the case generally.

THE HAIRSTREAKS

I didn't get to Meathop Moss on a nice day but even so there was no shortage of Green Hairstreaks though in my opinion whilst numbers are still good there are maybe not quite as many as 10 or 20 years ago. On the colonies in north Cumbria numbers were as good as normal on the three sites I monitor. Purple Hairstreak was as elusive as ever especially to the camera but enough sightings were made at Finglandrigg on the Solway Plain to convince me there is no problem. I looked for it in vain at both Arnside Knott and Gait Barrows however so suspect numbers there might have dwindled. It is a very hard species to see however and is very easily overlooked. White Letter Hairstreak is the latest Cumbrian species to arrive and we expect sightings to increase from now on particularly in the very south of the county.

THE BROWNS

Speckled Wood continues to be a success story and I hear was abundant as usual in the stronghold areas of Morecambe Bay and the Furness. It has ventured up the coast and is now regularly seen in Workington. I saw several in a wood just east of Cockermouth and even one in an industrial estate in north Carlisle. Wall Brown is giving cause for concern elsewhere in England but I find it not to be a problem in Cumbria. It is as abundant as ever along the coast and I also found it as usual above Shilloe Bank on Arnside Knott. Finglandrigg NNR on the Solway also has a good population of Wall. Meadow Brown again is not a problem as far as I can see but then we don't take much notice of it – do we?

Ringlet is as lively as ever along the roadside verges in north Cumbria as well as in woodland rides and edges. For the first time in years however I did not see one of the ringless variety. Sources in the south of the county tell me that it still appears there though numbers have maybe not increased as much as expected after its arrival a couple of years ago. Mountain Ringlet shows no sign of a decline despite worries about climate change. I even had a TV company trying to get me to say its days were numbered – but I declined. I'm not prepared to speculate like that in a pessimistic and very public way. Martin Tordoff and others did a very comprehensive Mountain Ringlet survey in 2011 and all being well his

report will be elsewhere in this newsletter. I know however that additional colonies were located and that it was found at all the usual places despite the poor weather.

Grayling was on the wing whilst I was away but even so I saw enough on my return to suggest there is no need to worry about it. Gatekeeper is quietly expanding its range in Cumbria having been more or less confined to the Furness area for a long time. It is not unusual now to find it as far north as Maryport on the coast and inland to Arnside Knott and I think a sighting was made in Witherslack Woods as well. Scotch Argus is still strong in its Smardale and Arnside colonies and on a roadside verge near Newbiggin on Lune. I've also seen it on the hillsides away from Smardale railway corridor though not in 2011.

THE HEATHS

Large Heath has two versions in Cumbria. The northern version on the Solway Mosses did Ok at Scaleby Moss but still struggles on the other Solway Mosses after fires and other upheaval in recent years. I didn't get to Walton Moss but have no reason to believe there is a problem there in that very remote area. I didn't manage any of the southern colonies like Meathop Moss but again suspect it is still doing fine there.

THE FRITILLARIES

Marsh Fritillary had an amazingly good year with double the number of larval webs than the best count previously recorded since reintroduction in 2007. We counted more than 1000 webs over our eight colonies. High Brown and Pearl Bordered still struggle for decent numbers but I just have a feeling that our Morecambe Bay Limestone Woodlands Project is paying off and that there might be light at the end of the tunnel. That said, I have no doubt that we would probably be staring at extinction had it had not been for the work done by the Project and by this Branch over the last few years. Pearl Bordered in fact increased in numbers in areas of Witherslack Woods I ventured into but away from transect routes and it was clear that they appreciated to newly coppiced areas. I also saw more Pearl Bordered on The Howe than I've seen for a long time.

Dark Greens abound as usual on the coast although I did not see as many as I would have expected at Barkbooth although the weather was not brilliant. Geltsdale in north east Cumbria also had decent numbers as usual. Small Pearl Bordered escaped me mostly in south Cumbria and my usual spot near Carlisle produced none though I must say I was sort of expecting that as the site is badly overgrown now. I suspect along the coast it is still abundant as well as in its usual boggy hollows in the Lakes.

Silver Washed Fritillary I was told had a poor year but when I went to Whitbarrow and Brigsteer Woods I must say I didn't have a problem.

THE BLUES

Common Blue is less frequent inland – or is it just me? Having said that there were plenty on Smardale and plenty along the coast in fact the latter was heaving with them. Small Blues continue to decline worryingly as its brownfield sites disappear through development or de-commissioning of industrial workings. I doubt we will ever get back to the halcyon days of seeing 1000+ in a single visit but hopefully viable

colonies will survive in both Maryport and Workington. There is no doubt however that but for cavalier work taking place over the years on its core sites this species would have survived in much greater numbers.

Holly Blue I find hard to pin down. The only places I saw them in 2011 were at Meathop Moss around the woodland edges and at The Howe where Holly is abundant. I don't think 2011 was any worse than the previous few years though. Northern Brown Argus struggled with a cold wet flight period so it was hard to tell just what sort of season it had. I usually see them at Latterbarrow and on Yewbarrow but the only one I saw in 2011 was on Arnside Knott. Hopefully 2012 will be better.

THE SKIPPERS

Large Skipper was as widespread as usual but I didn't see as many as usual – maybe just me. Again though plenty along the coast. Dingy Skipper I find to be a bit of a worry. They are really worried about it further south in the UK and I think we have every right to be up here as well. A huge colony at Workington has been wiped out although other sites in Allerdale continue to do well. A colony I relied on near Carlisle has also fizzled out but only to be replaced by a first timer. The Small Skipper has infiltrated Cumbria with a vengeance. It seemed to take ages to arrive over the borders but no sooner had it come in from both the east and south it was dispersing well. I've now seen it on several sites up here in north Cumbria including 31 of them on a Marsh Fritillary site where I'd never before seen Small Skipper, and I would have noticed.

THE OTHERS

Brimstone is a very early Spring gem of a butterfly in our south Cumbria woodlands and verges. I don't see it as often these days but believe it to be thriving as usual.

Small Copper was as delightful as ever late summer on the ragwort.

Duke of Burgundy did very well on The Howe but not so well at Gait Barrows. We need to be very careful about numbers at The Howe but hopefully the work the Branch are doing there will encourage both the Dukes and Pearl Bordered to thrive.

Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell were certainly not as abundant as normal but I don't anticipate a problem with either as the lower numbers were affected by the lack of migrants as mentioned above. Remember we were getting very worried a year or two back about Small Tort numbers but fortunately they have bounced back well apart from the 2011 blip caused by lack of migrants.

Peacock I found to be not as plentiful as usual and numbers on my buddleia are a good sign. Lack of numbers again were probably because of the lack of migrants coming in. Comma continues to pleasantly be seen throughout Cumbria and I have no reason to expect a decline, the reverse in fact.

OCCASIONAL VISITORS

Painted Lady passed us by this year and I think only one or two records have been sent in. Similarly for Clouded Yellow although maybe there were just into double figures. Odd though that someone saw two in Millom one day then two were seen in Workington the next day and I saw two at Maryport the day after that. Maybe they were the same two.

We are due a decent summer though so it would be nice to have a good Painted Lady or Clouded Yellow season in 2012 but good seasons for both rarely if ever come in the same year.

Camberwell Beauty and Monarch – dream on.

And so we move into the 2012 season. Who knows what might happen with not only the weather but with our butterflies and moths. No doubt there will be some exiting times as well as a few groans but whatever happens, get out there and enjoy it AND don't forget to send your records in to the new high tech recording centre in Tullie House, Carlisle.

Steve Doyle

News12209

PATCHES – 1km Recording.

This valuable recording system is being carried out again in 2012 and those who have volunteered to record 'their' patch should have by now received their forms for the 2012 season.

For those who do not already 'own' a patch and would like to know more The idea is that you adopt a 1km square from your local O/S map and record every species you see in it. As it is only a 1km square that's the furthest you will have to go so it's not a long route march. The square can be on your doorstep either rural or urban, or you can opt to have one a bit further away where you enjoy walking and are likely to see butterflies. You don't need to follow the same route every time as you do with a formal transect but you should only use rights of way and not trespass.

That's it in a nutshell but if you are interested give me a ring or e-mail me, details on page 23 and I'll help to set you up with your very own 'Patch.'

Steve Doyle

Watchtree Nature Reserve – 24 Hour

BIOBLITZ

Midnight to Midnight Sunday 17th June

Watchtree Nature Reserve lies just a few miles west of Carlisle on the ex World War airfield site at Great Orton and has been created as a nature reserve since it was used to a large extent as a mass burial site following the foot and mouth outbreak a few years ago. A great deal of effort has been put in by a small team of staff and importantly by volunteers to establish the whole site as a nature reserve with a great deal of thought and respect to all those creatures which perished. Already there is a large open water area with a bird hide and we have three Marsh fritillary captive breeding cages on site. There is a several kilometre long disabled persons adapted cycle track and the site is used regularly by many disadvantaged groups – to see the delight on the faces of those who visit is something I look forward to on my frequent visits there. Unfortunately I'm on holiday when BIOBLITZ takes place but if any of our members can help out on the day simply being there for a time that would really make a difference. Watchtree would like someone who can ID butterflies and I think they deserve that.

As part of the 'building' process Watchtree hold a series of events each year and in 2012 they are holding a 24 hour BIOBLITZ at which they would firstly like our help and secondly just like our members to go along and enjoy the day (or night – moths) there.

Steve Doyle

Here's what Watchtree Manager Frank Mawby says about the event :-

The two aims of BIOBLITZ are to record as many species of as many taxa as possible during a 24 hour period and to involve people by inviting them to join the many specialists to see how recording and identification is done and where to go for help with identification.

The BIOBLITZ is being run jointly with Carlisle Natural History Society, Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre and Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery.

There will be displays, demonstrations and a live link to the Biodiversity Centre.

Specialists are still required for all taxa and should contact Frank Mawby on 016973 51301 FrankMawby@aol.com

The first night session for moths will commence at 9.30pm on Saturday 16th so please book for this event. On Sunday we shall have early morning and evening sessions for birds and mammals, times and sessions to be announced. The site will be open for all other events from 7.00am to 10.00pm. Light refreshments will be available.

For full details of how to join a specialist, especially for the nocturnal sessions please contact Tim Lawrence on 01228 712539 wnr@watchtree.co.uk or visit our website www.watchtree.co.uk

CUMBRIA BRANCH OFFICERS

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and finally,

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In Scotland (SC039268)

Dedicated to saving Butterflies and Moths in their natural habitats.

Spring2012