

Message from
..... our Branch Chairman

Welcome to our Autumn edition of our Branch newsletter.
As your Chairman I am delighted to work with our committee on behalf of all our membership for the conservation of butterflies and moths and the habitats they require to survive in Cumbria.

After four years of excellent service as Chairman Steve Clarke felt it was the right time to stand down as Chairman – the good news is that Steve will continue to serve on the committee. Steve would be the first to thank his wife Millie for her valued support – on behalf of our membership and the committee ‘thank you’ Steve and Millie for the excellent service you have given.

The weather might have been of the wet and cool variety for what seems like too long but we must remain optimistic! Cumbria is still one of the most outstanding counties in the UK for butterflies and moths with 40 species of butterflies recorded and with so many outstanding locations to visit be they Cumbria Wildlife Trust reserves, RSPB reserves or in the ownership of the National Trust, the Lake District National Park, The Woodland Trust or indeed in private or council ownership but with public access, we are truly fortunate. Also all these organisations and others, not least Butterfly Conservation, have been very active in habitat restoration and management. This work is invaluable and is making such a difference to ensure that our butterflies, moths and especially our rare ‘specialist’ species have a bright and realistic future for all to enjoy.

Much has been achieved and much more can be done. We need your help! Details of our Winter Work programme are now on our Cumbria Butterfly Conservation website and this newsletter immediately following this message. The first is at Braithwaite Moss near Keswick on Sunday September 9th to restore habitat for the Marsh Fritillary. We would be delighted to welcome new as well as returning volunteers. On site training, tools and gloves are provided although for Braithwaite Moss wellies are usually essential as basically it is – a bog. For more information on all our work parties there is a contact person for each one.

Included in this newsletter are the minutes of our Branch AGM of June 2012. In the Spring 2013 newsletter there will be advance notice of next years’ AGM and members day. The Branch committee do a fantastic job but they are YOUR committee and want to listen to your views on how we can improve things. Please don’t hesitate to contact any member of the Branch Committee with your ideas and opinions.

Finally I want to say a big 'thank you' to Steve Doyle who apart from working hard on our Marsh Fritillary and Small Blue Projects continues to do such a brilliant job in putting together this newsletter and has done for every newsletter this Branch has ever issued.

Best wishes to all.

Chris Winnick.

22012

Work Parties – 2012/13

Work parties are arranged for the second Sunday in each month (third one in November) starting in September.

Meet at 10.00am at the venues in the table below.

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

Some of our endangered species need our help e.g. woodland specialists such as the Pearl Bordered Fritillary, so if you can help by attending even just one work party it really does make a difference.

We provide the tools and gloves as well if you haven't got your own. All we need is YOU

- Oh, and bring your own sarnies if you plan to stay for the afternoon session.

Day	Event
9 September 2012 Sunday 1000	Braithwaite Moss Follow A66T from Keswick towards Cockermouth. Pass junctions to Braithwaite village on left and Braithwaite Moss is on right hand side by farm buildings (<i>ca</i> 1km). Parking available on entrance to farm and in yard. Grid reference NY 232248 Bring lunch, rainwear, warm clothing and wellingtons. Wellingtons a ' must ' Contact Steve Clarke 01946 725828
14 October 2012 Sunday 1000	Township Plantation Take A5074 from Gilpin Bridge, take second left turn to 'The Howe' (no signpost), cross minor road and climb to the centre of the hamlet. Turn left on tarmac road, and then bear right onto a bumpy track. Enter the wood and park at the first clearing--parking limited. Grid reference SD 454885 Bring rainwear, warm clothing, lunch and stout footwear. Contact Sarah Bradley 015395 52340

<p>18 November 2012 Sunday 1000 Note 3^d Sunday</p>	<p>Township Plantation Same directions as given for 14 October Contact Sarah Bradley 015395 52340</p>
<p>9 December 2012 Sunday 1000</p>	<p>Fell Edge Either Turn off A590 towards Witherslack, continue on road to pass through the village to Witherslack Hall and continue northwards past the Hall (narrow, mostly single track road, with passing places, blind corners and dips) Bear right at road junction to Pool Bank hamlet (blind dangerous bend). Continue and keep straight on at road junction (to Crosthwaite). More blind corners. Take a right turn off road at a bend just past white house on right (Greenside, low wooden public bridleway sign). Follow gravel track over cattle grid uphill to farm and park at the farm buildings at Fell Edge Grid reference SD 436890 Or Take A5074 from Gilpin Bridge and continue past The Howe turning, passing the Lyth Valley Hotel on right and turning left after 7km (sign posted Cartmel) on to single track road with passing places. After 1km, note signed Broad Oak farm on right. Shortly afterwards turn left (road actually bears right at a corner) before house marked Greenside Follow gravel track over cattle grid uphill to farm and park at the farm buildings at Fell Edge Grid reference SD 436890 Bring rainwear, warm clothing, lunch and stout footwear. Contact Robin Eddleston 015395 32217</p>
<p>13 January 2013 Sunday 1000</p>	<p>Fell Edge Same directions as given for 9 December Contact Robin Eddleston 015395 32217</p>
<p>10 February 2013 Sunday 1000</p>	<p>Witherslack Woods Turn off A590 towards Witherslack, continue on road to pass through the village and continue to follow the road left in front of Witherslack Hall. Continue through the woods to the Bell Rake parking area before North Lodge – about 1.25km along the road through the woods. Grid Ref. SD 431872 Bring rainwear, warm clothing, lunch and stout footwear. Contact Chris Winnick 01539 728254</p>
<p>10 March 2013 Sunday 1000 (note change of venue)</p>	<p>Witherslack Woods (Note: Different meeting place from above) Turn off A590 towards Witherslack, continue on road to pass through the village to Witherslack Hall. Turn right onto a rough track (the kennels) for parking. Grid Ref. SD 436859 Bring rainwear, warm clothing, lunch and stout footwear. Contact Chris Winnick 01539 728254</p>

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at 11.00 on 24th June 2012 at Hay Bridge Nature Reserve

MINUTES

1. *Introduction and Apologies*

Five members attended the meeting, which was chaired by David Eastlick (DTE), who introduced the members of the committee. Total attendance including chairman and committee was 13.

DTE thanked Sarah Bradley and Martin Tordoff, who, before the meeting, identified the 55 or so species of moths collected over the previous night. Martin Chadwick's help in this was acknowledged too.

Steve Clarke (SC) had previously intimated his resignation as chairman but would remain on the committee and Chris Winnick had agreed to be the next chairman. Both men apologised for their absence and DTE read a message from SC:

"After four enjoyable years in the post of committee chairman, I feel it is time to stand down and allow a different person to take the branch forward. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with my friends on the committee, and I leave a branch with a strong committee of dedicated and willing people to manage the activities and the direction of the branch."

DTE thanked SC on behalf the committee and members for his work and enthusiasm as chairman

Apologies were received from

Steve and Millie Clarke
Chris Winnick
Peter Boardman
David and Jean Ellwood
Steve Doyle

**2. Approve Minutes of the meeting 19th June 2011
Action**

There were no actions arising from the minutes and no questions from the floor. The minutes were signed as a correct record of the meeting by DTE who also added the year to the date.

3. Matters Arising (not dealt with elsewhere in the agenda).

There were no matters arising.

A very brief discussion should take place initially within the committee on the need to publish the minutes sooner, perhaps with the autumn newsletter, and announce the agenda in a flyer with the spring newsletter. John Mounsey suggested we consider sending minutes out to members by email and putting them on the website, though it was recognised that this would mean incorporating a members-only section in the website.

Com'ittee

At this point Martin Wain, Butterfly Conservation, arrived and was invited to give an impromptu talk on the Morecambe Bay Nature Improvement Area. A bid for government funds by interested parties had been successful. A grant of £617,000 over three years was awarded to allow 3.5 advisors to drive initiatives on **Woodlands**, Butterfly Conservation (Martin Wain already appointed) butterflies and birds, **Grasslands**, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and **Wetlands**, RSPB. The grant also allowed for capital spending to link areas of high biodiversity value. Additional grant applications from SITA, Heritage Lottery Fund and the Co-op had all been successful, and among other things allowed the appointment of a BC volunteer coordinator for an initial 3 days a week. Martin Chadwick had been helpful in devising a transect for the Wartbarrow SSSI site. Free help given to some of the SSSI land owners has encouraged them into Higher Level Stewardship agreements. New Duke of Burgundy sites found last year near Finsthwaite have suffered by estate burning of heather. However, Martin has identified some survivor sites and has developed amicable relations with the estate.

4. Chairman's Report

4.1 **Branch membership** increased from 206 to 218, a 5.8% increase, during the year.

4.2 **Events** Attendance at winter work parties has been a little lower than normal due to illness suffered by several of the regular volunteers. Work parties included tree and scrub removal to enlarge the habitat at site B for the re-introduced Marsh Fritillary. There were two sessions at Fell Edge, on the western edge of Whitbarrow near Howe Ridding, to improve connectivity for fritillaries. Two sessions were held at Linsty Hall Wood, a new site, to further open up the area for fritillaries and two sessions at Township clearing scrub to promote the growth of cowslips to benefit the Duke of Burgundy.

Committee has discussed the criteria for selection of work party sites and a list of required site attributes has been developed, to ensure as far as possible that the work performed delivers real and long lasting habitat improvements. The attributes adopted are briefly, long term commitment from both the Branch and site owner, to preserve the uniqueness of some species to Cumbria, connectivity and regular monitoring to determine the benefits of the work.

A full programme of summer field trips was carried out last year, including a joint field trip with Cumbria WT for Mountain Ringlet. Two further joint Mountain Ringlet field trips are scheduled for this year in July. Working with CWT can only increase the benefits to butterflies in Cumbria

- 4.3 **Marsh Fritillary Project** Populations in the wild continue to do well with more larval webs found in 2011 than in any other year since reintroductions took place from 2007 of the hybrid butterfly. We now regard counting the webs in late summer as a more reliable method of enumeration than timed flights of the butterfly. It remains to be seen how 2012 will fare but early signs are that, despite the very late flight season, there are good numbers on most sites. Certainly, there were good numbers at Finglandrigg on May 27th, 4 days after emergence.

The branch will fund the purchase of further ~400 db scabious for the Ennerdale sites.

Productivity of the captive breeding programme has been greatly reduced compared with previous years. To maintain a capability to populate new sites with captive bred stock, the reason or reasons for breeding failure need to be better understood and rectified. The productivity varies greatly from breeder to breeder and is due to a failure to pupate successfully during the period November-March. Members enquired about predators or parasites

- 4.4 **Mountain Ringlet Project** Following an appeal for volunteer surveyors, the team of surveyors increased from around six in previous years to almost 40 in 2011. A joint field trip was held with Cumbria Wildlife Trust. Martin Tordoff cautioned that while 40 recorders were to be welcomed, many of the observations were casual. Much preferred would be a rigorous survey of a given 1km under defined conditions. "Surveyors' Notes" on the branch website, include a listing of around 75 sites where surveys would be desirable in 2012. These are a mixture of (i) sites with recent sightings, (ii) previously unchecked sites adjacent to these, and (iii) sites with apparent potential but no previous positive records.

John Mounsey suggested that in poor weather when the butterfly was not flying a search for the pale yellow larvae could give some indication of the presence of the butterfly.

Wendy Nelson suggested that some coordination with CWT upland observation

groups could achieve some of the objectives.

Records were received from almost a hundred 1km squares and twenty new occupied 1 km squares were found.

SC gave thanks to Martin Tordoff and Peter Wilde for sharing the workload to get this project started.

- 4.5 **Small Blue Project** There is a significant and unique population of Small Blue butterflies in west Cumbria around Workington associated with now closed industrial facilities. These sites are subject to development. But, Allerdale Council has been made aware of the status of the Small Blue as a priority species in the UK BAP, which helps at the planning stage with developers to protect the future of this butterfly.

A Small Blue Network (Action Group) has been set up in west Cumbria, which includes Allerdale Planning Department, Cumbria County Council, Natural England, industrial site owners and the Port of Workington. Tesco have donated £10,000 to Allerdale Council for Small Blue habitat restoration or creation and Steve Doyle is working with others in the action group to develop plans.

An additional £5,000 from Tesco was obtained by the Groundworks Trust to spend on wildlife education, with particular reference to Small Blues. Ten local primary schools are doing practical work with small-scale habitat creation. An underlying theme is that the Small Blue is Allerdale's butterfly, and with more awareness and involvement by others in a sense of ownership, a worrying situation can be improved.

- 4.6 **Grantscape Project Money for habitat restoration**

The original project finished this spring but a substantial amount of additional funding was secured to allow the project to continue.

- 4.7 **Moths** Martin Tordoff and members of the committee have represented the branch at many public moth events to raise the profile of moths in general, to encourage visitors to record moths in their own gardens and to submit their records to CBDC at Tullie House. Some moths are being rediscovered in areas but this is more probably to do with the lack of recording effort during the intervening years than the species' reappearance. Impetus to moth recording in recent years has been given by better lights and identification aids in field guides and on-line. Moths face the same general threats as do butterflies including loss of habitat by neglect, or changing land use, climate change, and unusual weather events.

- 4.8 **Other** The branch will fund the cultivation of between 800-1000 cowslip plants for Township Plantation to support the Duke of Burgundy.

The committee's thanks go to Steve Doyle who writes, edits other contributions,

collates and produces the branch newsletter and to Mark Eastlick, the Branch's web master

5. Treasurers Report

DTE presented the audited income and expenditure accounts for the year ended 31st March 2012.

- Accounts prepared in time for incorporation into HQ accounts.
- Thanks to Tony Harrison for the audit.
- The branch received £700 from Peter Wilde, which was divided between the Mountain Ringlet and Marsh Fritillary restricted funds. In addition, there was £188 in smaller non-designated donations, £137 in a partial VAT refund and £73 from advertising for NFU insurance, which totalled £398. This is a very welcome sum but cannot be expected every year.
- There was no major expenditure from the restricted funds.
- The major items of expenditure were the Branch newsletter and postage 39.2%, power tool equipment 20.0%, and materials for Marsh Fritillary cage maintenance 22.8%. While not part of this year's accounts nearly £500 of stamps were bought for future use - a future saving of £194.
- The branch has invested £7500 in a one-year bond at 3% maturing in February 2013.
- The current June 2012 unrestricted funds are £2870.
- Major works are balanced by donations and the unrestricted outgoings are balanced by un-planned income. Work party outgoings were very small due to the Green Grant and Bio-diversity grants of earlier years. Restricted funds are at a good level but are earmarked to use on major spends in the future as needed by the major projects we have ongoing in Cumbria.

6. Appointment of Officers

In his introduction DTE said that Steve Clarke will resign as chairman at this AGM but remain on the committee. Chris Winnick has agreed to take over as chairman. Both persons were elected to their current roles last AGM. Robin Eddleston resigned at the end of his three year term as required by branch rules and sought re-election.

There were no further nominations from the floor. DTE declared that Steve Clarke, Robin Eddleston and Chris Winnick were confirmed in their new positions.

Name	Position	Proposer	Seconder
Chris Winnick	Chairman	Sarah Bradley	Margaret Eastlick
Steve Clarke	Committee member	Martin Chadwick	Margaret Eastlick

Robin Eddleston	Committee member	John Mounsey	Lynette Gilligan

7. AOB

There was no other business

The meeting closed at 1232

Signed as a true record of the meeting

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Date June 2013

Chris Winnick
Chairman

Donation from Rugby Rotary Club

Earlier this year Steve Doyle did an illustrated talk at Rugby Rotary Club as a favour for a long time friend. The talk was about the conservation of the UK's endangered butterfly species with particular emphasis on Cumbria. The talk was clearly well received as Rugby Rotary Club recently sent us a donation of £125 towards Cumbria Branch funds and a similar amount was donated to their local Warwickshire Branch. Those donations will go directly to conservation 'on the ground.'

Thank you Rugby Rotary Club, your gesture is greatly appreciated.

Recruitment and Membership.

Over the years our Branch membership has continued to rise but we need your ideas to help spread the word that Cumbria is an outstanding place for butterflies and moths. One of the best ways to do this is to encourage others to join Butterfly Conservation and to join and support Cumbria Branch. We will publish a list of your ideas in the next newsletter on how this could be achieved. We could plant some of our ideas in advance but we want you to keep an open mind! Please contact Chris Winnick or one of the other Branch committee members to give your views. Many thanks.

Chris Winnick
Branch Chairman

Mountain Ringlets

..... still there despite the weather.

Over the last couple of years Martin Tordoff has taken on a bit of a Challenge – to really learn more about the Mountain Ringlet and its distribution in the Lake District. Needless to say that involves a lot of fell walking in a relatively short space of time which is why he appealed for volunteer help. Here's what Martin said about 2011 firstly.

'In 2011 over 40 people responded to Cumbria Branch's appeal for Mountain Ringlet surveyors, an unprecedented and much appreciated response. Of the forty 1km squares where the butterfly was found, twenty were new records. Though all of those were near or adjacent to known sites this has nevertheless helped the branch to further its knowledge of this montane butterfly's only English populations. The good work continued in 2012, subject to the vagaries of the weather!'

Martin wrote that before the Mountain Ringlet flight season really got underway! With the flight season for 2012 over, here's how Martin sees it now.

'I decided to have a look yesterday (25th July) for any Mountain Ringlets still hanging around at this late date in the season, hoping to get what we thought could be the latest ever English record for the species. Following my successful search on 24 July last year when I saw good numbers at two particular the sites, I went back to the precise GRs where I'd seen them last year. In relatively unsuitable conditions yesterday (thick mist, temp around 12c but negligible breeze) I spent half an hour at each location, doing a thorough search of just a few square metres at a time rather than wandering aimlessly around. I was successful at each site, with singletons found at NY44601262 (where I saw 32 on 24 July 2011) and NY44491302 (starting from where I saw 18 in 2011). They looked fairly fresh to me and the second one was apparently a female. Each was found roosting on a grass stem. So I saw only two, but under fairly grim conditions.

I came away with some satisfaction, having recorded what I believed to be the latest ever record, I having heard from some now-forgotten source last year that 24 July was the previous known latest, and then going on to equal that date. However, I've just had a quick look at the many hundreds of Lakeland MR records on the NBN Gateway site and initially could find none later than another 25 July one (tetrad NY10L - Whin Rigg area in 1998), but then stumbled on a 1 August record (tetrad NY41E - Place Fell area) in 1999. Both these were from the Cumbria Biodiversity Centre database but which doesn't identify the records' original sources. So though the flight season over the whole county in any one year may be 6-7 weeks, the records span more like 10 weeks across all years and areas. Whether we revise our surveyors' notes, currently asking for surveys only mid-June to mid-July, should

perhaps be revisited. Ideally surveys maybe should be confined to this short period, but we're clutching at straws this year, with only a handful of records having come in so far and should welcome any input regardless of date

I'm planning another look tomorrow, 27th - good forecast so far - at Hartsop Dodd (15-20 seen flying on 13 July) and hopefully Birks (a new colony found in 2010 but which I haven't had chance to visit in 2012). And if successful, again on 1 or even 2 August.'

As good as he always is Martin was true to his word and this is what he saw on the 27th.

'Just a quick note to let you know I found more MRs yesterday 27th July. Eighteen on Hartsop Dodd in the morning - around 12c and moderate-strong W wind - not all kicked-up; some flying freely. Then across to Birks in the afternoon. Around 20c shade temp in sheltered sunny spots with negligible breeze. Ideal conditions, but only two seen there though 300m or so apart, so that suggests that's pretty well over for the year at this site. Quite a few Small Heaths at both sites.

That's it now until Wed/Thur next week where I'm hoping for an August record on Hartsop Dodd, whatever the weather.'

Such dedication ! Just as well Butterfly Conservation Cumbria has such volunteers like Martin and if anyone else feels they might like to become a 'species champion' for a Cumbrian butterfly or moth species I or a member of our Branch Committee would be pleased to hear from you.

Martin Tordoff (published by Steve Doyle)

The Small Blue Network.

In the last year or so we have set up the Small Blue Network, or action group if you like. This species has High Priority status in both the UK National and local Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plans but its existence in West Cumbria is very much under threat from brownfield re-development.

As you may have read in earlier editions of this newsletter we in Butterfly Conservation Cumbria are not against re-development and we are not hell bent on stopping it as we fully understand the need for housing, commercial premises and jobs in the area. Within each development however if a currently occupied Small Blue site or patch of habitat is affected we become directly involved. That involvement can include not only liaison to and from local planning officers but also with the developers themselves so that all concerned are aware of the status of the Small Blue butterfly. Measure which we try to agree range from complete protection of the habitat but more likely to mitigation proposals which can mean that a certain portion of the site is set aside for wildlife within a development. Another

possibility is that fresh habitat can be created nearby but that is not a very viable option as Small Blue habitat in Cumbria tends to be on nutrient poor brittle substrate type habitat which is difficult to move without destroying it anyway. Equally there is no known successful relocation of such habitat.

To involve all interested parties it was thought that occasional meetings, about once or twice a year as necessary, should be held where those interested parties would have a platform to air their own points of view or concerns. Hence the creation of the Small Blue Network. Those invited include landowners, factory managers, Allerdale Planning department, the County Council ecology department, the Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership, Groundwork North-East and Cumbria, independent local ecologists, Friends of Siddick Pond, Solway Coast AONB, a climate change consultant, a local councillor, Butterfly Conservation Cumbria and others as necessary.

Tullie House where the Cumbria Records Database Centre is based are also usually represented and they have GIS mapped the Small Blue occupied geographic area in Cumbria all of which is currently in the Allerdale coastal area from Maryport to Harrington just south of Workington. Allerdale Planning are nowadays excellent when it comes to notifying us of a new planning application which might fall into or actually affects a patch of habitat within the Small Blue GIS area. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of both these factors. It is vital we properly and correctly record Small Blue activity (and other wildlife come to that) with the Tullie House records centre as that information is then available to not just planners but also to local ecologists, developers and any other interested party so that they may be well aware of the presence of a High Priority species on the habitat they have in mind. With that knowledge they are then informed about the action they can and must take if they choose to move things forward.

The Small Blue butterfly in Allerdale has suffered badly in recent years. All in the Network are well aware of that – which was an objective in the first place. Whereas we had very strong colonies of Small Blue at Maryport and at Workington a decade or so ago, we now have relatively small fragments of colonies and there are no remaining sites where you can now go and guarantee seeing more than a dozen Small Blues. A few years ago we counted over 1000 on one site which in 2012 yielded less than 50. Even so with a bit of education, commonsense, creative planning and future habitat creation those small colonies which remain are capable of surviving and re-building their numbers – BUT they can not withstand any more ‘hits.’

The Small Blue Network are also working on habitat restoration and creation both at Maryport and Workington. Such projects are long term however but at least a start is being made – hopefully before it is too late for the UK’s smallest butterfly *Cupido minimus*.

Steve Doyle

Rusland Field Trip 14 July 2012 (led by Chris Winnick)

6 members met at High Ickenthaite in the Rusland Valley to be greeted by a rain shower (par for the course in this miserable summer). However the rain ceased as we climbed through meadow and woodland to reach the lower part of the fell. This area was deer-fenced and had been planted with native trees about 10 years ago, supplemented by self-seeded birch. We followed a clearing with wet flushes, and soon came upon a female Dark green fritillary resting on bracken litter, with several more flying rather sluggishly under low cloud. Small heath, Meadow brown, and Common blue were also spotted, along with a Small elephant hawk moth. After a break for lunch, we retraced our steps and proceeded to another area to the north of the first site, this comprised a steeply sloping open area surrounded by woodland but heavily covered with bracken. Again, wet areas were present with marsh thistle providing a nectar source. At this stage a watery sun appeared, and with it many more fritillaries. All obliging enough to rest on the thistles were closely examined, with the majority being reluctantly dismissed as Dark greens, until one specimen was definitely identified as High brown fritillary. The final count was 2 High browns and 25 Dark greens. Small heath and, rather surprisingly, Small skipper were also present in these wet areas. Our party were able to return to their cars satisfied that this is a viable High brown site, worthy of any necessary management to benefit this species.

Robin Eddleston

The Marsh Fritillary Project.

It's now 5 years since we reintroduced the Marsh Fritillary to Cumbria in 2007 after it became extinct in the wild in 2004. Over those 5 years somewhere near 100,000 caterpillars have been bred in captivity and most of them have been released into the wild to create 8 new colonies, 5 of which are in Ennerdale thus forming a metapopulation there with viable connectivity routes. The remaining caterpillars stay in 'stock' for ongoing captive breeding but more about that in a minute as a new learning curve is presently being experienced.

As we are all well aware the summer of 2012 has been dreadful as far as butterflies are concerned. At the time of writing we don't yet know how the Marsh Fritillary fared in the wild but we do know it has fared badly in captivity for the second successive year.

Looking firstly at the present situation 'in the wild' we are due to carry out our larval web search in the week commencing 20th August so at the time of writing this we do not know the full position. Early indications from two of our eight sites are that larval web numbers are going to be well down and possibly by 50%. Balance that against the record year of 2011 when just over 1000 webs were located however and even a 50% loss in 2012 will be

acceptable given the wet, windy weather when the worst factor of all has been the very low temperatures during the flight and breeding season. We know that the Marsh Fritillary is as 'tough as old boots get' however because we feared the worst in 2011 yet we had record numbers of larval webs despite the very wet weather then as well. The difference in 2012 however has been the very low temperatures in addition to the wet and the wind. On two successive days I was on different sites in the flight season and the temperatures were 7 and 9 degrees celcius at mid-day in late May/early June. Butterflies need to warm up otherwise they are not active which in turn means they don't nectar, don't fly and don't engage in the mating process. Bear in mind at this point that each adult Marsh Fritillary butterfly only lives for about one week and that can reduce because of poor weather in which case an emerged butterfly merely sits in the grass and eventually dies. Such events fortunately are rare and even in the worst of weathers there is usually a gap when, even for short periods of time the temperature is high enough for activity to take place.

We were very lucky this year on our field trip to Finglandrigg NNR on 27th May as it was a rare 2012 summer day of dry sunny, warm weather. There were literally 100's of Marsh Fritillaries in flight that day and I think everyone of the 22 present were impressed by the sheer numbers and by the quality of the habitat as managed by Alistair Brock, Colin Auld and their team at Natural England South Solway Reserves. Contrast that day with the repeat field trip the next Sunday however when the awful weather had returned and we struggled to find just a few Marsh Fritillaries huddled in the grass. They were there alright but well hidden and not very happy.

Let's go back to that warm sunny day on 27th May when 100's were flying at Finglandrigg. Mating pairs early in the day would complete the process but those pairing up later in the day would perhaps not complete the process as it takes quite a long time. Hence those pairings would likely fail but worse still those females which had completed the process earlier in the day might still not have laid their fertilised eggs. Reason? Those females gestate overnight and lay their eggs early next day when the weather and temperature conditions are right – but next day they were not and that situation continued for well over a week with little or no break in between. It is very possible therefore that many mated females simply died without laying those eggs but being optimistic we hope that was not the case and that a small weather window did in fact allow for egg laying.

The situation with our captive breeding is not good reading at present. The main thing is that those in the wild do well and even allowing for a poor 2012 season we should still be Ok. No so the captive stocks however. As a captive breeding programme of the scale we are doing has not been done before there are no books to refer to so we need to use a lot of commonsense, liaise with others and learn quickly.

My own opinion as to why captive stock has failed in 2012 is this. Yes we had problems in 2011 but I consider that was due to the unseasonal hot weather in very early Spring that year when a large part of our captive stock perished as larvae or dried up pupae. That was an unusual scenario and we have learned from it. 2012 was different however because it was not too hot early on, indeed breeding conditions were too cold. That alone was not a decisive factor in my opinion however or we would have also seen much lower numbers flying in the wild. In the captive cages I saw the emergence was slow, it was weak in numbers and many of those which did emerge simply did not engage in mating activity. The easy explanation is that temperature was the problem and I agree it certainly was a problem but in my opinion it was not the main problem. I think that in captivity the genetic weakness problem surfaces a helluva lot quicker than it does in the wild. Out there in the wild the adult butterflies can fly effectively as far as they want even though most choose only to fly a few metres in the same or to a neighbouring similar field. That leaves them the option of mating with another butterfly from a different egg batch (family) and that in all likelihood happens and so the genetic diversity thing carries on indefinitely. In captivity in a cage however if stocks are low there are few larval webs so the opportunity to mate with a member of a different egg batch/family is denied or significantly reduced and that reduction factor compounds itself as years go on. That is avoided in the wild in a strong colony. See what I mean?

My thoughts are that we need to introduce some more wild stock into our captive breeding process to strengthen the gene pool in our cages. Such action will need to be agreed by our Action Group and if approved we will need a licence to do it as the Marsh Fritillary is a fully protected species. If agreed it will also depend on the numbers of larval webs we have in the wild in 2012. The process would be to take 6 or 10 larvae/caterpillars from about 30 webs therefore giving us new stock from 30 different 'families.' That would not seriously affect stock in the wild as each larval web contains an average of 150 larvae. We would also plan to use stock from the eight Cumbrian colonies and not introduce more Scottish stock.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this short resume of where we are up to with our Marsh Fritillary Project. It's not easy learning 'on the hoof' but overall I think we are heading in the right direction and we now have a very strong and active Marsh Fritillary Action Group in Cumbria. Another update will follow in the next newsletter.

Steve Doyle

LANDSCAPE and CONNECTIVITY.....

..... not big words as such but of vast wildlife significance.

In his Chairman's Message on page 2 of the last newsletter, number 24 Steve Clarke outlined the criteria agreed by the Branch Committee and which should be in place before the Branch adds a particular site to the winter work party schedule. That is a good step forward because we have learned a lot about habitat requirements for our most endangered species. Crucially however he also says 'characteristics that we feel need to be substantially met.' That also is very sensible because some sites are so good that we can't afford to write them off if one of our criteria is not in place provided it is not a critical one, for example the landowner is not playing ball. So it's not just about what you might read in books but commonsense comes into play as well and that has been gained in abundance by this Branch following many years of habitat management i.e. conservation on the ground.

That's what I want to focus on now. Twenty years or more ago when we started we and other conservation partners concentrated on managing sites here, there and everywhere. Some conservation bodies owned nature reserves and managed those well, very well in some cases, and we had very good work parties ourselves.

However, there were two main problems, Nature reserves tended to be 'island' sites like postage stamps in a much larger landscape. I don't mean to harshly dismiss small nature reserves – they play their part and there are some extremely good ones in Cumbria but many lack that second and most important word 'connectivity.' In today's world, in the UK at any rate, conservationists are now talking more about 'landscape' management which brings into play the 'connectivity' factor.

If you have been a regular reader of the Cumbria Branch newsletter in recent years you might have noticed those two vital words cropping up more and more. Our Marsh Fritillary reintroduction project is a good example of landscape and connectivity. If we were to have reintroduced the species to the original four sites and left it at that we would in all probability have failed in the longer term because they would have been 'island' sites with no connectivity where individuals could realistically move from one colony to another to maintain genetic diversity. Now there's another 'buzz' word or phrase because with island/isolated colonies you will inevitably get in-breeding and over time that will reduce the genetic strength of the colony with only one eventual outcome. Our aim is to have a cluster of four or five colonies within reach of each other to give us every chance of nature taking its course naturally. Isolated colonies might still find new and acceptable habitat by themselves but giving them a helping hand just makes the odds of success a bit greater.

Genetic strength is something which should be considered with other wildlife species as well. Birds are maybe not such a problem as they can travel to find suitable habitat. Flora

are not quite such a problem either as insects pollinate them but what if those insects became scarce?

This Branch has a Broadleaved Woodlands Project ongoing and headed up by Regional Officer Dave Wainwright and more locally by Martin Wain. The focus is to manage a series of woodlands to benefit woodland specialists such as Pearl Bordered, High Brown and Silver Washed Fritillaries. Those species need open rides or glades and freshly coppiced areas and will die out if that type of habitat is just not there. We know that because that is exactly what happened not just here in Cumbria but everywhere else in the UK. Working in only one woodland would not be enough because from our genetic knowledge of Marsh Fritillaries it gives us every reason to believe the same genetic problems are likely to affect other species (and not just butterflies). So our Woodlands Project is managing 30 or so woodlands all of which have realistic connectivity routes.

In West Cumbria our aim is to maintain the core colonies of Small Blue butterflies in Maryport and Workington which are the most northerly and southerly points for that species in Cumbria. However we also have recorded the odd one in between those places and along a narrow coastal strip between the two towns so it is important we concentrate on conserving habitat along the way – another example of connectivity between colonies.

It all adds up to 'landscape' management. Sounds simple but as you might have guessed there are a few snags along the way.

Steve Doyle.

Whicham Valley based member Nigel Gilligan.....

has like the rest of us, had a frustrating butterfly year, mainly if not entirely because of the weather. He put together his own thoughts, presumably as something to do on yet another wet day – here's what he said

I expect you are only too aware of the problems faced by butterflies this "summer", both nationally, and locally (where it seems we have been especially unfortunate with the weather)

I've done quite a few butterfly surveys in recent weeks. In addition, I've kept a close eye on the status in my own garden. It's doing very badly – for species, for numbers, and to some extent for first arrival dates.

Numbers and species seem particularly down relative to known good areas – where perhaps one might normally do a butterfly survey. I wondered if there might be an additional unknown factor in play affecting my own garden compared with good habitat areas. For this reason I have detailed my own observations.

**Butterfly species
seen in my garden
at Gateside.**

1st seen 2012

1st seen 2011

comments

Butterfly species	1 st seen 2012	1 st seen 2011	comments
Comma	—	27/07	Rarely seen anyway
Common Blue	28/05	23/05	very low numbers normally
Gatekeeper	3/08	27/07	Only one so far in 2012
Green Hairstreak	26/03	-	Seen just outside garden from 27/04/2011, but first seen in garden in 2010 on 14/04
Green-veined White	13/04	9/04	Frequent - commonest butterfly this year quite widely
Large Skipper	4/07	12/07	A single specimen, but normally very low numbers
Large White	19/04	29/05	Very late this year, and only one!
Meadow Brown	27/07	26/07	Only one worn specimen this year so far
Orange-tip	5/04	10/04	Plenty of them
Painted Lady	-	25/09	Rarely seen anyway
Peacock	24/03	28/03	But have not seen one since June
Red Admiral	-	7/04	Very low number seen elsewhere
Ringlet			Hasn't quite got to this corner of Cumbria yet
Small Copper	22/04	13/07	After first sighting this year, there was a long gap until August and some better weather
Small Heath	-	-	A single one strayed into the garden from Black Combe in 2010.
Small Tortoiseshell	18/03	25/03	Not seen from mid-June until early August
Small White	27/03	19/04	Comments as per Small Copper
Speckled Wood	16/04	19/04	Comments as per Small Copper
Wall Brown	28/05	4/07	Always in low numbers, but this year not seen since 30 th June

Here is a simplistic analysis for my own locality. The pattern is that early species are doing well. But, less obviously: -

Green-veined White and Meadow Brown are doing well, but all other later-emergence species are down across the whole area. Even in those areas with excellent habitats for certain species (e.g. Common Blue, Small Heath), numbers are

down, and patchy within those areas. Those doing particularly badly appear to be Peacock, Red Admiral, and most concerning of all, Wall Brown. Is this on the verge of a local extinction?

Focusing on my own garden, we normally have a very good spread of species, but low numbers. We have plenty of wild and garden flowers, and a long flowering season. This year, however, many of the numbers have been zero for weeks on end, despite the flowers being there. We have become almost indistinguishable from the wider agricultural landscape – where butterflies struggle to survive.

My thoughts on this are as follows. Our garden simply isn't big enough to sustain a population of any one species on its own, and when times are bad, it simply reflects the fact that the typical habitat in an agricultural landscape is of no use to butterflies. There are two major factors in depressing butterfly numbers: the weather, and the habitat. In most rural landscapes the habitat is degraded, and they struggle. Compound that with bad weather, and they can't survive a double whammy. But in good habitat areas, they have survived in years gone by when bad weather has been a factor. They can bounce back from that. After the summer of 2012, and away from the good habitat areas, I question what the health of the butterfly population might be. It could be critical.

Nigel Gilligan

The Great Orme on 1st July

Weather conditions for the Great Orme trip did not look promising.

Some of us had decided to make a weekend of it and get B & B in Llandudno.

On Saturday, foregoing the delights of the shops, I did a recce of the summit by going up the tramway. Remaining vertical up there was a challenge and despite a buffeting walk around the top I only found two brave Grayling huddled under a wall. Where were the Blues?

But at the appointed hour on Sunday our leaders Robin and Verity seemed full of confidence when they met us by the West Shore. There were five BC members and three guests. It was only a short stroll to the start of Invalid Walk, a gradual ascent of the Orme on the sheltered aspect. Immediately by the path were lots of Silver Studded Blues. Most were males but there were plenty of the very attractive bluish females that are so characteristic of this small race *caernensis*. They were sedentary, even lazy, little butterflies seemingly content to bask in the sunshine or sit with wings folded to avoid being blown a calamitous couple of metres away from their favoured leaf. The largest concentration was at the beginning of the walk just after passing through the gate and near the wall and bramble-strewn rubble to the right of the path. This was a relatively calm area in the still strong winds and here we also found Graylings, a few Small Skippers and a single Ringlet. The Graylings are of the form *thyone*, an isolated form that is smaller and darker than the ones we see in Cumbria. Like the Great Orme Silver-Studded Blues they emerge earlier than the larger standard form.

Four of us proceeded to the summit finding Silver-Studded blues almost all the way. Their food plant Rock Rose provided a lovely display on the lower and middle slopes. Higher up of botanical interest were splendid specimens of Spiked Speedwell and Pyramidal Orchids.

Amongst the cries of the Jackdaws Robin picked out something different and sure enough there were some Choughs; an adult with two begging fledglings. Our tally for the walk was Silver-Studded blues in the hundreds, Grayling about 30, Small Skipper 2, Meadow Brown 10, Small Heath 10, Small Tortoiseshell 1 and Ringlet 1. In addition we saw Cinnabar moths, many Burnet moth pupae, a huge Mullein moth caterpillar eating mullein of course and some Forester moths. Many thanks to Robin and Verity for organising and leading us on such an interesting trip.

Martin Chadwick

Visit to How Ridding and Witherslack Woods.

On 12th July at the request of Lancashire Branch Chris Winnick led this walk. How Ridding is a Cumbria Wildlife Trust reserve on the western side of Whitbarrow and adjoining Witherslack Woods on the south side. The weather was almost perfect but little did we realise that there was to be the 'butterfly highlight of the year' for most of those present! Although we only saw one Silver Washed Fritillary (our main target species) the butterflies were out in profusion. Without butterflies the walk is an absolute delight- early dwarf daffodils in early Spring, late Spring bluebells, primroses and bugle and Summer just about everything else. However on this day we were joined for the half mile walk by about 20 Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries, 20 Northern Brown Argus, 50/60 Meadow Browns, 50/60 Ringlets, 70/80 Dark Green Fritillaries (possibly a few High Browns in there as well) and an astonishing 80/90 Common Blues/ Together with numbers of Speckled Wood, Green Veined White, Small Tortoiseshell and Large Skipper – what a visual feast!

Unlike on some days, many just posed for the photographers. Thank you to Joe Murphy the Senior CWT reserves officer for permission to access the reserve with our group. However if you wish to make your own visit I cannot recommend this wonderful CWT reserve more highly. Further details of the reserve are in the CWT reserves handbook.

Some of us stayed on to look at the BC sponsored woodland management in the adjoining Witherslack Woods. This is a very special project in conjunction with the Stanley Estates. Further details of this to follow but note there are two work parties there this coming winter. Recently a huge area has been coppiced near the end which adjoins How Ridding and already that new area looks great and 'ripe' as a breeding ground for Pearl Bordered and High Browns next year.

Chris Winnick

Front Cover Picture.

Most if not all of you will recognise the High Brown Fritillary.
The broadleaved woodlands of South Cumbria are critical to the survival of this species in the UK and through our Morecambe Bay Limestone Woodlands Project we hope that the decline in numbers of High Brown has been halted or better still reversed. Although the renewed Project targets woodland management for Pearl Bordered Fritillaries the work done will also benefit High Browns a year or two down the line. Several of the winter work parties held by this Branch will benefit both species - so see you there!

CUMBRIA BRANCH OFFICERS

Branch Organiser	Chris Winnick	Newsletter Editor	Steve Doyle
	The Old Vicarage		14 The Willows
	Queens Road		Durdar
	Kendal		Carlisle
	LA9 4PL		CA2 4UP
	01539 728254		01228 544059
	chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk		stevedoyle44@hotmail.co.uk

Conservation Officer currently done jointly by the Branch Officers.

Moth Officer	Martin Tordoff	Treasurer	David Eastlick
	1 Fletcher Drive		Benrigg
	Kendal		16 Highfield Road
	LA9 7DL		Grange over Sands
	01539 735935		LA11 7JA
	mt@vmst.fsnet.co.uk		01539 532076
			eastlick@ktdbroadband.com

Committee	Peter Boardman	Robin and Verity Eddleston	Members
	36 Market Street	Turnstones	
	Kirkby Stephen	Charney Road	
	CA17 4QN	Grange over Sands	
	01768 372063	LA11 6BP	015395 32217
	telemark-hq@ktdinternet.com	robbedleston@hotmail.com	

Steve Clarke
Low Cray
Gosforth
Seascale
CA20 1EB
01946 725828

Sarah Bradley
Thornbarrow Hill
Witherslack,
Grange over Sands
LA11 6RR
015395 52340

clarkelowcray@btinternet.com bradders@aol.com

Webmaster Mark Eastlick mark.eastlick@yahoo.co.uk

Regional Officer Dave Wainwright, Butterfly Conservation regional office,
Low Barns, Witton le Wear, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham,
DL14 0AG Tel : 01388 488428 E-mail address
dwainwright@butterfly-conservation.org

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and finally,

Butterfly Conservation

Cumbria Branch

c/o Chris Winnick

The Old Vicarage

Queens Road

Kendal

LA9 4PL

01539 728254

chriswinnick@tiscali.co.uk

Butterfly Conservation

Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468)

Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset,

BH20 5QP. Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and

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