

**MI NUTES OF BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION WARWICKSHIRE BRANCH**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**2.00 p.m. – 10 November 2012**  
**NFU Mutual, Tiddington, Stratford upon Avon**

Mike Slater opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. He also thanked the NFU for the use of their facilities.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Chris Foulkes.

2. Minutes

The Minutes from the previous meeting had been circulated. Proposal for acceptance was made by Val Weston and seconded by Richard Lamb and the Minutes were approved by the meeting.

3. Re-election of Officers

Phil Parr, Richard Lamb and Mike Slater stood down from the Committee by rotation and were entitled and willing to offer themselves for re-election. Val Weston proposed and Richard Dinsdale seconded and the re-elections which were carried unanimously.

4. Chairman's Review

Mike Slater noted that the weather had played a predominant part of the year's butterfly records with a dry and warm early spring followed by a cold, wet late spring and summer.

Outdoor events began with a visit to Prestbury Hill which, though cool, produced some good butterflies and flora. This was followed by a weekend visit to Catfield Fen in Norfolk. The event, organised by the Norfolk Branch, was actually cancelled due to flooding of the carpark but a few hardy individuals made the journey and were rewarded by brief views of a Swallowtail. Mid week visits included one to Hampton Wood; the best sighting here was a Scarlet Tiger moth. We held our Open Day at Ryton Wood Meadows in July which at least was a dry day although many of the paths were under water. A weekend trip to Cumbria picked up seven target species and we ended the year with a successful Brown Hairstreak hunt on Ryton Wood Meadows and in Ryton Country Park.

Mike noted that the second Annual Report which included moth data, had been well received and urged members to send in their photographs for inclusion in the 2012 report.

The website continues to be praised and Mike thanked him Steve Cheshire for his sterling work on it.

5. Treasurer's Report

The financial report had been circulated. Of the funds in the bank account, £5680 is available for Branch use and £9667 is restricted Stewardship funds in respect of Ryton Wood Meadows. The cost of the Annual Report had doubled this year because of its extra content and Keith reported that at our current rate of expenditure versus receipts, the Branch will not be able to afford to print it by 2015. We therefore need to find a sponsor or achieve extra fundraising to support the project and Keith asked the meeting for any sponsorship suggestions.

It was confirmed that we would be getting the Barclays 'Pound for Pound' donation again in respect of monies raised during the year.

Keith reported that the asset purchased during the year was a new, larger and waterproof gazebo at £250.

The proposal to accept the accounts was made by Richard Dinsdale and seconded by Richard Lamb and the meeting voted to confirm acceptance.

6. Butterfly Recorder's Report

Keith Warmington thanked everyone for sending in their records whether online or on paper. The deadline for records is 31 December and he asked for any outstanding records to be submitted as soon as possible.

This year the Branch have been targeting 2km squares which have had no records since 2000. At the beginning of the season these squares totalled 119 and by the end of the season there were only 36 empty squares; many of these were in the centre of Birmingham. We would like to fill these empty squares next year in time for the next update of the Millennium Atlas. Mike Slater commented that we wanted to encourage all 270 members to input their records or send them to the Recorder on paper and to remind everyone that all records were needed even if it

was the odd sighting when taking the dog for a walk. That record might be one to fill an empty square. Warwick, Kenilworth and Leamington areas were not well covered so Mike asked for members to bear that in mind for next year.

Whilst transect records are still coming in, Keith put forward four 'winners' for the year as Gatekeeper, Red Admiral, Comma and Meadow Brown. His four 'losers' were Wood White, Small Tortoiseshell, Common Blue and Large Skipper.

#### 7. Web Records – Statistics

Steve Cheshire reported that this year we have had nearly 124,000 records online. There has also been an increase in the number of people inputting records. The records show that the poor weather has affected woodland species in particular.

Steve also mentioned the members' zone on our website where all members can input their membership number to gain access to reports and magazines. He also reported that we have a Twitter account which is used to notify members when certain species are on the wing and keep members up-to-date with other sightings. This appears to be helping to gain the interest of younger people.

#### 8. Conservation Officer's Report

With regard to the Reserve, Mike Slater reported that a local farmer had paid for a new gate to bring the site entrance out nearer the road and allowing for three parking spaces behind the gate. A flail mower had been purchased making path cutting much easier. The mower has also been used at the Fenny Compton Tunnels site. A lot of hedge laying has taken place and we are purchasing disease resistant elm trees which can be sponsored with a memorial plaque if members are interested. Longhorn cattle are being used to graze the meadows which are already showing an improvement.

Large areas of Sutton Park have been surveyed for the Green Hairstreak and as a result two new areas have been discovered. In North Warwickshire we are working with RSPB Middleton Lakes to retain Dingy Skipper sites. Peastockings Meadow at Meriden has had a flora survey undertaken. We are working in partnership with the owners to make this a Reserve using HLS funding.

Two students are conducting surveys at the Ryton Reserve and at Harbury.

With regard to woodland, the main focus this year has been Hay Wood which has good moth records. Because of this the Forestry Commission are going to fell a lot of the conifers and widen rides which should help prospects for Argent & Sable moth. At Weston & Waverley Wood the Forestry Commission are allowing us to make trees that we would like them to retain to help Red Data Book species that exist there. Recent management has created potential habitats in Oakley Wood for Silver Washed Fritillary.

The Princethorpe woodland complex will be monitored and will be used to show woodland management procedures to landowners. A first year's transect has been conducted at Coombe Abbey and the data already shows a major difference between those meadows grazed intermittently and those grazed constantly.

In the Rugby area there is a new monitored site at Flecknoe and a local group at Causton are being given advice regarding the creation of habitat. We are working with the Malpass owners for habitat compensation before that site is developed. Part of the site will come into HLS.

There are now up to nine Small Blue sites grown from the original three. There are 35 landowners interested in helping to develop more sites. At Stockton the scrub clearance shows how management work has resulted in the increase in Grizzled and Dingy Skipper plus Small Blue populations. Sustrans sites are being monitored at Draycote and Long Itchington. Two meadows at the Oxhouse Farm site are to be put under HLS and the original meadow will be grazed by Exmoor ponies over winter. There will also be some scrub clearance undertaken. Dark Green Fritillary has also been seen at Harbury and will hopefully spread further.

In west Warwickshire, a landowner is planting a lot of forestry but is sympathetic to including wide rides and will let us manage for wildlife. We are also working with the Ragley Estate as they are changing their Stewardship system. We shall need help with the monitoring here. There are a couple of farms in the Stratford area going into HLS for wildlife and it was noted that Wolford Wood needs management although we believe the Wood White has gone from the site. More work will be done at Ryton to try to build the population there.

#### 9. Moth Recorder's Report

David Brown gave a summary of the larger moths' year in Warwickshire. Moths have also been affected by the poor weather but perhaps not quite as radically as butterflies. Large Yellow Underwing had a particularly poor year. Highlights included the first record of Dark Spinach in Oversley Wood for 20 years. This moth is in decline nationally. Other highlights were Red Sword Grass at Ryton Country Park, Devon Carpet at Weethley Wood and Pauper Pug, a Red Data Book species, in Weston & Waverley Wood.

The Hornet Clearwing, highlight of last year, had a very poor season with only seven individuals seen at Halford Hill Farm. However, the farm did produce Marbled Green. Scarlet Tiger is spreading up through the county and appears to be feeding on a larger variety of plants.

With regard to migrants, it was a poor year but highlights were Cloaked Pug in Coventry, Blair's Mocha in Kenilworth and Scarce Bordered Straw at Ryton Country Park in October.

The impact of the Ash die-back disease will be felt by three moth species in particular which are dependent upon the tree. These are Centre-barred Sallow, Dusky Thorn and Tawny Pinion. Others which could be affected, although not exclusively dependent upon Ash, are Ash Pug, Coronet, Privet Hawkmoth, Copper Underwing, Sprawler, Brick and Lilac Beauty.

Mike Slater commented that in the West Midlands area there 98,000 hectares of woodland of which 11,000 is Ash plus another 1,500 hectares in fields and hedges. Potentially, the cost to the countryside could be worse than Dutch Elm Disease.

10. Butterfly Photography Presentation

Following a tea break Keith Warmington gave a very interesting talk on his top tips for successful butterfly photography and following a general discussion the meeting closed at 5.00 p.m.