

MI NUTES OF BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION WARWICKSHIRE BRANCH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
2.00 p.m. – 6 December 2008
NFU Mutual, Tiddington, Stratford upon Avon

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Pam Reason.

2. Minutes

The Minutes from the previous meeting had been circulated and were approved by the meeting.

3. Chairman's Report

Margaret Vickery welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced her intention to stand down as Chairman in favour of Mike Slater. She thanked all the other committee members for their service during the year and then handed the meeting over to Mike.

Mike thanked the NFU for providing the meeting venue and reported that they will donate £10 to Butterfly Conservation for any policy taken out. They have also offered to match fund any monies raised that the AGM to go towards the 'Stop the Extinction' target.

4. Treasurer's Report

The financial report had been circulated with the recent newsletter. John Liggins reported a busy year in which the committee had purchased its own digital projector for talks and workshops. Matched funding had been provided during the year by Barclays, HSBC and Whitbread.

To comply with Charity Commission rules, all Butterfly Conservation branches now have one account only (with NatWest). Previously, several county branches had large amounts held in their accounts which were not being used and consequently contravened the Charities Commission rules. Mike Slater reported that Butterfly Conservation has been commended by the Charities Commission for the way they handled their funds and Warwickshire branch has similarly been commended by head office.

The motion to accept the financial report was proposed by Phil Parr, seconded by Pauline Morgan and carried unanimously.

5. Field Trip Report

Steve Cheshire reported on the Branch's field trips during the summer to Pooley Fields, Wyre Forest, Prestbury Hill, Ryton Wood Meadows, Oversley Wood, Wolford Wood, Snitterfield Bushes and Bernwood Forest. Although the weather let us down at times, particularly during the visit to Ryton, we were able to see target species on most occasions.

Steve also reported the occurrence of a number of aberrant forms of species found during the year and posed the possibility that this was due to the temperature range and poor weather for the last two seasons.

6. Branch Website

Steve reported that the website has now been running for two years. From March to December 2008 there have been 4800 visits to the website with 2092 individual visitors. Online recording has been very successful this year. From a graph of online recording, May and July were the major months and there was a total of 42 different recorders. Steve confirmed that all records submitted were vetted before being released for public viewing to filter out any 'spam'.

Mike Slater commented that other Branches think that the Warwickshire site is excellent.

7. Butterfly Recorder's Report

Keith Warmington thanked everyone for sending in their records whether online or on paper. Judging by the amount of records received, it indicated a poor year generally. We are always looking to encourage people to record and he said that if anyone has the time to record a transect for the branch, there are some vacancies. The Branch currently has 32 transects covered but there is always room for more. For anyone wanting less of a time commitment, timed counts at sites once or twice a year would also provide valuable information.

Keith reported on the success of species in respect of records received so far such as the fact that both Dingy and Grizzled Skippers appear to have done well in Warwickshire which is against the national trend. Very few migrants were recorded and Phil Parr confirmed that this was the same on the coast in Devon where there should be good records. It was agreed that Small Tortoiseshell had a generally poor year but picked up slightly late in the season. One good record was that it was the best year ever for the county's rarest butterfly, Dark Green Fritillary.

8. Re-election of Officers

David Brown, Stephen Cheshire, Debbie Hibbitt and John Reeve stood for re-election to the Committee and Terry Southgate volunteered to join the Committee. Mike Slater proposed and Phil Parr seconded the election and re-elections which were carried unanimously.

9. Moth Recorder's Report

David Brown reported on the records for the year. Numbers were down in 2008 probably because there were very few warm nights. David then gave a resume of the year's highlights.

10. Ryton Wood Meadows Report & Conservation Review

Mike Slater reported that thanks to Val Weston, the Ryton Reserve had received sponsorship of £2500 from Barclays Bank this year. Because it is not an SSSI it has been possible to conduct some experimental work on the site such as the creation of a number of ponds. These have been left to

develop naturally. The dry stone wall has been extended and the resultant ideal habitat for Grizzled Skipper has meant that the numbers on the site have gone against the national downward trend. Fifty elms and buckthorn have also been planted. Again, thanks to Barclays and HSBC Bird's Foot Trefoil seed has been sown around the site together with plant plugs of Devils Bit Scabious. Funding from Lafarge provided fencing and stiles which were erected with the help of Barclays' personnel. Lafarge are also helping to recreate hedges on the site.

In 2007 150,000 Ragwort plants were removed and in 2008, 47,000 which shows that this arduous task is successful in reducing plants the following year.

It has been decided to try and apply for High Level Stewardship under DEFRA for the site. If the application is successful it means that up to £2000 per year would be available to manage the reserve.

Grazing by Dexter cattle has been introduced on parts of the Reserve but not every meadow will be grazed each year allowing for the species rich parts to flourish.

On the Stockton Cutting site, extensive clearing work was undertaken and Kidney Vetch plants provided by Barclays Bank were planted. Bubbenhall Meadows has also benefitted from the Bird's Foot Trefoil seed provided by Barclays.

Mike then introduced Phil Parr, who had been given a Volunteer award at the national AGM, to give an update on the Malpass site at Rugby.

Phil reported that the main site which runs up to the new Western Relief Road, is to be developed as a Farmer's Fuel plant. Phil has been involved from the early stages, suggesting areas we would like to retain for species like Green Hairstreak, Grizzled Skipper, Small Heath and Marbled White. The plans have been amended many times but he is still hoping that the butterfly areas will be catered for.

Mike said that thanks to Phil, there are opportunities on the Western Relief Road for the spreading of Grizzled Skipper.

Mike then reported on a number of courses run by the branch including transect, timed counts and monitoring courses. Mike also attended a health and safety course with Warwickshire Wildlife.

The branch has also participated in the production of the West Midlands Regional Action Plan for Butterfly Conservation.

In the Southam area, there are grants for £165,000 to manage 18 woodland sites. This is a three year project to clear scrub and return the sites to manageable proportions which will hopefully be undertaken by local groups. We are also hopeful of obtaining a £25,000 grant to manage the Princethorpe woodlands where a massive clearance is required.

11. Following the raffle draw, the meeting closed.