

MINUTES OF BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION WARWICKSHIRE BRANCH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
2.00 p.m. – 28 November 2009
Shirley Institute, 24 Church Road, Shirley, Solihull

1. Present

There were 43 members present.

2. Branch President

Margaret Vickery, the Branch President, opened the meeting to explain that as Mike Slater has now become employed, by Butterfly Conservation, as Project Leader of the Small Blue and Princethorpe Woodland Fritillary Projects, he can no longer act as Chairman for the Branch. The Committee had met and agreed that the Vice Chairman, Keith Warmington, would take on the Chairman's role and Margaret asked for the meeting to endorse this change. This was carried unanimously.

3. Re-election of Officers

Mike Slater, Phil Parr and Richard Lamb were to stand down from the Committee by rotation and were entitled and willing to offer themselves for re-election. John Reeve proposed and Roy Ledbury seconded the re-elections which were carried unanimously.

4. Minutes

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

5. Chairman's Report

Keith Warmington reported that branch membership stood at a healthy 193 despite the recession. He then reviewed the events that had taken place during the year.

Over 30 people attended the Spring Meeting held at Bishops Itchington and which was preceded by a walk on Bishops Hill where Grizzled Skipper and Green Hairstreak were both seen.

The Ryton Wood Meadows annual Open Day was at last blessed with warm, sunny weather and over 30 people enjoyed the good company, good butterflies and good food – once again provided by Val Weston. The star of the show was the first influx of the Painted Lady migration.

Eighteen butterfly walks and moth nights were held with only one event having to be cancelled due to the weather. Out of county trips to Prees Heath and Wem Moss, Fermyn Woods, Watlington Hill and Bernwood Forest were all well attended. Mid week events to Wappenbury Wood and Shenton Farm were also popular. In the case of the latter, a cream tea afterwards made up for the pouring rain.

Keith then listed the walks being considered for 2010 and asked for any requests/suggestions from the meeting before the list was finalised.

Public events attended by the Branch were the two day Bird Fair at Middleton Hall, the Solihull Environment Day and a trade event at Focus Optics.

The Small Blue Project was launched in June at Southam Quarry. This event had been organised by Jane Ellis who left Butterfly Conservation soon afterwards. Keith expressed our thanks to Jane for the work she has done for Warwickshire's butterflies during her time in office.

Keith took the opportunity to thank all the volunteers who regularly turn out to support the various projects with which we are involved. He also thanked Steve Cheshire, Debbie Hibbitt, Alan Prior and Val Weston for their work to produce our magazine, newsletters and the annual moth report. Keith also thanked Alan Prior, Martin Kennard and Val Weston for their dedication in monitoring a large number of key sites on a constant basis for moths throughout the year.

Thanks were also given to Steve for building and maintaining a superb website which is so good that it is a valuable resource for other Warwickshire conservation organisations. Apologies were extended to those people without access to a computer.

6. Treasurer's Report

The financial report had been circulated with the recent newsletter. John Liggins pointed out the fact that the last quarter's subscriptions had not been received from Head Office by 30 September 2009 when the accounts were prepared and will therefore feature in the 2010 accounts.

7. Butterfly Recorder's Report

Keith Warmington thanked everyone for sending in their records whether online or on paper. Over 10,000 casual records have been added to the database so far making this year the best recorded year since 2005 when the last Atlas update was produced. With the 28,000 Transect records we have over 38,000 individual butterfly sightings reported to us this year so far.

Three new transects have been added this year but the transect recorder for Harbury and Stockton is unable to continue next year. Keith asked for any volunteers who could help with these important transects to contact him.

The Branch completed 14 out of the 20 Wider Countryside surveys which was a good result but could have been improved. No results from the survey have yet been released by Butterfly Conservation.

A new recording scheme has been developed from Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to target butterflies and day-flying moths on seldom visited Trust reserves. This is backed up by our annual recording and identification workshop held for the Trust. An appeal has also been launched for recorders to survey Sutton Park for Green Hairstreak.

Painted Lady was the butterfly of the year and gave Butterfly Conservation some great PR in the news and Press. It was also a good year for Clouded Yellow. Silver-washed Fritillary has responded well to the active management in Ryton Wood. Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood were the two top butterflies recorded on Transects. Common Blue has done well and it was probably the best year ever for Brown

Argus. Wood White did well at Ryton but was not seen at Wolford Wood. White-letter Hairstreak records were minimal.

8. Branch Website

Steve Cheshire reported over 31,000 butterfly records were submitted online and there were 77 different recorders. The most common species was Meadow Brown and the least common, Wood White. Steve confirmed that all records submitted were vetted before being released for public viewing to filter out any 'spam'. Hopefully, as the years go by we shall be able to use the statistics to see a trend for when certain species appear in the county.

9. Moth Recorder's Report

David Brown reported on the records for the year which were better than for 2008. The highlight was the Rannoch Looper which is normally only found in Scotland but there was an influx from the Continent similar to the Painted Lady migration. It was not, however, a particularly good migration year.

Other highlights were two Convolvulus Hawkmoths at the end of August, four Orange-tailed Clearwings in Cubbington, Devon Carpet in Waverley Wood, Scarlet Tiger in Warwick and good numbers of Nut Tree Tussock in Wolford Wood. Two field meetings were held at Nelson's Quarry and Stockton. Nelson's produced five Light-feathered Rustic which had not been seen for 20 years. There were also four records of Chalk Carpet which has thrived due to the recent scrub clearance.

10. Ryton Wood Meadows Report & Conservation Review

Mike Slater reported that the Ryton Wood Meadows Reserve was being grazed by two rare breeds of sheep this year. The Reserve comes under Higher Level Stewardship and has been planted and seeded with additional wildflowers. Three thousand trees are due to be planted in December.

Fourteen Brown Hairstreak eggs have already been found and on 27 February 2010 a concentrated egg search will take place by volunteers on the Reserve and surrounding areas.

Funding was received to allow three ponds to be dug on the Reserve. Solihull MIND are growing on wildflower plants for the Reserve and funds and volunteer help was also received from Barclays and HSBC.

With regard to the Small Blue and Fritillary projects, effort is being made to get landowners involved. Most woods in the Princethorpe area are due to have rides widened and scrub cleared. Mike finished by saying there is always plenty of work for volunteers to get involved with like collecting wildflower seeds.

11. Following the refreshments and raffle draw, the meeting was entertained by a delightful talk by Steve Cheshire and Debbie Hibbitt on their holiday in the Picos de Europa, Spain.