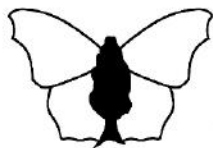


Dorset Branch News



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

Chairman's Letter

From Jane Smith, Dorset BC Chairman

Welcome to the first newsletter produced by Guy Freeman, our new editor. I hope you enjoy reading it. The Branch Committee has decided that, for the foreseeable future at least, the number of newsletters per year will be reduced to two (formerly we had three issues). So this edition and the accompanying Events List covers the period up to the end of September.

By the time you read this it should be a bit warmer than it has been recently (late-February). There have been some sunnier and warmer days, and we even had a Painted Lady flying in our garden last week. Sadly, it is too cold and cloudy for anything at the moment, although at least it has stopped raining. However, as the days start lengthening and Bill Shreeves ventures out for his four "butterfly trends" meetings, we know that spring is just around the corner. If you didn't make it to any of these meetings you missed a treat, as Bill gave an erudite presentation of weather patterns and trends in butterfly numbers as measured in Transect Walks, Regional Action Plan Surveys, and the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey, and Adrian Neil reported on the results of the Butterfly Garden Survey. As you will know most butterflies had a disastrous year last year; but there were a few that did well, particularly Browns which coped well with the damp weather and consequent lush growth of grass. You will be able to read all about these results in Bill's article in the next edition of the newsletter. These surveys, and the casual records submitted to the branch, are all fed into the national monitoring systems. Dorset is a major contributor to these systems, so many thanks to those of you who submit your sightings and take part in our surveys.

If you have access to a computer you will probably be aware of the revamp of the Branch website that has happened over the last few months. Thanks to hours of work by Lyn Pullen and Dominic Greves, and excellent technical support from Dom, we have a new look, and

most important of all, a new online reporting facility for butterfly sightings. This is much easier to use than the previous version (which 'died' last June), has a look up facility for grid references and is fully automated so that your sightings are automatically added to our recording database once they have been checked. Well done and thanks to Lyn and Dom. You may also have noticed that the branch has joined Twitter (our username is @BC_Dorset); you can read about this elsewhere in the magazine.

The Branch has had another successful year at the National AGM awards presentation in November 2012. As a result of our nomination, Dr Phil Sterling was awarded the Lifetime Achievement in Lepidoptera Conservation Award for 2013. This was because of his major contribution as lead author of the ground-breaking publication "The Field Guide to the Micro-moths of Great Britain and Ireland", and his work on the landscaping and reseeded of three extensive cuttings on the Dorchester-Weymouth Relief road (opened in 2011) to create an extensive chalk downland habitat. Last year, you may remember, Bridget and Lawrie de Whalley were both given Outstanding Volunteer awards.

Once again this year's Save our Butterflies Week will take place early in the year in order to catch those spring butterflies; being held from 18th to 26th May. Hopefully the weather will be warm enough for some butterflies to be flying then. National Moth Night is to be held from 8th to 10th August, and will include a daytime element. The theme this year will be Tiger Moths. The branch will be holding events to coincide with both of these periods; details are given in the Events List, so please come along.

We will be holding our annual Branch Members' Day and AGM on Saturday March 23rd at 2pm in the Village Hall in Puddletown. Our speaker this year will be Professor Jeremy Thomas on "Butterflies, Ants and Parasitoids". It is always a pleasure to hear Jeremy's presentations, so do come along to hear what he has to say. Full details of the meeting are given in the Events List.

Sadly, our secretary, Sue Rawles, has decided to resign from the committee. This has been her second stint in the role, so we are very grateful to her for all the work she has done over the years. I am delighted that Adrian Neil, already a Committee Member, has volunteered to take over from Sue as Branch Secretary. He will continue to look after the Butterfly Garden Survey, and the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey for the branch.

Finally, it just remains for me to wish you all a successful butterfly and moth year, with a warm summer!

Jane Smith

The Nature of Dorset

By Peter Orchard

The Nature of Dorset website (www.natureofdorset.co.uk) has been a consuming passion of mine for four years now. You may have already paid a visit but, if not, it is basically my personal guide to the places to visit, and the wildlife you can see in Dorset. It is "for the people of Dorset interested in wildlife and for people from elsewhere with an interest in the county's wildlife." The site features a database of nearly 1,500 species of animals and plants, 180 nature reserves or areas with a high level of wildlife interest and over 20,000 individual records which link species and sites together to give species lists for sites and distribution maps for species. I have put hundreds of unpaid hours in to it and I pay for its hosting on the Internet, but charge nothing for its use and keep it free from adverts; "Why?" you might ask.

I lived most of my life in Hampshire, but my wife and I have long had a love for the Purbeck area of Dorset and whenever we could we would drive down to Arne, Durlston and other favourite places. "One day, when I retire, we will move down there" I would say. Well, in the summer of 2006, circumstances were such that "move down" we did, to Wareham.

Natural history had been my main leisure-time interest for over 30 years, and so my first task was to find out where we could go and what we could see in our newly adopted county. I spent many hours trawling the internet gathering up information from a whole range of web sites. Armed with a hit list of places and species off we went, camera at the ready and notebook in hand. I have been a compulsive collector of data all my life so I quickly acquired reams of notes! I needed something to organise my records and so invested in a computerised wildlife recording system.

By 2009 I had a library of photographs of animals, plants and places which no one ever saw and I had a few thousand sighting records locked away on my computer. Then I happened upon Drupal, a means of building on-line databases and web sites, and 'bingo' – the idea of the Nature of Dorset was born! I have a background in computer system design and database management and so it was not long before all that data and all those photographs were being organised and uploaded to the internet for all to see. Better still, from my point of view, it also enabled me to download and send off my records to interested agencies such as the Dorset Environmental Records Centre.

The site is probably never going to be finished! So far the project has taken me to over 100 places in Dorset, many of which I would probably have never known about. Most have been stunningly beautiful and incredibly interesting. My personal favourites that I might otherwise have missed include Alners Gorse, Hilfield Hill and Sovell Down. I still have over 80 identified sites to visit, and I am finding more and more to add to that list. Many of the sites I have visited I want to return to; the draw of Powerstock Common, Kingcombe Meadows and Holt Heath is compelling. The project has also opened my eyes to species I had never bothered with before: wasps, flies, beetles, spiders, grasses, ferns, mosses, lichens, fungi; all have broadened and extended my knowledge and aroused my interest. The digital camera and macro lens have revealed beauty that I had never before seen in so many creatures and plants, all because I needed a photograph for the Nature of Dorset.

The site is not a science based project, and many may turn their noses up at its inadequacies. However, it fills a gap; it provides the visitor to Dorset, or the person with a newly emerging interest in nature, with a starting point and a guide. The site gets over 750 visits a month, and this figure is continually rising. A number seem to be from students seeking information to support their research projects but people from all over the world visit, although only a minority are from Dorset! The site has had various styles over the period of its development and I expect it will have a few more as I continually seek to improve and develop it. It's a win/win/win for me; I love nature, am fascinated by data and enjoy the internet. But, most of all, I want to share what knowledge I have about Dorset, and nature in general, with others. I have just launched a new Facebook page, again called the Nature of Dorset, where I post species nature notes, reviews of sites, general chat and event information. I would love more followers but, better still, I would love more contributors to it.

So there you have it! I hope you find time to take a look and I hope you find something to interest you; a new place to go or something new to see this summer perhaps. If you have any comments or suggestions then you will find a contact link on the main menu. You will also find a link to my Facebook page, so if you use Facebook why not take a look and join in?

The Great September Red Admiral Migration

Compiled by Bill Shreeves from reports sent both to him & to the Web Site

From January 2nd right through to August there was a steady trickle of Red Admiral reports every month, from both the Transect Walks and through the website. However, on September 1st Dave Miller reported to the website a total of 20 Red Admirals at Knowle Bay, Studland. After that it soon became clear that Purbeck was experiencing a significant migration of Red Admirals. On September 3rd Neil Freeman saw 'hundreds' of Red Admirals on the heather behind the dunes at Studland, and the walker on the Studland Ferry Road Transect noted 7.

On September 4th the butterfly walker at Nine Barrows Down counted 12. Further west, as early as September 1st, Colin Nunn was reporting a “good build-up in the RA numbers in our Worth Matravers garden over the past week or so. Current count is 15-20 RA”. Later, on September 5th, it was clear that the migration stretched further along Purbeck to the west. A Swanage fisherman reported large numbers of Red Admirals “well out in Swanage Bay with also an unusual abundance of hoverflies and other insects.” On the same day transect walkers picked up 19 on the Bindon Hill walk and 5 at Grange Arch. During the Townsend Quarry Transect on September 9th the highest count of the year (22) was reached. Further to the west at Winfrith Newburgh, 18 were reported on garden buddleias by Lyn Pullen. Even as late as September 13th a northward migration in the Studland Heath area could still be detected. Jon Bellamy described how “in open heath there was a steady diffuse flow of RAs in sight, maybe 30 to 40 per mile or so in the open, most outside Transect Walk recording distance, almost all heading steadily N or NE, diagonally working their way across a quite stiff NW breeze.” Most were singles although there were the odd twos or threes. All this was taking place within a few hundred metres of the coast so it is possible that they had arrived that day, rather than rested overnight, and were then continuing.

Meanwhile the migration had been sweeping into West Dorset. On September 3rd, Martin Raper watched many Red Admirals coming in off the sea at West Bexington, while the walker on the Radipole Transect reached a count of 32. Two days later, on September 5th, 120 Red Admirals were counted in the garden of Portland Bird Observatory and the walker on the Tout Transect reported 8. Soon, sightings from many gardens along the West coast were reaching the web site. Notable examples were 9 in Bridport from Richard Gillingham on September 6th and 15 in Wyke by Sarah Faulkner on the 12th. The migration front also stretched right across to East Dorset. On September 5th, Rob Hume reported “from 12 noon at Southbourne many Red Admirals were coming in off the sea all along the beach. I saw around 50-60/hour for a while but they soon tailed off. Note that similar numbers had been seen over several recent days here and in Bournemouth

and I suspect thousands will have come in off the sea over Christchurch Bay in the past week or so”. Garden recorders sent in many valuable records and photos of Red Admirals at this time which clearly showed them ‘tanking up’ on any food available. A very good example came from Richard and Pat Howard on September 4th, with Richard commenting “My wife and I live in Bournemouth, and have a Victoria plum tree at the bottom of our garden. Although this is close to a Buddleia bush, which they rarely seem to visit, for some days now there have been at least ten Red Admirals at one time feeding on the split open windfalls below the tree. Since we moved to this house in 1998 we have never seen so many together before”. Most of the Transect Walks in the area recorded a sudden flush of Red Admirals, with Hengistbury Head counting 12 on September 8th and Stour Valley 37 on the 11th.

It seems probable that the migration continued to sweep inland but it will be hard to be certain of this until all the casual records come in and are entered on to the Levana map (some are still arriving at the time of writing well into the new year!). In any case it is hard to know whether a sudden increase in inland numbers is down to migrants or an emergence from local Red Admirals. I like to believe at the moment that the sudden influx of Red Admirals to the buddleia collection well up in North Dorset at Fontmell Magna, near Shaftesbury, might have been migrants who continued their northward flight inland. The numbers counted by the surveyors suddenly grew from single figures in early September to 50 on September 6th, and a peak of 79 on September 8th meant that Red Admirals were easily the highest counting species on the site.

Red Admiral records continued to come into the web site well into November, but by October there had been evidence of a reverse migration. On October 22nd Ken Tucker observed “a Red Admiral beating its way eastward into the wind and drizzle! I have been astounded at the steady passage of these insects over the past 2-3 weeks. I almost never fail to see some whenever I’m out and about and, apart from the odd one nectaring or resting, they are all heading steadily E or SE. Just the one today in miserable conditions, but a couple of weeks ago there were hundreds.

I've seen them coming in off the sea in numbers during the summer but nothing like this protracted, steady return in the autumn, often into quite a stiff breeze”.



Red Admiral on Studland Heath (4th September 2012), by Guy Freeman

My thanks go to all those who have sent in records to the web site and taken part in the Transect Walks. That includes not only those whose observations and records were mentioned in this article, but also many others which there has not been time or space to include but which are still part of the very valuable database which has been built up.

Painted Ladies in the News

By Bill Shreeves

The first results calculated from the completed Dorset Transect Walks in 2012 suggest that it was not a great year for Painted Ladies; the total combined count for all walks was only 48. Although there are now more walks than back in the 1990s this was the lowest count since then; just one below the 49 counted in 2010 and very disappointing when compared with the annual average between 1996 and 2012 of 1,780 and the record counts of 18,311 in 1996 and 5,035 in 2009. West Dorset walks had most records with 16, followed closely by South Dorset with 15 and North Dorset with 12. The East Dorset walks only managed 5 between them! However Painted Ladies continued to be seen after the walks closed down at the end of September, and the year came to an unusual close with Colin Nunn photographing a Painted Lady in Worth Matravers on December 27th. The 'Ladies' also got off to a brilliant start in 2013 with sightings on January 1st in both Corfe Castle and Studland!

By the time you read this we shall hopefully have gathered enough information from Dorset and elsewhere to make a guess as to whether these unusual sightings had been released from breeding kits, were late summer hibernators or newly arrived migrants.

To many of us the most spectacular and encouraging news of 2012 was the publication of a research paper, entitled “Multi-generational long distance migration of insects: studying the Painted Lady butterfly in the Western Palaearctic”, in the international journal *Ecography*. This study of the great Painted Lady Migration of 2009 demonstrates what can be achieved by combining ‘citizen science’, technology and scientific experts. The citizen science was provided by over 60,000 Painted Lady observations from right across Europe and North Africa, including 10,000 from UK recorders via Butterfly Conservation’s Migrant Watch online and the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. The technology came from a special modified radar system operated in Hampshire by Rothamsted Research. The team of science experts involved researchers from across Europe including British scientists from Butterfly Conservation, the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Rothamsted Research and the University of York. Until now it seemed that the Painted Ladies which migrated northwards ended up in a useless, enigmatic, evolutionary dead-end. Unlike the Red Admirals, who were regularly observed heading southward in a well documented reverse migration, the Painted Lady’s annual northward migration seemed to end in no return and a waste of life. Thanks to the mass observation in 2009 there was eye witness evidence of Painted Lady reverse migration, and The Rothamsted Research radar equipment proved beyond doubt that it was a large one. Radar in Hampshire revealed that around 11 million high-flying Painted Ladies entered the UK in spring 2009, with a higher number of 26 million departing southwards in autumn.

The reason why the migration has up to now been missed is that most of it took place at high altitudes. Radar records revealed that Painted Ladies fly at an average altitude of over 500 metres on their southbound trip and can clock up speeds of 30 mph by selecting favourable conditions.

In addition, the research has shown that the Painted Lady migrations, from North Africa to North Europe, rival the migrations of the Monarch, from Mexico to Canada. The annual cycle is carried out by as many as six generations. The round trip from sub-Saharan Africa to the Arctic Circle and back adds up to around 9,000 miles (15,000 km), almost double the distance involved in the Monarch migrations in North America.

The Painted Lady cycle is arguably a safer, but less romantic strategy than the Monarch because it tracks the availability of food plants and avoids hibernation. The spectacular mass hibernations of Monarchs in the forest highlands of Mexico, and special 'butterfly trees' in California do not appear to be needed by the Painted Lady.

Three Monarch News Items 2012

By Bill Shreeves

This year I have so far heard about 2 Monarch records in Dorset, which is twice as many as last year but well below the 14 of 2001! Rob Hume saw the first from Southbourne Beach on September 5th, while using binoculars to watch Terns. He also noticed "Red Admirals flying mostly very low and fast and, against the sun, looking blackish. At about 2 pm I then saw a markedly different butterfly higher over the sea; it was apparently much bigger, with much longer, triangular wings (straight front edge, rear edge angled forward) and it flew with slightly slower, flickery beats between glides on raised wings. Although out over the water, it immediately looked very big indeed. It appeared, against the sun, to be all pale, bright orange with darker wingtips/fringes. I have no real doubt that this was a Monarch, although the date is a bit early. Sadly, it flew off out to sea!"

By the time Rob's eye witness account came to my notice I had already seen the reports of a more obliging Monarch (though I suppose it could just possibly have been the same one?) first sighted at Easton, Portland 2 days later. Sue Bryan reported: "on Friday September 7th I was on Portland. At Broadcroft quarry I met other butterfly enthusiasts who told me they had just seen a Monarch opposite the Health Centre at Easton.

So I dashed off and joined about a dozen people admiring this beautiful butterfly feeding off a buddleia." As was pointed out by Sue, and in the Portland Bird Observatory Report, the fact that a Short-billed Dowitcher (an American wading bird) was seen at Lodmoor Reserve at the same time suggests that this Monarch had been swept out across the Atlantic.

The second Monarch news item of the year also mentioned the 'lost' Dorset Monarch. This came at the end of a highly enthusiastic review, on the September 23rd, of a new film called 'Flight of the Butterflies'; a collaboration between Britain, Canada and Mexico which follows the 40 year quest of the zoologist Fred Urquart to uncover the secrets of the Monarch's annual migrations. Mike Slee, the director of the film, is well known for his natural history programmes, and especially for the film Bugs, which was narrated by Dame Judi Dench.

The new film has taken 5 years to make and has been made possible by a new pioneering 'snorkel system' which films insects in 3D. Micro CT and MRI scans have been adapted to view inside the chrysalis, and the director claims that this is the first time anyone has seen inside a chrysalis in 3D as it changes from caterpillar to butterfly. Slee says: "I still can't believe it when I watch. It's rather like when they first brought out ultrasound and you could see a baby in the womb." The technology is so detailed that every Monarch butterfly looks like an individual, with the scales on the wings and 'punk' hairstyles on some heads standing out vividly. Almost all the butterfly footage is shot in slow motion at 120 frames per second instead of the usual 24. There are stunning sequences of the butterflies in the Mexican forest hibernation site, which Urquart discovered. Millions are shown dancing in slow motion with a sound track which converts the whisper of the wing beats into a wash of sound.

One of the scientists present at the preview commented: "the film is extraordinary. I have been amazed by the overwhelming emotional reaction that revealing the scientific secrets of the butterfly has had – even the eminent board of science advisors had moist eyes when the lights went up".

The premier of the film took place in the Smithsonian in Washington on 24th September. According to a reviewer from the Observer a UK cinema release was to follow. Alas I have failed to pick up any further news of this, but hopefully somebody else may have?

My third Monarch news item will interest those of you who agree with me that public interest in natural history may be measured by the increase in novels which use it as more than just a name drop in scene setting. Barbara Kingsolver's first book since she was awarded the Orange Prize for 'The Lacuna' was published in 2012 by Faber and entitled 'Flight Behaviour'. Before converting to writing she was a scientist with degrees in biology, and natural history and conservation usually play a major part in her novels, notably the Poisonwood Bible and Prodigal. Alas, although my daughter was kind enough to get me a copy of 'Flight Behaviour' for Christmas I have not yet found time to read it myself!

However the cover blurb and, more importantly, Robin Mckie, the Observer's science reviewer, both agree that the discovery by the 'heroine' of an overwintering colony of Monarchs in 'a silent forested valley filled with what looked like a lake of fire' is the catalyst which provokes a confrontation between local religious leaders, farmers, sightseers, the media and scientists. This leads to an interesting investigation of the issues of climate change, global warming and its deniers which must surely make this a novel of interest to us. Perhaps someone else has already read it or can read it before I do?

Portland's Royal Visitor

By Guy Freeman

From the 7th through to September 15th a small, urban park in Easton, Portland, played host to a Monarch. During this time the butterfly remained remarkably loyal to a single buddleia bush, and although it floated off out of sight on occasions it would soon return to its favoured nectaring point. Monarchs are regular autumn visitors to the UK in small numbers but sightings are usually very brief. As a result, the presence of a settled, 'twitchable' individual proved very popular!

A few days prior to the Monarch's arrival, Britain's second ever Short-billed Dowitcher (a vagrant bird from America) had turned up at the nearby RSPB Lodmoor reserve, and this helped to ensure that the Monarch received a constant stream of admirers throughout its stay. According to the BBC over 1000 people came to see the butterfly on the weekend of 8th/9th September, and over its entire stay this number must have been considerably higher!



The Easton Monarch, by Guy Freeman

A Sunny Walk on Cashmoor (Thursday 24th May 2012)

By Bridget de Whalley

We couldn't have asked for a better May afternoon; earlier clouds slipped away and left a clear blue sky and warm sunshine – perfect for butterflies!

And Cashmoor, a site which has now been managed by BC for over 10 years, was looking in fine order too with fresh leafy scrub and a variety of grasses, yellow vetches and pink, blue and mauve milkwort. About a dozen of us walked along this narrow oasis of SSSI, which is bordered by crops and a model aeroplane flying club, and rejoiced to see a total of ten species of butterfly, as well as a group of Lapwings and Plovers on a nearby ploughed field and a lone Hare. A batch of **Lackey** caterpillars were seen on a branch and at least one **Mother Shipton** moth showed itself. We must have spotted about twenty **Green Hairstreaks** that posed for us in the scrub, flitting from branch to branch with the sun catching the brilliant green of their undersides. There were also a similar number of **Small Blues**, flying fast and then seeming to glue themselves onto kidney vetch for us to admire. Importantly, we saw a single **Grizzled Skipper** and were delighted to count at least twenty **Dingy Skippers** perching on flower stalks. We counted at least half a dozen **Holly Blues** too, weaving busily in and out of the scrub.

One **Adonis Blue** was identified, along with a miscellany of butterfly **Brimstones**, bright **Orange-tips** and a welcome number of **Small Heaths**. This was a very rewarding walk for BC volunteers and workers who have been involved with the management of this site for many years. Many thanks to Arthur Bryant for arranging such a feast!

Fontmell Magna Buddleia collection: a haven for butterflies in a dreadful summer

By Bill Shreeves

From 21st July to 13th October, the Fontmell Magna buddleia collection, consisting of over 100 different varieties put together by Judy and Peter Westgate, was visited by 18 different recorders. They counted the numbers of butterflies feeding on varieties which ranged in colour from yellow, white, red and pink to blue, lilac, purple and violet. Between them the intrepid recorders surveyed 211 plants and counted 844 butterflies of 12 different species feeding on them. **Red Admirals** were top of the list with a total count of 318, followed by **Small Tortoiseshells** (274) and **Peacocks** (59). A 13th species was the **Silver Y** moth, which came in 8th with a count of 13. The largest numbers of butterflies were attracted to lilac (184), white (184) and purple (144) varieties. Although popular with bees, yellow was the least successful with only 14 visits. Blue appealed to the widest range of species (11), followed by white and purple with 10. The top three varieties measured by the highest butterfly count per visit were 'Dartmoor' (violet) at 16.3, closely followed by 'Autumn Beauty' (lilac) at 16.2 and 'White Profusion' with 9.5. The award for the most promising youngster, barely knee high, goes to 'Pink Spreader' which was the only variety to entice a **Clouded Yellow** to feed on it! Next year these small 'saplings' will grow to maturity and, with some good luck with the weather, the heady scents of the many varieties and the numbers of butterflies could be even more astounding. Hopefully many more recorders may be tempted to visit the collection and help with the recording and dead heading in summer 2013. Further details can be obtained from Bill Shreeves (see contact details on back cover).

Website Progress

*A short report from Lyn Pullen,
our Website Coordinator*

We now have a new techie, Dom Greves, to help me with the technical bits of the website which are beyond me, and he is proving to be very good and very helpful. You can visit his website at www.domgreves.com to see some of his stunning wildlife photos. With Dom's help, the website has had a bit of a tidy-up. I hope it is giving you what you want, but please let me know if it is not. Below, I'll give a quick overview of what you will now find, and the areas where some more input from you would be helpful.

Home page - a regularly updated News section, taking the reader through to other parts of the site to find more detail, plus a regularly updated section on our upcoming events. There is a separate Events page which lists all of our events.

Species - gives photos and information on all the butterflies likely to be seen in Dorset. It's on my list to work on these pages, but they are doing the job for now. I'm aiming to cross link the Species and Places pages.

Places - this is a section on which I have done a lot of work, but there is a lot more still to be done. I am working through the transect sites we have, as well as other sites, looking at ones which seem worth putting up as "a good place to see butterflies" in terms of what species are there and whether there is good public access. I've got 22 up so far and expect to double that in due course. I also intend to add a map so people have a better idea of where each site is in the county. If anybody is able to help with suitable information and photos for the walk they do, that would be most gratefully received.

News - this is where I need everybody to help, by keeping the need for items in mind and sending me anything they can. I am not aiming to put up long articles (they belong to the newsletter), but will be including fairly short bits about butterflies and moths, or the society, or anything generally relevant and interesting. If you have a longer item,

you can always send it to me to forward to Guy, and I'll pull out a short bit for the website as well.

Events - my thanks to Arthur for feeding me the information about the fantastic programme of events he organises: it is very impressive. If any event comes up after the paper events list has been published, it can be sent to me for inclusion in the website: I usually get things up within a couple of days.

Sightings - for reasons beyond our control, our old system died. We thought at the time that we were within a few weeks of getting a new system up, but Steve, our technical guy, became unwell and unable to continue. We therefore soldiered on with a very make-do-and-mend approach for the rest of the season, though we still managed to capture 1,195 records for the year. I am delighted to say that Dom has finished off Steve's work and the system is up and running; I've written a separate article for the newsletter on it.

Recording - this covers why and how we record as well as the results of our recording, which uses Bill's annual butterfly report and Adrian's garden report.

Photos - I am delighted at the photos we are receiving, many of which are technically brilliant, but all of which show an enthusiasm for butterflies and moths that must communicate itself to browsers. I could still do with some more so please send me some if you can, especially moths!

About Us - this is the section of the site I have not done very much with as yet. There is an article on the history of the branch and a list of the committee members, but I think we can do much more to entice people into the branch: it's on the list!

Gardening - I've left this pretty much as it was - not least because I supplied the original text. I have started a personal blog on gardening for butterflies and other wildlife, which I've linked to the gardening page; details are in another article in this newsletter.

Links - this is one of those lists which could become enormous: I'm trying to keep it very relevant but still helpful. If anybody feels any

other links ought to be on there, please let me know.

Join - this goes straight to the HQ site.

I am trying to get moths onto the site as much as possible, though I lack in-depth personal knowledge. We have decided not to accept moth records as they are too much for us to cope with, and the Dorset Moth Group exists for this purpose. We do try to talk about interesting moths which are found at the places we cover, but I could do with some input here. I have tried asking Les from the Dorset Moth Group, but I think it would be quite a lot of work to do other than by personal knowledge, which is probably why this has gone no further. It is pleasing to note that the website has already gained us three new volunteers, one of whom is Guy, who is doing the newsletter. The others will hopefully find roles as the new season emerges. It has become evident that the website helps us to gain interest and help from people who come to us not just through an interest in Lepidoptera, but also through photography or gardening.

I hope, as the year advances, to link news items I put on the website to press releases: the latter being a lot easier to send now we've got e-mail than they were when I undertook the publicity role years ago and spent a lot of time putting paper into envelopes and sticking on address labels! I am convinced that we can attract more records and more people through the website, and am going to enjoy seeing what I can achieve in 2013.

Dorset BC on Twitter!

From Martin Raper

Good news for those of you on Twitter. The Dorset Butterfly Group is now on Twitter to promote our events and news, and for interaction with other users. To follow us, just search for BC Dorset and select Follow. Twitter can be a useful tool to keep abreast of, for instance, wildlife matters around Dorset and the UK by choosing to follow the people and organisations that share your wildlife interests.

New sightings system for the website

From Lyn Pullen

The new online sightings system is now operational and appears to be working well.

The new system will allow people to not only input their records, but also to use an interactive map to work out the grid references which we hope will reduce the number of records we receive where grid references have to be chased up. People enter their records onto the website, and these records are captured on a database that cannot be seen by the public, allowing the records to be verified before they are published. This work will be overseen by Bill, but with others undertaking the brunt of the grunt work involved. Martin Raper has agreed to undertake this work for now, and my grateful thanks go to him for this, for his stalwart work on the website records during 2012 and for starting us on Twitter.

A record is verified by seeing whether it looks convincing that the species would be out at the time of year it has been recorded and in the place/habitat described. The vast majority of records will go through, but a few will remain to be queried with the sender. Records will only be shown on the website once they are verified, so there will be a short delay while this work is done. We have decided not to include grid references on the public records any more, on the grounds that most of the time they are not adding much to the description of the site. Additionally, if the species is rare we do not want lots of people knowing exactly where it is to be found and then possibly annoying the landowner by turning up in numbers, or endangering the species by collecting. The records will show on the website for 45 days, then drop off that screen but be shown on an archive page and retained in our underlying database. The online system is not intended to replace the existing, more structured, methods of recording such as transects or garden recording. It is seen as a way of enticing beginners to record, and to then encourage them to move onto the other methods.

If you are a regular recorder please go on using the methods you are currently using. If you see something particularly noteworthy, you can duplicate the record by entering it on the website, but it would be better if you could send it to me for inclusion on the news page - telling me why it is a record of note, please, as I am not a great butterfly expert. Duplicated records will be removed from the database at the end of the season.

Do let me know if you find any problems with the form and its linked pages; we've tested every combination of circumstances of which we can think, but there's always something unforeseen.

Butterfly and wildlife gardening blog

Lyn Pullen tells us about the blog she has just started

Don't be put off by the word 'blog'. It only really means a series of articles about something or someone, published on the internet. You can go into a blog, read it and come out, just as you would with a website, but you can also (in most of them) leave a comment if you wish to communicate with the author.

My blog is to be found at www.butterfliesandgardens.wordpress.com, and I hope the name tells you what it is about. I am lucky enough to have a fairly big garden in Dorset and I garden to attract wildlife, particularly butterflies and moths. I've recorded 20+ butterfly species in the garden, and am now starting on the moths..... In my blog, I hope to mainly entertain, but also to gently educate people about butterflies, moths, and gardening in a wildlife-friendly manner, as well as giving other gardening tips. I hope also to learn from the comments left. In an early article (called a "post" when it's in a blog) I advised that February was a good time to prune buddleias, only to receive a comment from a lady in North Toronto saying that she would, if only her buddleias weren't buried under deep snow! I'm aiming to link the blog to the Twitter site set up by Martin Raper when I get brave enough to figure out the technicalities. It's all something of a steep learning curve, but quite fun!

Lyn reports her plant sales

I have been selling plants in aid of Butterfly Conservation since 2002. At first it was just on days when I opened my garden, but since 2007 I have been selling on a regular basis from a table in my driveway. Having the Butterfly Conservation banner up for several months a year certainly raises our profile: I'm known in our village as the Butterfly Lady!

Takings from my plant sales in 2012 held up remarkably well given the weather. I had days at a time when nothing sold, which is most unusual but quite understandable. My main problem was keeping the plants upright when it was windy and stopping them drowning, but at least watering wasn't a problem! The final total from plant sales alone was £432.54, with another £46.30 from an event held at my place which was partly made up of plant sales. This compares with the total for 2011 of £436, which was the year the table was late going out because I broke my foot!

I continue to need donations of plants; I grow a lot myself, but the sales are helped by variety. Experience shows that bushes do not sell, with the exception of buddleias (especially "different" buddleias), and I do not generally sell annuals as producing trays of annuals takes up too much space. It is herbaceous perennials which sell well, so if you have any you could pass to me that would be very helpful. We're coming up to the time of year when you may be splitting large clumps of perennials, so please think of my sales stall when you do so, and if you've got any interesting seedlings coming up which you do not want please pass them on. My contact details are on the back of the newsletter, so if you e-mail me or telephone (not before midday, please) we can see how we can get the plants from you to me. Things I'm over-wintering to sell in 2013 include a number of pots of a tall, white michaelmas daisy, which is a good late nectar source, pots of *Phuopsis sylosa*, which is good for Small Tortoiseshell in particular, and pots of aster *Frikartii monch*, a large-flowered aster which blooms for weeks and is used by butterflies and other insects.

If I get round to splitting them before they get too big, I should also have some tall white *Phlox* and some *Cephalaria gigantea*, which is a very tall yellow scabious - great for bees!

If you are out my way, you are welcome to knock on the back door and browse the plants I've got lined up for sale if I'm in.

Garden Butterfly Highlights 2012

By Adrian Neill, Dorset Garden Records Coordinator

I received a total of 108 forms from Dorset garden recorders (plus one anonymous one!), covering 98 1km squares. Many thanks to all those who took part in the survey and sent records in. They are included in the national survey conducted by Margaret Vickery that is reported in the magazine Butterfly, and Dorset now contributes nearly 10% to the number of records on which her report is based. The poor weather in the summer months may have discouraged a few people from recording as I received slightly fewer forms than in previous years; I would like to get the number back to 110 - 120 if possible.

Nevertheless, the coverage of the county continues to improve and there is now only one 10km square from which we get no garden records at all. This is SU 90-00/10-20, so if you live in the area of Ashmore, Tollard Royal, Sixpenny Handley and the Upper Tarrant Valley I would be very grateful if you could help us to fill the gap.

Many recorders commented on how few butterflies they saw and this is evident in other reports both locally and nationally. However, the number of species that were recorded in gardens was only a little down on previous years, maybe because gardens provide sheltered microclimates with a good supply of nectar plants thus mitigating the worst effects of the weather. A total of 32 species were reported compared to 36 in 2011. Those missing this year were **Grizzled Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Adonis Blue and Brown Argus**; not really species that one would expect to get in gardens very often anyway. There were no 'gains' of species, nor were any rare or exotic butterflies sighted.

The 'Top 10' butterflies were fairly much the same as before, headed by **Red Admiral** and **Small** and **Large Whites**. **Small Tortoiseshells** moved up to 4th place from 9th the previous year, despite not having done very well elsewhere. Other 'improvers' were **Gatekeeper**, **Comma** and **Meadow Brown**. 'Backsliders' included **Speckled Wood** (down to 10th place from 4th in 2011), **Orange-tip** and **Brimstone**. **Common Blues** seem to have had a terrible year, appearing in less than a quarter of gardens compared to about a half normally. **Small Coppers** also declined in prevalence along with **Silver-washed Fritillaries**. The remarkable total of nearly one in five gardens in the survey reporting the latter in 2011 was not maintained, and only about one in ten had them in 2012.

The only species showing much of an improvement were **Painted Lady** and **Ringlet**. The latter seem to have been relatively happy with the damp conditions in the summer and they were seen in 29% of gardens compared to 25% the year before. **Painted Ladies** were seen in nearly half of gardens; rather surprising because it didn't seem to be a particularly good year for them, but maybe 2011 was even worse.

Understandably, gardens do not make much of a contribution to the recording of Priority Species. The one exception is **Wall**: seen in nearly 18% of gardens last year which must be an encouraging sign

It's nice to know that some species, whilst not being all that uncommon elsewhere, have fairly specialised requirements but nevertheless come into gardens occasionally. Single sightings of **Essex Skipper**, **Purple Hairstreak**, **Small Blue**, **Dark Green Fritillary** and **Marsh Fritillary** were reported. You may have seen that the **Dark Green Fritillary** was Bill Shreeves' 'Butterfly of the Year' on the transects.

A few exceptional gardens (with keen-eyed owners!) record 20 or more species each year. This number was down to 7 from 10 in the two previous years.

On the other hand, the number of species seen by the largest single group of recorders (a sort of 'average') rose to 14 from 13 in 2011, back to where it was in 2010. This means that if you see 15 or more species a year in your garden you are doing quite well.

A good many people who returned their forms to me noted the appearance of large numbers of **Small Tortoiseshells** and **Red Admirals** in their gardens in the late summer, staying on well into the autumn. This was a more cheerful note on which to end the butterfly year after a fairly dismal season earlier.

HELP NEEDED!

The Display Stall needs a **tent-team** to help us with our tent at up to 5 venues across Dorset each year. If you might be able to help please email me, Bridget de Whalley, for further information (contact details are at the back of this magazine).

Butterfly Conservation Head Office are in urgent need of extra volunteer help.

We are grateful for any assistance you are able to give; a few hours a week or a month would be very welcome. The types of tasks we need help with include: regular mailings, filing, photocopying, gardening, data input or general handyman duties.

Adrian, who has been volunteering at Head Office for over five years says "The office at East Lulworth is very friendly and volunteers are made welcome and plied with refreshments! Without them, the staff would struggle to get out mailings and keep on top of filing and other tasks. Your help would enable the staff to concentrate on their core duties. The volunteers' contribution is always very much appreciated".

If you have a few hours to spare and would like to find out more about volunteering at Head Office please contact Diane Garland on 01929 406001 or email dgarland@butterfly-conservation.org.

Visit Athelhampton House and Gardens for £5!!

Martin Young, who runs Nectar Plants in Weymouth, is organising the Plant Heritage Plant Fair at Athelhampton House this year on Sun 5th May (open to public 1030-3pm). This year's fair will have a wildlife theme, and our Branch will be there with our Display Stall. He has done a special deal with the RHS this year offering their members a concessionary entrance fee of £5.00. This includes the Fair and access to the beautiful gardens and 15th Century House (normal admission is £12.50). So we are hopeful for quite large numbers as the fair will be previewed in the April edition of the RHS magazine, 'The Garden', and also on the RHS website. He can offer BC members who wish to visit the same concessionary rate (£5) as RHS members. If you wish to take up this offer please contact our Membership Secretary, Robin George, (see back cover for contact details) and send her a stamped self-addressed envelope for your discount card.

Greetings! *The Branch is delighted to welcome the following new members. We hope to meet you all soon at our events and work parties. Please introduce yourselves to any of the committee members and find out how you can get the most out of your membership and what you can do to help.*

| | |
|--|---|
| Mr S C & Mr A Argles – Blandford Forum | Mr L Cowling – Dorchester |
| Miss F Bain – Dorchester | Mrs H Davis – Bridport |
| Miss C E Baker – Poole | Mrs M M Dorey – Broadstone |
| Mr J & Mrs L Barlow & Family – Dorchester | Mr I & Mrs K Duckworth – Tring, Herts |
| Mr S K Beswick – Poole | Mr E B Evans – Sherborne |
| Mr A Butler – Dorchester | Miss S Faulkner – Weymouth |
| Mr J Chambers – Poole | Mr N & Mrs E Fawcett – Swanage |
| Mr A Chandler – Weymouth | Mrs M Featherstone – Blandford Forum |
| Mr P & Mrs M D Christopher – Wareham | Mr F Fetton & Family – Blandford Forum |
| Ms S J Cookson – Weymouth | Mr A Ford Pesci – Weymouth |
| Mr A Cooper – Bournemouth | Mr A T Fox – Sherborne |
| Mrs P A & Mr H Corbin – Lyme Regis | Mr W T Franklin – Sturminster Newton |

Mr D Freemantle & Mrs C Dixon – Verwood

Mr C F & Mrs D Fry – Beaminster

Mr P D & Mrs M Green & Family – Weymouth

Mr R G & Mrs L Hammond – Dorchester

Mr M R Handley – Dorchester

Mr C Hawthorn – Weymouth

Miss P Hollanders – Poole

Mrs S & Mr P Holmes – Poole

Miss C S Hore – Bournemouth

Mrs L Insley – Sturminster Newton

Miss R A Jarvis – Dorchester

Mrs B & C B Jones – Blandford Forum

Mr N Kerley – Shaftesbury

Mr P Lister – Blandford Forum

Mrs S & Mr C Lovegrove & Family – Bournemouth

Mr B & Mrs P MacFarlane – Wimborne

Ms V McCormack – Weymouth

Miss J McGrath – Gillingham

Mrs W & Mr A Merritt – Blandford Forum

Mrs E M Moncrieff – Sturminster Newton

Ms L Munns – Swanage

Mr P & Mrs J Oakley – Bournemouth

Mr A Patenotte – Bournemouth

Mr N A Pawluk – Bournemouth

Mrs C J & Mr R W Piddock – Weymouth

Mr C Pink – Dorchester

Mrs J M Rayner – Weymouth

Mrs S Richardson – Blandford Forum

Mr C Rowland – Dorchester

Mr J H Rowley – Dorchester

Mrs C & Mr P Rye – Yeovil, Somerset

Miss V Smith – Bournemouth

Mr G R Smith and Ms R Shore – Christchurch

Miss N Smithson – Dorchester

Miss K Staddon – Poole

Mrs P A Stribling – Ferndown

Mr R Syms – Poole

Ms V Thomas – Poole

Mrs J A Thompson – Broadstone

Mrs R & Mr M Tucker & Family – Dorchester

Mr S & Mrs J Tutt – Ferndown

Mr M Van Tol – Portland

Ms M Vassar – Dorchester

Ms L Wall – Swanage

Miss R Whelan – Bournemouth

Miss K Wilkinson – Bournemouth

Mr B R & Mrs G M Williams – Wokingham, Berks

Mrs M & Mr T Williams – Wareham

Miss J L & Miss B Wilson – Bournemouth

Mrs V & Mr N Wilson & Family – Bournemouth

Mr H G Wood-Homer – Dorchester

Mr K Woodland & Mrs S Cannon – Wimborne

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

31st August

For mid-september publication

28th February

For late-march publication

If you would like to submit something for the next newsletter please send your articles in by these dates at the latest. Many thanks to the people that have contributed articles to this current edition.

We are always in need of articles and line drawings, so please put pen to paper, or your finger to keyboard, and send in your contributions.

TREASURER'S NOTE

**Bank balance at 31st
January 2013:**

£13,711

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All members are welcome to attend committee meetings.

The next meeting will be held on:

10th June 2013

The time and venue have yet to be decided. However, if you would like to attend please check beforehand with Adrian Neil (01305 832937 or adrian.neil@madasafish.com) for details.

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 in Scotland (SCO39268)
Tel: 01929 400209 Fax 01929 400210
email: info@butterfly-conservation.org
www.butterfly-conservation.org

PLEASE NOTE THE OPINIONS
EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE
NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF
THE SOCIETY OR THE BRANCH

All material in this magazine
© 2013 Butterfly Conservation Dorset Branch

Dorset Branch Who's Who

www.dorsetbutterflies.com

PRESIDENT: Brian Dicker*
Sunnydene, Higher Holton, Wincanton,
Somerset BA9 8AP . 01963 32453
briandicker@talktalk.net

CHAIRMAN: Jane Smith*
32 King's Road, Sherborne DT9 4HU.
Tel: 01935814029
jane-mary@clara.co.uk

**VICE CHAIRMAN & CONSERVATION
OFFICER** Richard Belding*
28 Manor Rd, Dorchester DT1 2AU.
Tel: 01305264868
rbelding601@gmail.com

**SECRETARY, GARDEN RECORDS
& WIDER COUNTRYSIDE SURVEY:**
Adrian Neil*
15 Littlemoor Road, Weymouth
DT3 6LA. 01305 832937
adrian.neil@madasafish.com

TREASURER: Allan Higgin*
6 Firside Road, Corfe Mullen
BH21 3LS. 01202 691710
allanhiggin@aol.com

MEMBERSHIP & Branch Liaison
Mrs Robin George*
Clarence House, Cemetery Rd,
Gillingham SP8 4BA. 01747824215
rab.george@which.net

RECORDS: Bill Shreeves*
Little Garth, 5 Butts Mead,
Shaftesbury SP7 8NS. 01747852587
w.shreeves@btinternet.com

NEWSLETTER: Guy Freeman
Tel: 07749 631235
freeman_g@hotmail.co.uk

MEETINGS: Arthur Bryant
9 Mannington Road, West Moors
BH22 0JE. 01202 892816
arthurbryant@onetel.com

MOTH CO-ORDINATOR
Gordon Hopkins*
Skailrora Lodge, Common Mead Lane,
Gillingham SP8 4RE. 01747822577
grhopkins99@gmail.com

SALES STALL:
Kathie & Richard Clarke
24 Pound Lane, Shaftesbury
SP7 8RZ. 01747853236

WEBSITE CO-ORDINATOR
Lyn Pullen*
Cobblers Cottage, 20 High Street,
Winfrith Newburgh, Dorchester
DT2 8JW. 01305 853946
cobblers@btinternet.com

DISPLAY CO-ORDINATION
Bridget de Whalley*
2 Longmead Cottages, Winterborne
Stickland DT11 0LZ. 01258 880524
BandLdeWhalley@btinternet.com

RESERVES MANAGER: Nigel Spring*
346 Mundens Lane, Alveston, Sherborne
DT9 5HU. 01963 23559 or 07981776767
nigelspring@yahoo.co.uk

COMMITTEE MEMBER:
Mark Spencer*
42A Gorleston Road, Branksome,
Poole BH12 1NW. 01202760621

COMMITTEE MEMBER:
Keith Howland*
keithhowland@hotmail.co.uk

* = Branch Committee Member