

## **Butterfly Conservation Dorset branch**

### **AGM and Members' Afternoon February 24<sup>th</sup> 2018**

#### **Chair's Report.**

Welcome to everybody and thank you for coming out to our annual get-together. Special welcome to Andy and Linda Barker from the Hampshire branch; Andy is a Trustee of Butterfly Conservation so he should be able to act as an intermediary between our branch and Head Office if any issues are raised.

We have received apologies from Steve Brown, Kathy Henderson, Lyn Pullen, Robin George, Adrian Neil, and Peggy Taylor. Roger Smith is also unable to join us but has sent the next instalment of books from his library for us to sell for the benefit of the branch.

We are also very pleased that Dan Hoare is with us and will be giving the presentation in the second half of the meeting. He is now Head of Regions for BC and will be giving an illustrated talk entitled 'Five steps to save a species - Butterfly Conservation's Landscape-scale conservation projects'.

2017 has been a year of challenges with Brexit and Climate change being near the top of the list, but the butterflies in Dorset had a much better year than in 2016. It seems to have been the year of the Red Admiral, Comma and Silver-washed Fritillary, with Common Blues making a comeback, long-grass species doing well and Marsh Fritillaries having a record year on Alners Gorse. Sadly Chalkhill Blues continued their rapid downward trend with no good explanation yet.

As Chair of the branch I was forced (!) to endure the Branch Chairs' weekend in a very fine hotel outside Stratford on Avon courtesy of Butterfly Conservation, with fantastic food, very comfortable accommodation and a superb 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner on the Friday evening. There were 44 attendees, with a very good range of staff, Trustees and representatives of the branches; sadly nobody from Somerset, Devon or Cornwall. This is particularly unfortunate as one of the suggestions at the meeting was for increased collaboration between contiguous branches and Somerset and Devon are two of our neighbours.

The two day sessions covered a wide range of topics with Julie Williams masterminding the proceedings in a very efficient but sympathetic way, Jim Asher presented the 2025 Strategy with BC's ambition to increase its membership to well over the 34,000 present level and to continue to increase its fundraising effort. In 2017 the income and expenditure figures exceeded £4 million, a record level but it was very sobering to think that £12 million is needed over the next 4 years for the organisation to stand still even without any expansion. Another target will be to increase the number of volunteers involved with the organisation particularly in the branches. There was a general feeling that this is an aspiration which is easier to express than to achieve!

Plans were revealed for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations including the Conservation Day of Action on March 10<sup>th</sup>.

This year is also the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Dorset branch. Attempts were made to establish a Dorset branch before 1988 but the branch as we know it now began 30 years ago. Lyn Pullen has extracted some fascinating facts about the early days of the branch – in 1988 membership stood at 50, 239 in 1993, now up to 950 in 2018. In 1988 turnover was around £160, now we have £27,000 in the bank. In 1993, the branch bought its first computer with a 40 mbyte hard disk! Now our website gets 96,000 views each year from 10,000 viewers. Things have certainly changed! The people who were our earliest members here qualify for a Butterfly Conservation badge (featuring the photo of a White Admiral taken by our old friend Tim Field who passed away in the autumn of 2017). The badge reads: Dorset branch – 30 years on and still flying!

We are very grateful to Colin Burningham and Christine for taking on the sales and display stall and the job of organising a rota of people to man it at the many fairs, meetings and shows that we try to attend each year. It will be difficult to follow in the footsteps of Bridget and Lawrie de Whalley who used to attend 27 events or more!

Thanks also to Lyn Pullen for all her hard work with the website and with her efforts on her plant stall where she raises large sums of money for branch funds. Also for all the help she gives Jane Smith with the production of our full-colour newsletter.

We are eternally grateful to Bill Shreeves for running the butterfly monitoring schemes in the county; he has expressed a wish to cut back the hours he spends on this and we hope that this year more volunteers will come forward to help Bill and his team with the records work. Next year we are aiming to hold only two regional recorders meetings in the county instead of four as at present: probably one in Dorchester and the other in the BH20 postcode area, perhaps Wimborne. A show of hands at the meeting showed that a good number of people present come from this area of Dorset, Poole and Bournemouth and it is hoped that they will support such a change.

Finally, we must offer a huge thank you to Brian and Sylvia Dicker for their lifetime service to the Dorset branch. Brian will continue to be the President of the branch but is stepping down from the committee. He became Chairman of the branch in 1990 after Les Clements resigned through pressure of work and became President in 2006. His involvement in butterfly conservation, our reserves, species recording and workparties was all-encompassing (supported tirelessly by Sylvia!) and this set up the branch to reach the very strong position it is in today.

We look forward to a busy butterfly and moth year in 2018 with plenty of support for all the activities and events to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the main organisation. Thank you all for your continuing support.

**Nigel Spring**