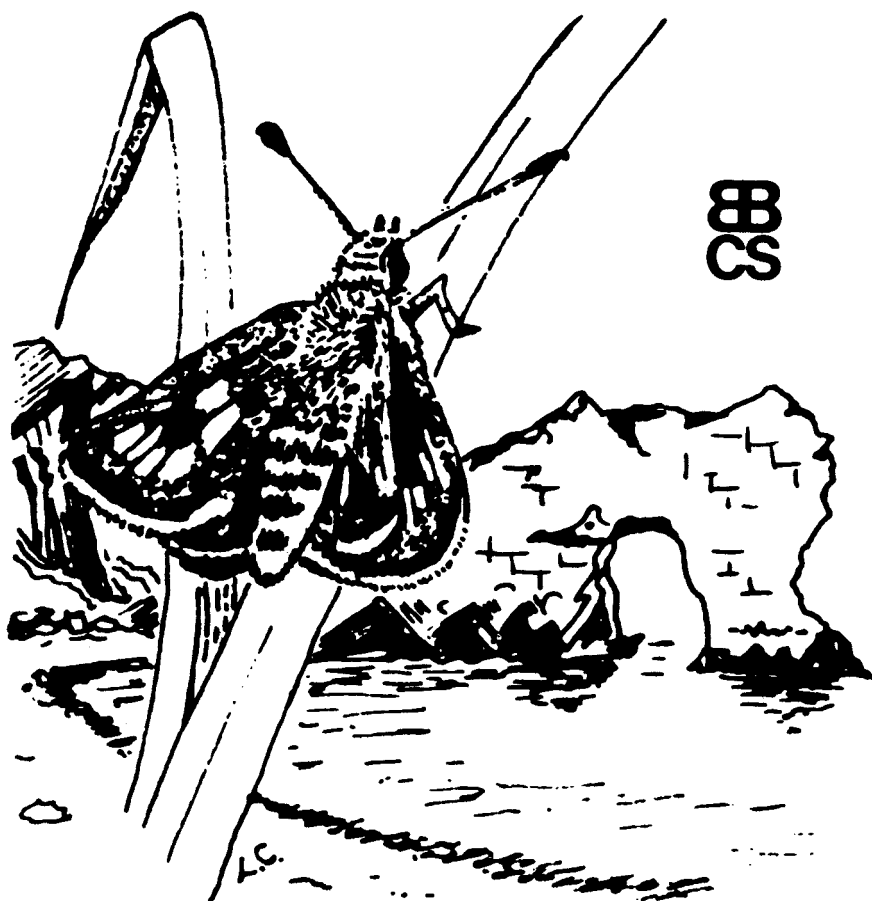


British Butterfly Conservation Society

Dorset Branch Newsletter



Issue No. 1

surely be unsatisfactory to choose a butterfly symbol which is on the point of extinction in Dorset.

I do hope that you will all make notes of your experiences in the field this year and let me know the details for inclusion in the next Newsletter. Without your support the Newsletter will fail to be interesting.

The committee would lastly like to thank you all for your support and I personally look forward to meeting you at the various events planned for this year.

Les Clements.

NEWS SNIPPETS

Portland's Rubbish Dumping Worry.

Members may have recently been aware of a rumour that the Dorset County Council was proposing to use some of the old quarries on Portland for rubbish disposal.

We can, I am happy to say, confirm that that is all it is - a rumour. After contacting the council we have been assured that there are no plans at present for such a use. If a proposal for tipping were made it would have to go for planning approval, and at such time objections could be raised. As they say "there is no smoke without fire", so please be vigilant. If anybody detects a change in this situation please contact the BBCS immediately.

Note: for those not fully conversant with Dorset butterfly matters, the old Portland quarries are an important locality for many species, particularly the blues. It is believed that Portland is the last remaining locality for the Silver Studded Blue on calcareous soils in Great Britain.

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Painted Ladies seem to be having a good year. Many reports from Dorset and the New Forset from the first week of May. Bill Shreeves reports two noted on the Fontmell Down walk and one at Fifehead. Two also seen by Mike Murless in Bridport in March.

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The committee recently agreed that membership renewal will be from 1st. April each year.

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The Slide Library.

Mike Murless is compiling a portable case of slides in order that the branch can have a reservoir of material for talks to external groups. Mike is particularly keen to receive clearly labelled slides showing life cycles, habitats and specific aspects of butterfly behaviour (not just views of butterflies!). Please contact him to help if you are a keen photographer. Mike will reproduce slides on behalf of our group and return the original.

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Bill Shreeves has kindly agreed to supply us with an article in the next Newsletter giving us a summary of this year's "butterfly walking". Anyone interested in helping with the surveying should contact Bill on Shaftesbury (0747) 2587.

* * * *

I have recently received a request from Dr. Jeremy Thomas at the Furzebrook Research Station, Wareham to send all records for this year's sightings to the Environmental Records Centre, Dorchester Museum, High West Street, Dorchester DT1 1XA. Jeremy has requested that particular information is required regarding the following:

1. Essex Skippers, especially on rough tall grassy patches such as cuttings (there are thousands on the new Bere Regis by-pass).
2. Pre 1980 records of White Letter Hairstreak, Chalkhills, Brown Argus, Small Blue, Grayling and White Admiral.

* * * *

Longtailed Blue in London!

Amongst the records of butterflies this year one in particular stands out. David Carter, who works for the Natural History Museum, bought a packet of frozen "mange tout" peas which, when opened, proved maggotty. Rather than demand a refund, he decided to breed them through. The result was an unseasonal emergence of Long Tailed Blues, a rare visitor to this country, but widely distributed in Europe, especially it would seem in fields of peas! (Thanks to Greg Herbert, Branch Liason Officer for this item.)

* * * *

26th. May, Foxhunting Enclosure, Beaulieu Heath.
Les Clements spotted a solitary Pearl Bordered Fritillary,
Forestry Commission will be informed. Also a Brimstone
male feeding at length on Lousewort flowers.

* * * *

MANAGEMENT PROJECT

The Dorset Branch is most grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Seymour of Wantsley Farm, Broadwindsor for the opportunity to monitor the butterflies on part of their land, with the aim of increasing the numbers through appropriate management.

Throughout the summer of 1988 a butterfly survey is to be made in order to establish which species are present. If all goes well a management plan will be proposed, which will eventually mean much clearing work and possible food plant propagation. In due course volunteers will be needed! Please help!

The first monitoring session of the season took place on 22nd. May. The weather unfortunately was dull and windy and consequently very few butterflies were seen. However, a good number of Orange Tip ova were found on both Cuckoo flower and Garlic Mustard. Also one male Small Copper which was very fresh and had obviously just emerged. A number of Green Veined Whites were also seen.

A modest beginning maybe, but from tiny acorns mighty oaks do grow!

Mike Murless.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT FOR BUTTERFLIES.

The richest woodlands can contain 35-40 species of butterfly but most have less than half that number. Only four species need trees as larval foodplants - Purple Emperor, Purple and White-letter Hairstreaks and the Large Tortoiseshell. A few species such as Green and Black Hairstreak, Brimstone and White Admiral use shrubs, but the vast majority of species use plants of the woodland floor. Therefore the internal structure of a wood is of the utmost importance to butterfly conservation. The woodland floor species can roughly be divided into those that prefer rides and glades and those that prefer new clearings. All species require light so that spaces between trees are important. Fritillaries are attracted to new clearings as one of the first plants to move in are Violets which are the larval foodplants.

Woodland management has changed drastically over the last 100 years, many are not now managed at all. In the Middle Ages woods were intensively managed to provide necessary products for the people living nearby. Thus there was abundant coppicing and pollarding, two management techniques of benefit to woodland butterflies. Coppicing, in which most of the trees in an area of about one acre are cut to the ground leaving just a few standards, is of great benefit. It allows sunshine to reach the woodland floor thus encouraging herbaceous plants to colonise. Bugle, for example, is a good nectar plant which soon colonises open spaces in woods. Sunshine is also beneficial to the caterpillars of several species, including Pearl Bordered Fritillary, as without it they do not grow properly. Duke of Burgundy and the Heath Fritillary used to be butterflies of coppiced woodland, but they were forced to seek other habitats when woodlands ceased to be managed. The White Admiral too prefers a semi-shady habitat and this is another butterfly which has increased its range and numbers recently like the Speckled Wood. However, these are the exceptions and most

woodland species need sunny, open spaces amongst the trees.

During the wars many woods were clear-felled, which was good for butterflies as it opened up the woodland floor. After the last war the Forestry Commission replanted many of these woods with conifers. Although the butterflies were unaffected while the trees remained small, large trees shaded out the woodland flora with the result that there was a drastic reduction in butterfly numbers. Conifers also dry out the soil which reduces the number of moisture-loving plants in a wood and hence the butterflies dependant on them. Unfortunately, conifers grow quickly and there has been a severe decline in species such as the Pearl Bordered Fritillary. High Brown Fritillary, which used to be a woodland butterfly, has declined too and now uses meadows within large woodland complexes. The Silver-washed Fritillary has not been as badly affected as the other fritillaries as it can tolerate some shade.

Rides of the correct structure within a wood are of great importance to butterflies. A good ride is one in which the structure changes from low growing plants on a metalled surface in the centre, to grass and wild flowers at the edges, backed by shrubs and then trees. Such rides will receive enough light for a good selection of nectar plants to develop. They do, however, require continuous maintenance to stop overgrowth by shrubs and, eventually, trees. Butterflies found along woodland rides include Brimstone, Common Blue, Peacock, Grizzled Skipper, Large Skipper, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, and Wood White. Shrubby edges of Sallow are popular with the Purple Emperor, while Blackthorn is essential to the Black and Brown Hairstreaks. Cutting scalloped glades and widening of ride junctions to produce semi-glades has proved successful, though in the latter case grasses can take over from flowering plants. This can be halted by developing scrub which can then be periodically cut.

(Thanks to Margaret Vickery of the West Midlands Branch for the above article taken as notes from a lecture by Caroline Peachey of the Conservation Sub-Committee.)

UNPROTECTED LOCALITIES

One of the primary aims of our local group is to establish a list of all good butterfly localities in the county that are not under any kind of protection. By this we mean areas that are not SSSI's, National Trust, Dorset Trust for Nature Conservation or any other type of conservation body.

Held on file, along with a list of species represented, will be a note of the owners of the land and any other relevant information. Eventually contact will be made with the owners and an invitation for them to join the society if they wish. We hope in due course to be able to offer to sympathetic owners help and advice and to encourage them to value the butterflies on their land. In order to do this we need the help of all the local members. If you know of good butterfly "spots" which are not protected please inform Mike Murless who is co-ordinating the lists. Please include a note of as many species as possible that you have observed, also a note of the owner's name and address (if possible), also the ordnance survey grid reference number.

Please do help with this important project. It could possibly be the means by which a link could be made between the various reserve areas; a means by which it might be possible to halt the worrying trend of butterfly populations being isolated in pockets, a situation which is a recipe for extinction.

Mike Murless.

REPORT ON JOHN TUBB'S FILMSHOW

To those lucky enough to have been present in Dorchester at St.Mary's Hall on 26th. March, I'm sure you had a very enjoyable evening and to those who were not present, what an event you missed!

John Tubb's show really gives one inspiration to get out in the field in summer and try to see some of the sights that are captured on his film. John showed some new 16mm. film, the quality of which had to be seen to be believed. It was so nice to see rarities like the Brown Hairstreak at such close quarters, a sight I have yet to see personally in the field. (Maybe I'll be lucky at Deadmoor Common on September 11th.) May I thank John once again for putting a lot of time and effort into such a great opening event for us.

I hope, incidentally, that you liked the display boards that Mike Murless has put together for our sales stand, which gives a very professional appearance for the group. Our sales stand selection has been augmented recently by the purchase of more BBBS literature "Gardening for Butterflies" and "Butterflies of the Chalk Downland" which will be on sale at our Gordon Benningfield event in August (at a reduced price for members!).

Les Clements.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR THE YEAR

This Newsletter should get out in time to remind you of the field trip to Powerstock on June 12th. and let's hope the weather will be favourable. We have no way of cancelling at short notice but suffice to say if rain is forecast all day, then the event will obviously be off.

Field Trips:

1. 12th. June Powerstock Common (meet at Grid Ref. SY 547954) Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Wood White, Dukes, Green Hairstreak etc.
2. 11th. September Deadmoor Common (meet at Grid Ref. ST 760108) Brown Hairstreaks, Vanessids etc.

Note field meetings are for members only.

Events:

1. Saturday 6th. August 7.30pm at the Council Chamber, East Dorset District Council (old Wimborne D.C.), Furzehill, Wimborne. Gordon Benningfield, famous wildlife artist will be giving a lecture for us. Members will have priority on tickets, 50p each plus S.A.E. to Les Clements please.
2. Bill Shreeves talk on Butterfly Recording in Dorset Saturday 15th. October at St.Mary's Church Hall, Alexandra Road, Dorchester at 7.30pm.
3. Dr.Jeremy Thomas talk on Conservation of Butterflies in Dorset. Jeremy has kindly agreed to give us an informal talk on the state of butterfly populations, conservation techniques and projects in our area. No doubt he will give us guidance on what the group should really be doing to help and hope to answer any questions you may care to bring along! Saturday 26th. November at St.Mary's Hall (as above) 7.30pm.

We would like to hear from you if you have any ideas for events, field trips etc. If there is any interest in perhaps a field trip to Syon Park Butterfly Farm and the Natural History Museum for next summer, please let Mike Murless or Les Clements know and if there are sufficient numbers (ie. over 10) we will arrange transport.

If anyone has difficulty obtaining transport to any of our events, please contact me and I will try to arrange transport via other members.

Incidentally, I feel it would be a good idea to print members' telephone numbers in the next issue so that contact can be made from member to member. If anyone objects, please let me know and their number will be omitted.

Note: Please reserve 20th. January 1989 in your diaries for an informal members slide evening. Venue to be announced but probably Wimborne.

The Committee have recently agreed charges for our indoor events - 50p for members, 75p for non-members with no charge for refreshments.

Les Clements.

HELP!

Having already mentioned that we need help recording butterflies and news snippets and articles for the Newsletter, it must be mentioned that out of nearly 100 members of the BBCS living in the Dorset area, some 50 have decided to join the local group and out of these we have only 4 people who have volunteered their services to take up a full role on the committee. Although we have valuable support from another 3 or so persons on our committee, that leaves an awful lot of work to be done by a handful of people.

The future of this group must lay in all of your hands and I must urge you all to help in any way that you can. One thing that must not happen to our group is that only a small band of enthusiastic members will be involved enough to keep the group running. The danger is that if a member has to stand down for any reason, there must be somebody already au-fait with the duties to step into the vacant place without delay.

Please therefore, consider some of the following areas of duty which take very little time out of the week, (sometimes under an hour a month) but will help the group run more effectively and efficiently:

1. Publicity for example, draughting joining forms, sponsorship letters, press releases etc.
2. Printing does anybody know of a cheap source of printing and photocopying?

3. Clerical help with stapling and sticking labels on newsletter envelopes - not exciting stuff but essential to the group.
4. Event organisers just arranging halls, speakers and co-ordinating. Also help with refreshments and manning the sales stand.
5. Sales Goods Caretaker manning our stand occasionally and taking care of the stock. Very little time outlay but again, essential.
6. Conservation officers to help us liaise with landowners, conservation societies, press etc. over specific issues eg. Portland infill scare.
7. Typists to help Sarah in producing the minutes, newsletter and any official correspondence.
8. Artwork anyone who can sketch and produce drawings to augment our newsletters.
9. Event Helpers taking entrance fees, organising the refreshments.
10. Membership Secretary somebody to update our computer list. Very little time outlay.
11. Newsletter editor a very enjoyable job just putting the articles together in a sensible order for typing and liaising with officers to get the material in on time.

12. Lecturers we have already had requests for a lecture on butterflies from external groups, in this instance the Women's Institute. Jean Matthews has agreed to do this lecture but if anyone else is interested, please contact me.

Please let me know of any of these duties which are of interest (and any others you perhaps have in mind).

Les Clements.

SEPTEMBER
3rd

STOP PRESS: DORCHESTER SHOW.

Help needed to man the stand. Please contact
Martin Pirie on 0202 477555.

COMMITTEE

Chairman	Les Clements	0202 422020
Publicity Officer	11, Colville Road	
Membership	Pokesdown	
Secretary	Bournemouth	
Treasurer	Phil Grey	Swanage
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	Steppes Hill	
	Langton Matravers	
Committee	Sarah Bovey	Maiden
Secretary	Rowans	Newton
	Kingcombe Road	20833
	Toller Porcorum	
	Dorchester	
Habitat Survey	Mike Murless	Powerstock
Officer/Field	Sawpit Orchard	442
Trip Organiser	Powerstock	
	Bridport	
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	Verwood	
Committee Member	Jean Matthews	Bath 25506
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	23, Grosvenor Place	
	Bath	
Committee Member	Martin Pirie	0202 477555
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	Burton	
	Christchurch	
Committee Member	Richard Coman	01 834 0424
	Kingcombe Farm	
	Lower Kingcombe	
	Toller Porcorum	
Committee Member	Simon Beadles	Bridport
	Bridport Museum	22116
	South Street	
	Bridport	