
Table of Contents

5.1	Chair’s Report 2021 BC Gloucestershire Branch AGM (Sue Smith)	1
5.2	Treasurer Report for the year ended 31 March 2021 (Serena Meredith)	3
5.3	Membership Report (Sue Smith, Temporary Membership Officer)	5
5.4	Brief Notes on the 2021 Butterfly Season (Chris Wiltshire, County Butterfly Recorder)	5
5.5	Moth Officer Report (Steve French)	6
5.6(i)	Back from the Brink update (Jen Gilbert)	9
5.6 (ii)	Cotswold Landscape Officer update (Jen Gilbert)	11
5.7	Sites monitoring and Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (Trish Atkinson)	11
5.8	Prestbury Hill reserve update (Trish Atkinson)	12
5.9	Rough Bank Report (Sue Smith).....	13
5.10	Forest of Dean Conservation Report (Simon Glover).....	13

5.1 Chair’s Report 2021 BC Gloucestershire Branch AGM (Sue Smith)

It has been another strange year, mainly because of the effects of Covid. Although we have learned to live with it to some extent, many of us have changed our habits and life is still not the same as it was before the pandemic hit. Fortunately it has not affected the butterflies and moths!

Events: We have held a few online sessions which I hope people have enjoyed. We are thinking of doing more again next year. We feel these are especially welcomed during the winter months when we can enjoy a variety of speakers from all over the UK in the comfort of our own homes. Do let us know what you feel about these. We are hoping that we can organise an open air get together next spring/summer.

As you know, few outside events were held during the summer, with the exception of Steve French’s four moth nights, the Simon Saville bike ride event at Rough Bank and an open day at Prinknash to promote the Big Butterfly Count.

Bug Butterfly Count: According to results from the Big Butterfly Count, more counts were carried out this year but sadly fewer butterflies and moths were recorded. I suspect this has been true for a lot of our recorders, although Vic Polley’s record of 2,600 Chalk Hill Blues at Coombe Hill topped all expectations. You can read more about the county records in the County Recorder’s Report by Chris Wiltshire. You can also see more about the full results of the Big Butterfly Count here <https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/big-butterfly-count-2021-sees-lowest-ever-number-of-butterflies-recorded>

BftB: Sadly Back from the Brink finally came to an end on 31 August this year when we had to say goodbye to Kathy Meakin and Jen Gilbert. You can read more about Limestones Living Legacies in Jen’s report. We are extremely grateful for all the work that Kathy, Jen and Julian all carried out during the lifetime of the project.

Cotswolds Landscape Officer: However, we have not said a final farewell to Jen as from 1 September 2021 she was appointed Cotswolds Landscape Officer. This is a one-year BC post but it is hoped that something may continue in the Cotswolds in some form or other later in 2022. If anyone knows of any funding opportunities, do please contact us.

Committee: We also have three new committee members – Christine Blythe and Rosie Woolley – who have joined to help with events. If you have any ideas for face-to-face events or zoom sessions do please contact them. We are also asking that they be formally adopted onto the committee at this AGM. Alan Sumnall also joined the committee in December 2020 and we ask that he, too, be endorsed as a committee member. All other officers are happy to continue their work on the committee.

Sadly Juliet Bowman left us in the summer. We are really grateful for all the work she did for us during her time on the committee, not least taking the minutes of our committee meetings and AGM's.

I, too, have decided that the time has come for me to relinquish my position as Chair on the Branch Committee. However, I have offered to stay in role until the 2022 AGM (unless I am removed earlier!). It has been a most interesting and rewarding experience during the (approximately) 18 years that I have been your Chairperson but all good things come to an end. However, I can thoroughly recommend it.

Reserves: Work has continued on the reserves and work parties will carry on as usual, unless we are once again restricted to travel.

Recording: I think most people have managed to carry on recording activities throughout the county, both for butterflies and moths. A new group was formed to carry out a different type of recording, recommended by Kathy Meakin, on Rodborough Common. It has been quite problematic getting this up and running this year but we are hopeful things will run more smoothly next year.

Membership: There is still some frustration regarding the membership database at Head Office and we constantly live in hope that all the problems will be sorted out. If you are a new member and you haven't heard from us, we apologise but at the moment things are sometimes outside of our control. Hopefully everyone has received Antennae, either electronically or by post, and you can find everyone's contact details at the end of the newsletter

Butterfly Conservation Strategy: Butterfly Conservation has now launched their new Strategy – you can find out more here <https://butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/our-strategy> The aims are very ambitious:

- Halve the number of the UK's threatened species of butterflies and moths
- Improve the condition of 100 of the most important landscapes for butterflies and moths
- Transform 100,000 wild spaces in the UK for people, butterflies and moths

The branches will be working with Head Office staff to try and achieve these ambitions over the next five years. We can all individually do our bit – whether it's joining in with other local groups to promote butterflies and moths, recording, letting parts of our garden 'go wild' or growing nectar

plants in the garden. Individually it may seem as if we are not doing a lot but collectively we can achieve much.

Thank you: Last, but not least, I would like to thank you all for supporting Butterfly Conservation and the Gloucestershire Branch. I would personally like to express my appreciation of all the work committee members undertake – without their support my life would certainly be more difficult.

5.2 Treasurer Report for the year ended 31 March 2021 (Serena Meredith)

For the eagle eyed amongst you, you may have noticed a discrepancy between the cashbook value as shown on the accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 £28750.75 and that at 1 April 2020 £29690.61. This is due in the main to VAT adjustments and is to the benefit of the branch. The accounts presented here have a number of notes attached to explain the most obvious changes to our income and expenditure during the year.

2020/21 was a difficult year for the society as a whole. The pandemic played havoc with planned in-person events resulting in cancellation of fund-raising activities, walks and talks which normally add not only cash but contribute to the wider understanding, knowledge and interest in moths and butterflies. Our income dropped by £3202.28 largely because as a branch we no longer receive the Agri-Environment Support Scheme monies which are now being administered by Head Office. That said it is still available to fund works done on the Prestbury Hill Reserve. We were though lucky to receive a donation of an amount that was refunded in respect of a cancelled holiday, which more than made up for the reduction of donations from elsewhere.

By the same token, despite an increase in spending on Prestbury Hill Reserve maintenance (for which we were still responsible at the time) our expenditure reduced by £2994.51 as costs reduced for the printing and distribution of newsletters and meetings went online.

There was therefore an excess of expenditure over income for the year of £1277.56 resulting in a cashbook value at 31 March 2021 of £28413.05.

At the start of the pandemic following a request of Julie Williams (Chief Executive) we offered £15,000 of our funds to ensure the financial security of the main society. Whilst not required during the financial year under review, this amount has now been transferred out of our cashbook balance and will be used by Head Office for the benefit of the branch.

The accounts and balance sheet are shown below.

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION
GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH ACCOUNTS AND BALANCE SHEET
For year 2020/21 - 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

INCOME (RECEIPTS)	2019/20	2020/21	Notes	EXPENDITURE (PAYMENTS)	2019/20	2020/21	Notes
	£	£		<u>Transfers</u>	£	£	
Subscriptions	4002.00	4314.00		Contribution to the Butterfly Effect Education Project	3000.00	3000.00	4
Donations - individual (inc. Gift Aid)	403.79	1526.00		<u>Other expenditure</u>			
Donations - corporate	315.00		*	Training - conservation volunteers	320.00	126.00	5
Tax refunds - gift aid donations	62.50		1	Consultants - conservation	690.00		6
Postage and packing on walks booklets	37.60	23.30		Field equipment (tools, materials, fuel, plants)	750.11	11.00	
Sales - items bought in (ID Charts, plants)	243.00	263.33		Printing - conservation	169.43		
Sales - Walks Booklets	576.00	283.00		Events - conservation (inc workshops)	284.20	-60.00	7
Events charges	482.00		*	Reserve maintenance	3198.48	4859.50	8
Sales - items donated	121.20		*	Reserve Interpretation			
Raffle Income	55.00		*	Reserve - water	759.63		9
Fundraising				Branch newsletter - printing & postage	1661.12	473.11	10
Grants (Bathurst Estate PBF project)		1052.00	2	Events - fundraising costs (prizes)	10.00	10.00	
Agri-Environment Support Scheme	4365.82		3	Events - promotional	40.00		
				Cost of sales (calc)	222.30	-17.60	
				Stationery & other office consumables	78.40	33.89	11
				Postage (including for walks booklets sales)	238.82	73.86	11
				Committee expenses (room hire & refreshments)	14.91	59.95	12
				AGM costs (room hire, photocopying, gifts)	164.66	41.99	13
				Computer equipment	8.29	7.45	
				Insurance	123.35	120.04	
TOTAL RECEIPTS	10663.91	7461.63		TOTAL PAYMENTS	11733.70	8739.19	
Adjusted cashbook value @ 1 April 2020		29690.61		Notes:			
Add				* No events attended or organised other than virtually			
Receipts		7461.63		1. Tax refund due will be included in 2021/22 figures			
Less				2. This recovered all our costs on this project			
Payments		-8739.19		3. This is now retained by HO			
				4. Final contribution to the project			
Cashbook value @ 31 March 2021		28413.05		5. First aid training for work party volunteer			
				6. Payment to contractor in 19/20 for work on Bathurst Estate recovered by grant in 20/21			
				7. Refund for cancelled room booking due to Covid			
				8. PH grazing, contract work (Glebe in Happy Valley) and fencing supplies in the main			
				9. No invoice received for 2020/21 water - 19/20 amount was for 3 years worth			
				10. Newsletter mainly distributed electronically, hence reduced costs			
				11. Reduction in new member letters sent			
				12. Zoom licence included			
				13. Members day held by Zoom - no room hire cost			

5.3 Membership Report (Sue Smith, Temporary Membership Officer)

There is still very little to report on this as full reliable details are difficult to get from Head Office. Christine Blythe has offered to take on this role but Trish (outgoing Membership Secretary) and myself (temporary Membership Secretary) feel it is unfair to hand it over whilst there are so many problems.

I do not have a reliable number of members in the county and no idea of how many new members there have been during the year.

This matter has constantly been discussed with Head Office staff and we are met with lots of apologies but no true resolution of the problems.

We live in hope . . .

5.4 Brief Notes on the 2021 Butterfly Season (Chris Wiltshire, County Butterfly Recorder)

Weather: The season got off to a very slow start due to the unusually cold weather which delayed the appearance of many species by two to three weeks. However by the time we got to late Spring species were only about a week late and they caught up by June after which the whole season seemed to rush past due to some hot periods and more or less came to a premature end in early September.

It was a better year than 2020 overall but not quite up to the level of 2019. The late start did mean that we had some odd species mixes with the likes of Orange-tips seen flying with Marbled Whites.

Skippers were not abundant especially the Essex this year, in contrast the Dingy Skipper did very well with large numbers seen across many sites but they were late and as a consequence I have not received any reports of second generation specimens unlike the last two years. Grizzled Skipper is still giving cause for concern with declining numbers and possibly sites.

Whites in general were rather scarce in the Spring and only slightly more abundant in the Summer broods. A few Large and Green-veined Whites were still on the wing on 10th October. Only a few records of Wood Whites in the Dean.

Hairstreaks were very patchy in their appearance with some people seeing plenty of Green and White-letters although most agree that Purple Hairstreaks were far from abundant this year. At the time of writing I have not received any records of Brown Hairstreaks. Small Coppers were in rather short supply too although some impressive aberrations have been photographed this year.

Blues – a bit of a mixed bag really. Adonis probably suffered the most and has not recovered from the Spring/early Summer drought of 2020 and numbers are down to single figures on some sites. Brown Argus was also suffering with low numbers and the spring generation was not recorded on some sites although there was a bit of boost in numbers around the end of August. Large Blue did not do very well in contrast to last year but the Small did reasonably well with a larger than usual

partial second generation. Common Blues were certainly more common than the previous species and had a good year and Holly Blues did very well, even a late individual being seen in the first week of October. The star of the show is undoubtedly the Chalk Hill which did exceptionally well across most sites. The prize goes to Coombe Hill, Wotton-under-Edge where Vic Polly counted over 2,600 on one daily count on the transect! But like many other species they were over by the beginning of September. While not a Blue I have included Duke of Burgundy here and can only say that it seemed to be an average year with no great numbers reported.

Tortoiseshells and Admirals etc – The Small Tortoiseshell seemed to increase in numbers slightly while other members of this group just seemed to have an average year. White Admirals were very few and far between which is a bit of a worry. Fewer Purple Emperors were seen this year but once again Matthew Oates has found larvae confirming its breeding status in the county.

Fritillaries – Small Pearl-bordered, I have not received any information about this species yet but I know surveys were carried out this year. Pearl-bordered did quite well and some spectacular aberrations were seen where the tan colour was replaced by white or cream. Dark Green Fritillary was reasonably abundant this year especially around Cotswold limestone grassland sites, there was even a very late one seen in September on Cleeve Common. Silver-washed were quite numerous in any large woodland with quite a few wanderers away from their usual haunts. Marsh Fritillary was in reasonable numbers on Strawberry Banks and their modest numbers on the Bill Smyllie reserve suggest that they are breeding there after the presumed unofficial release last year. Several others were seen around the county with two (?) seen at Lower Woods again.

Browns – Speckled Woods were late and scarce in the Spring but more numerous August onwards and they are one of the few species still flying in October. The Wall was scarce this year with most records from Nottingham Hill. Marbled White only had a reasonable year but Gatekeeper seemed to have a good year with numbers up compared with the last few years. Meadow Brown also had a good year although its flight period was curtailed seeming to vanish as September arrived. Ringlets did not approve of the season with numbers down in most places. The Small Heath had a strange season doing very well in some sites and very poorly in others, the north of the county seemingly doing better than the south but more data required here.

5.5 Moth Officer Report (Steve French)

Weather Trends: It's fair to say that there have been some challenging weather conditions this year. Spring, in particular, proved to be difficult for both moths and moth recorders. March and April were unusually wet, whilst May brought much dryer weather but the nights provided constant clear skies and unusually low temperatures. The upshot of this was noticeably fewer moth numbers on the wing and those species that did appear were anything up to three weeks later than a "normal" year. By the middle of June it was clear that Spring Moth Recording was going to be one of the quietest for years. In my own garden I had recorded almost 100 species less than 2020 and I was beginning to worry. What were the consequences of these weather conditions on future populations of spring moths, if any? There have always been good and bad years for moth populations and whilst we can all agree there is a general decline in moth numbers, there is usually a "bounce back" after extreme weather conditions. Only time will tell if this year's weather has significantly impacted on our moths.

Thankfully, Summer proved to be far better. Both July and August were much better months with some very warm nights indeed and moth traps around the county were heaving once again. Migrant moths however have been in short supply this autumn despite some favourable temperatures and southerly winds.

County Moth Events

Despite the continuing COVID saga and the above mentioned poor weather we have managed to put together a few events across the region.

7th May - Silver Cloud Night. *Hartpury Orchard Centre.*

The Orchard Centre is a key site for this Severn valley speciality moth. Despite being well attended (we had nearly a dozen moth traps running), moth numbers were very low as we were in the middle of a sustained cold, dry patch. However, we were successful in finding two Silver Clouds and these were on show for the following morning's reveal.

29th/30th June – Sponsored Bike Ride. *Rough Bank.*

To coincide with Simon Saville's epic bike ride and stop off at Rough Bank a trapping session was organised on the previous night to provide some "show and tell" moths to display during the guided walks. The weather was kinder than the previous month although a little cool. Nevertheless, a good selection of moths were recorded by the five trappers, including some crowd-pleasing hawk-moths (Privet and Elephant) and a number of less common macro and micro-moths.

9th July – National Moth Night. *Hartpury Orchard Centre.*

This annual event has been held at the Orchard Centre for the past 4 years but was particularly relevant this year as the theme was "Reedbeds and Wetlands" which is a feature of this site. Concerns surrounding COVID meant we had less attendees than the previous year (and we were unable to provide hot breakfasts this year!), but that didn't stop a hardcore of ten recorders turning up on the night and another half a dozen for the morning reveal.

14th August – Gloucestershire Moth Group Meeting. *Painswick Beacon*

This was one of the locations discussed in the winter Zoom meetings and Joyce Barrus had obtained permission for us to trap there. The moth recorders were joined by wardens from the Painswick Beacon Conservation Group. Over 100 species were recorded, adding many new records to this key site.

20th August – Moth Trapping Session at *Bathurst Estate*

Something of a taster session for this habitat rich site. Myself, Chris Tracey, Pete and Ken Cservenka had a very rewarding trapping session in Oakley Wood. Over 100 species across four moth traps. The ants were a challenge, and we found a rare ichneumonid wasp that parasitizes Lobster moth larvae, which may turn out to be a County first when the record is verified.

Zoom Meetings

We had half a dozen Zoom meetings during the winter months for the Gloucestershire Moth Group. I was very pleased with the turnout. By the time of the last meeting, we were getting between 30 and 40 people a session.

Topics covered were:

Moth Events for 2021 (Locating new Sites).

Moth Traps, Bulbs and other Equipment

Keeping and Submitting Records

Clearwing Moths and the use of Pheromone Lures

The two Butterfly Conservation specific meetings were equally, if not better, attended

Moths and their Caterpillars (Barry Henwood) had fantastic feedback.

Spring into Summer with Gloucestershire Moths – my own attempt at an overview of what to look out for in the County in Spring and early Summer was a great platform to get some of the more butterfly focused members into moths and was instrumental in driving up membership of the Facebook Group. Talking of which....

Facebook Group

When I submitted the Winter report in January, we had 260 members in the Gloucestershire Moths Facebook Group. This has now grown to 340. Something that I never expected. So, what's driving this growth and interest in moths?

COVID, of course, has affected everybody in some way in the last 18 months, but it's certainly driven an interest in the natural world. People have been stuck indoors and have looked for new ways to engage with the Nature. Studying moths is easy to do in your own garden, and inquisitive local amateur naturalists have stumbled across the group this way.

The above-mentioned Zoom Meetings have been another signpost to Facebook too.

I'm also delighted to report an influx of younger people into the group. Some of this stems from a hook-up with Hartpury University (more of this below).

With so many new enthusiasts studying moths now, it's important to ensure that they record what they see and that these vital records reach the County Recorder. With this in mind, I will be doing a series of Facebook Posts about Recording Moths.

Emperor Moth Challenge

During the *Pheromone Lures* Zoom call I asked attendees to attempt to deploy the Emperor lure in as many different sites as possible this year so we might establish the true distribution of this rarely seen moth. The results were enlightening, and a full write up of this venture is in the latest edition of *Antennae*.

Loan Trap Scheme

As the final part of my Moth Officer handover, I met with Peter Hugo to discuss re-establishing the successful Moth Trap Loan Scheme. Peter has provided me with as much equipment as he had left in storage. This includes a portable generator, a Mercury Vapor trap and 4 Hugo traps (both mains and battery). I'm in the process of getting all these PAT tested and then I will re-launch the scheme so that people new into moth recording can have an opportunity to "try before they buy".

University Moth Challenge

I was recently approached by Hartpury University and College, who had heard about this initiative and were keen to take part. University Moth Challenge (UMOC) is a joint initiative by the UK's youth nature network A Focus on Nature (AFoN) and Butterfly Conservation. The aims are:

- To encourage more biological recording at university
- To encourage more young people to take an active interest in moths
- To give young people valuable biological recording and identification skills
- To link young people and Universities with the National Moth Recording Scheme

This, of course, is exactly the sort of thing that we should be supporting. I have, so far, organised four moth trapping sessions, assisted by Peter Cranswick, and over 350 species of moths have been recorded. Despite the fact most students had returned home for the summer break we had a good crowd turn out (including three lecturers!)

I have provided the Uni with a 15w Hugo trap and the students intend to run this as often as they can.

I hope to roll out this initiative to further Universities in the County next year.

5.6(i) Back from the Brink update (Jen Gilbert)

The Limestone's Living Legacies BftB project came to an end on 31 August this year after four years. The project worked alongside local partner organisations such as the National Trust, Natural England and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust as well as with our national BftB partners Buglife, Plantlife, Bat Conservation Trust and Bumblebee Conservation Trust focussing on 30 (15 primary and 15 secondary) rare and threatened species.

These included species such as the Large Blue, Marsh Fritillary, Ruderal Bumblebee, Greater Horseshoe Bat, Rugged Oil Beetle, Juniper and Pasqueflower – all of which have an association with the special limestone grasslands of the Cotswolds.

Our project also worked very closely with a number of local volunteer groups such as the Glos BC Branch, Stroud Wildlife Survey Group, Painswick Beacon Conservation Group, Gloucester Vale Conservation Volunteers and the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens among many other individual volunteers. Much of the work carried out during the project couldn't have been achieved without the volunteers who helped out with species surveys, at events and with practical conservation work so a big thank you to those of you who got involved.

Below are some of the project's highlights:

-
- Working with the National Trust and the commoners at Rodborough Common, targeted paddock grazing using electric fencing enabled some of the under-grazed slopes to be brought back into better condition for a number of target species such as the Duke of Burgundy, Pasqueflower and the Large Blue. This paddock grazing also enabled the Large Blue reintroduction to go ahead.
 - The Large Blue butterfly was reintroduced to three new sites including Painswick Beacon and Rodborough Common. A fourth supplementary introduction was also carried out to a previous reintroduction site.
 - The use of electric fencing and targeted paddock grazing at Painswick Beacon also resulted in a dramatic increase in the abundance and distribution Purple Milk-vetch.
 - In Feb 2020 Julian Bendle confirmed evidence of Marsh Fritillary breeding at a second site where he began work with the landowners to provide better and increased habitat for this butterfly. (This work is still ongoing.)
 - 14 scrapes were created at five sites. These have seen positive results for both Cotswold Pennycress (at sites in the north of the Cotswolds) and Juniper at Juniper Hill. (The scrapes also created bespoke habitat for four other target species).
 - 75 management advice visits by our Conservation Officer (Julian Bendle and latterly Kathy Meakin) were carried out to 49 different sites
 - A total of 718ha of land benefited either from direct habitat management or management advice
 - Some highlights of our survey work included:
 - The discovery of Rugged Oil Beetles at 12 new sites in the Cotswolds – taking the total from 8 to 20. Another 3 were also discovered outside the Cotswolds AONB boundaries.
 - Rock-rose Pot Beetles were re-discovered at Rodborough Common after not being seen there for 35 years
 - Ruderal Bumblebee was discovered at two news sites – one of which was Prestbury Hill
 - Red-shanked Carder Bee was discovered at one new site – Prestbury Hill
 - At one site in the north of the county Pasqueflower numbers increased from 277 to over 800 in 2 years
 - After one year the newly created scrape at Juniper Hill was found to have 28 seedlings already growing within it.
 - Audiomoths (a new piece of sound recording equipment) were used to help understand the use of Rodborough Common by Greater and Lesser Horseshoe Bats in response to the new paddock grazing regime.
 - Some final numbers:
 - 55 habitat management work parties were carried out across 24 different sites benefiting 26 of our 30 target species. These work parties were attended by 173 individuals volunteering 442.5 days of support.
 - Approx. 348 species surveys were carried out by 147 individual survey volunteers totalling 294 days of support.
 - In total 414 volunteers have contributed 1123 days of time to the project - this equates to just over an extra 3 years!
 - In addition, through our training workshops and work parties, a total of 546 people learnt new skills directly with us and 4251 people have been engaged directly through the project.

5.6 (ii) Cotswold Landscape Officer update (Jen Gilbert)

Although sadly BftB came to an end, I have been very fortunate to be able to stay on with Butterfly Conservation in a new role as Cotswold Landscape Officer. This is a year long post and will involve becoming the main contact for the day-to-day management of Rough Bank and Prestbury Hill, working closely with the branch to look after these reserves. I will also be continuing some of the work started during BftB, for example work for the Marsh Fritillary. Currently I am working with the landowners at a site near to Strawberry Banks to improve the habitat there for the butterflies which do turn up there regularly, to help this become an established breeding site.

In addition to this I will be looking for other opportunities to get involved with butterfly and moth related projects across the Cotswolds and hopefully for opportunities to continue the post after this initial year.

5.7 Sites monitoring and Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (Trish Atkinson)

Butterfly key sites recording: We have received records from several key site recorders but am expecting more records to come in. If you do key site recording and have not yet sent in your records then please send them to your area coordinator (Sue, Vic or Tricia).

The cool and wet weather in the early part of the season may have reduced the number of visits then and the very hot weather in July might have been too hot for some recorders! However if recorders can cope with the heat, it is worthwhile going out on a hot day to record. One recorder went out to a site on the eastern flank of Cleeve Common and recorded approximately 200 Dark Green Fritillary along with high numbers of other butterflies!

We keep a list of which sites were recorded and the key butterfly species recorded at each site for each year. We don't yet have totals for this year but last year 131 key sites were recorded including 10 being recorded for the first time.

We are still looking for recorders for the Forest of Dean area which is rich in key sites. Peter Hugo has been going to the Forest to record and has recorded at some new sites this year.

All butterfly records are useful whether from key sites, gardens or just when out for a walk. If not doing official key site recording, send records to Chris Wiltshire, our county butterfly recorder, using a Casual Butterfly Recording form downloadable from our branch website. Records can also be submitted using Irecord on a phone or on a computer.

WCBS: We have 4 new squares being recorded this year. All recorders have recorded in their squares, so that makes 43 squares being recorded by 32 recorders. In addition to these 43 squares recorded by BC members, there are also some squares recorded by BBS (Breeding Bird Survey) members.

Thank You: Thanks go to everyone who has carried out recording and sent in records.

5.8 Prestbury Hill reserve update (Trish Atkinson)

Butterflies: It has been an average year for butterflies. Some species having a poor year and others a good year. We are now seeing a few Adonis Blue and 9 were recorded in total on the transect this year. In fact Chalk hill, Common and Small Blues also did well.

Contractor Work: An area of bramble and scrub on the slopes of Happy Valley was cleared by contractors in October 2020. The contractors used heavy machinery, and as well as cutting the bramble, much of the turf was also removed leaving bare earth and arisings. We raked off the arisings from most of the area last winter. The west side wasn't affected too much and the regrowth is quite good but the east side has regrown with bramble, Clematis, Rose-bay willow herb and other undesirables. We are hoping that the cattle grazing this autumn might help control the regrowth.

Cattle: 20 Belted Galloway cattle from the Cleeve Common trust are now on the reserve. We don't yet know how long they will stay on the reserve but as there has been much grass growth this summer we are hoping they will stay on for quite a while. The cattle now have GPS collars so we have requested extra grazing in some areas and also exclusion zones in other areas. We will have to wait and see whether this has been effective.

Conservation work: The Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens have been clearing a huge area of Gorse on The Masts section. We had branch work parties last weekend which cleared some Hawthorn and Gorse on The Masts. We also had a corporate group through the Glorious Grasslands project who did a lot of clearing one day. Serena has been using a tree popper to pull up some of the many young Hawthorn bushes.

BftB Bumblebees: Richard Comont from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust visited the reserve on a hot day in July and found both BftB target Bumblebee species on Bill Smyllie, the Red-shanked Carder Bee (*Bombus ruderarius*) and Ruderal Bumblebee (*B. ruderatus*). This is quite exciting as he had found it difficult to find these species in The Cotswolds. He thinks that the existing management on the reserve is suiting them - lots of flowers available throughout the season in a matrix of medium-height open grassland with rougher/longer areas around scrub patches.

Heather Restoration: This has proved problematic as we have had little sign of Heather seed germinating after we have scattered Heather seed collected from the original small enclosure. However we have now found several small plants growing within the enclosure often under Gorse. We have grown on more than 100 small plants at home which we plan on planting out in a block this Autumn. We will put a net around the area to keep the rabbits off but it looks as if the rabbit population in the enclosure might be decreasing. We have also extended the original Heather enclosure to include some original Heather plants

Visitor Pressure: We get a lot of people going up and parking on the side of the road by the reserve. We find lots of discarded picnic rubbish, bottles and cans etc along with many nitric oxide cannisters. We do try to do litter picks whenever possible. We are grateful to one BC member who does a very thorough litter pick whenever he goes to the reserve. The problem seemed worse around May and early June.

5.9 Rough Bank Report (Sue Smith)

BC Staff: Lucy Morton, who had been employed by Butterfly Conservation and was helping on our reserves, left BC employment earlier this year. Since then we have been supported first by Kathy Meakin and Jen Gilbert in their roles for BftB. Overall responsibility was taken by Jenny Plackett, our South West Regional Conservation Officer; work on the reserve is now shared between Jenny and Jen Gilbert who has become the BC Cotswolds Landscape Officer.

Work Party Leader: Chris Wiltshire has decided to hand over the reins as work party leader, although he will continue to walk the transect and will remain on the Rough Bank Committee. Graeme Davis, who is fairly new to the area, has agreed to take on this task from January 2022. We are extremely grateful to Chris for all his efforts over the years since Rough Bank was first purchased in 2012.

Trees: A tree survey was carried out in the summer and various trees will need to be either reduced in size or removed. The contract has been given to T & T Howell Grounds and Tree Maintenance Ltd from Gloucester. It will be nine days' work and will cost £3,555; the work will be carried out over the next two months. This will be to carry out remedial tree surgery work to make safe trees identified in 2021 Ash dieback survey. Terry Fenton is also carrying out a fully comprehensive tree survey in the coming months.

Pheasants: There are still problems regarding the number of pheasants on Rough Bank and this is currently being investigated.

Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens: The Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens will be doing a considerable amount of scrub clearance on Great Myers over the winter of 2021/22.

Little Myers Hedge: The hedge between Little Myers and the Hancocks field will have the gaps filled with trees this winter which Jenny has managed to secure through some Council funding as part of ash dieback replanting.

Butterfly and Moth season: There was a bad start to the butterfly year but with some highlights during the summer. It was the third highest count since the reserve was purchased so it ended up being quite a good year. The number of moth species now stands at over 700.

Committee: The Rough Bank committee continue to hold two meetings a year to check on progress etc.

5.10 Forest of Dean Conservation Report (Simon Glover)

The Small Pearl bordered Fritillary has had a poor season. The linear Park has been the best with 6-8 flying in early June. Other sites all drew a blank apart from Brandricks where 2 males were eventually seen. A sharp contrast with 30 plus breeding colonies all over the Central forest 30 years ago.

David Green who has been financed by the Foresters Forest to survey for the last three years said the Linear Park was still the hotspot but the butterflies are ever more reliant on this one site. At least he managed to find a couple of egg-laying females. Despite the low numbers, the habitat here was

looking very promising in the spring. Last winter's grazing has improved conditions considerably within the fenced area and the bracken litter structure and violets were looking a lot better than seen in previous years. More recently the bracken has become dominant over the summer and needs managing this winter as it is reducing nectar areas.

The pigs have been fenced out from the best habitat and it is recovering from being rooted up. Although pigs are still a problem in the wider forest. I counted over thirty in one area recently, and that many can do a lot of damage. I have noticed that they also spend time below oak trees looking for acorns, just where the Silver Washed Fritillary caterpillars should be munching on violets. This maybe an unintended consequence of so many pigs?

The Dean butterflies and wildlife have had the luxury of a number of paid staff recently. Fifteen years ago we had the occasional visit by ecologists financed on a shoestring. Then suddenly millions became available through the Foresters Forest and European structure funds and GWT obtained grants. Now a lot of this finance is coming to an end with Foresters Forest winding down and Brexit having ended any continental financial support. We will continue with recording and making good use of the many metres of stock fencing to manipulate habitats in the favour of butterflies.

Back to the butterflies and Fox's Bridge area seems to be the current butterfly hot spot in the Forest with good numbers of Wood White, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper and Common Blue.