



Butterfly Conservation Gloucestershire Branch 'Members' Day' and Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 29 October 2022 at Christchurch, Abbeydale, Gloucester.

1) Welcome

There were 34 attendees at the meeting. Sue Smith, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Ros John, Helen Carver, Andrew Bishop, Simon Glover, Sue Dodd, David Elder, Karen Nicholls, David Nicholls, Ruth Woollen, Andrew Brown, Vic Polley and Steve French.

3) Minutes of the 2021 AGM

Full minutes with officer reports had been made available on the Download section of the Gloucestershire BC Branch website prior to the meeting and also emailed to branch members. There were no comments on the minutes of the last meeting and so they were adopted unanimously,

4) Matters Arising from the 2021 AGM Minutes

There were no matters arising.

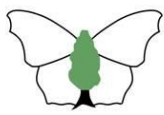
5) Reports from Branch Officers

- 5.1 Chairman's Report – Sue Smith
- 5.2 Treasurer's Report – Serena Meredith
- 5.3 Membership Report – Christine Blythe
- 5.4 Events Report - Christine Blythe
- 5.5 Butterfly Recorder's Report – Chris Wiltshire
- 5.6 Moth Officer's Report – Steve French read by Sue Smith
- 5.7 Cotswolds Landscape Officer Report – Jen Gilbert
- 5.8 Sites Monitoring and the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey – Tricia Atkinson
- 5.9 Bill Smyllie/The Masts Report – Tricia Atkinson
- 5.10 Rough Bank Report – Sue Smith
- 5.11 Forest Conservation Officer's Report - Simon Glover

Full reports are in Appendix 1 below.

6) Election of Officers

A number of changes are occurring this year. Sue Smith is retiring from the position of Chair. On behalf of the Branch Committee and all Branch members,



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Tricia Atkinson thanked Sue for her 20 years volunteering as chair for Glos Branch. Four Richard Lewington butterfly prints and flowers were presented to Sue.

As agreed by the Branch Committee, Tricia Atkinson will become the new Branch Chair.

Chris Tracey, Ruth Wollen, Peter Hugo and Sue Smith are all retiring from the Committee.

Proposal (i): Following co-option to the committee in the summer, Matthew Oates be confirmed as a full committee member. Proposed by Serena Meredith and Seconded by Chris Tracey. This was followed by a vote from members and duly elected.

Proposal (ii): Following agreement for Sue Thompson (new webmaster) to become an Associate Member in the summer, to be confirmed as a full committee member. Proposed by Rosie Wolley and Seconded by Mo Gardiner. This was followed by a vote from members and duly elected.

Proposal (iii): Propose Graeme Davis be confirmed as a full committee member (he is already a member of the Rough Bank committee and work party leader) Proposed by Guy Meredith and Seconded by Chris Wiltshire. This was followed by a vote from members and duly elected.

Proposal (iv): Chris Tracey, Ruth Wollen, Peter Hugo and Sue Smith to become Associate Members. Proposed by Tricia Atkinson and Seconded by Serena Meredith. This was followed by a vote from members and duly elected.

Proposal (v): Ken Newcombe to become an Associate Member (to help with mapping) Proposed by Tricia Atkinson and Seconded by John Coates. This was followed by a vote from members and duly elected.

Proposal (vi) To re-elect Serena Meredith to the Committee. Proposed by John Coates and seconded by Tricia Atkinson. This was followed by a vote from members and therefore duly re-elected.

7) Date of the Next AGM: 28 October 2023 (to be confirmed nearer the time)

8) Announcement of photographic competition winners.

Young Photographer - Gatekeeper by Flo Kirby (age 7)

My Garden Butterflies - Comma by Paul Sadley

Overseas Butterflies or Moths - Southern White Admiral by Pete Rodgers

UK Moths - Yellow-barred Longhorn by David Elder



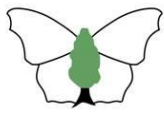
UK Butterflies and Overall Winner - Dingy Skipper by David Elder

A video set to music was run during the break of the photographs submitted for the photographic competition. Many thanks to Chris Tracey for organising this and to all the contributors of the photographs.

9. Speaker: Dan Hoare, Director of UK Conservation, Butterfly Conservation.

Dan outlined the crisis facing butterflies and moths in the UK with significant declines in the abundance and distribution of most UK species due to habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, decline in habitat quality and climate change. The response of species to these threats is complicated and mixed. Dan then outlined Butterfly Conservation's new 2021-2026 Strategy with 3 main goals:

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



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APPENDIX 1: Reports of Officers of Butterfly Conservation Gloucestershire Branch for the AGM, on Saturday 29 October 2022, 2 pm

5.1 Chair's Report for the 2022 AGM

It seems like a long time since we all managed to meet together face-to-face and a lot of water has passed under the bridge since then. We have a new monarch and lost several prime ministers!

Of course, butterflies and moths are oblivious to all this! They carry on in their own inimitable way with their continued ups and downs. From a weather perspective, this year has been very different from others with the very high temperatures and although that may not have affected the insects in a big way this year, the consequences with lack of larval food plants, could be very noticeable on the populations next year. We will have to wait and see.

We have, again, started attending events this year, well organised by Christine Blythe and Rosie Woolley. If you are interested in helping next year, please do contact events@gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk They will be very pleased to hear from you.

There will be a number of changes to the committee at this AGM. Some long-standing members will be stepping down and new members have come forward but more on this later when we come to the Election of Officers.

We were delighted that Jen Gilbert was able to continue working in Gloucestershire following the end of the Back from the Brink project. She was appointed Cotswold Landscape Officer until the end of March 2023 and has been particularly helpful with work on the reserves and other areas within the county. We would very much like this post to continue after that time.

BC nationally is going through a bit of a metamorphosis and many meetings have been held on zoom regarding Threatened Species, Communications and Wild Spaces to name but a few. There has been a lot more communication between Head Office and Chairs of Branches. We hope this will go some way towards revitalising activities both nationally and locally within branches. Everyone's aim is, of course, to engage with more people in order to better help all our butterflies and moths.

I feel privileged to have worked on behalf of BC with members of other wildlife organisations in the county and also with BC staff. I thank them all for their co-operation.

I have had an amazing 20 years with the Gloucestershire Branch Committee but all good things must come to an end! I would like to thank all the branch members, the many recorders who go out week after week to record butterflies and moths, to those who have helped at events and work parties for their unstinting efforts and especially to the branch committee members who have supported me and helped me over the years. I really couldn't have achieved anything without everyone's help. I hope that some of what has been achieved over the last 20 years has benefited the butterflies and moths – after all that is what it is all about.

I'm sure the branch will go from strength to strength under the able leadership of Tricia Atkinson and all the other members of the committee.

Best wishes to you all.

Sue Smith, October 2022



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5.2 Treasurer's report for the year ended 31 March 2022

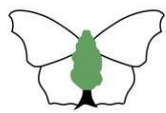
The following report is based on the main society's audited accounts as it relates to income attributable to and expenditure by the Gloucestershire Branch. As such the figures presented here now are purely for your information and will be considered for adoption at the national AGM on 12th November.

Income fell by £1335.98 due to lower individual donations and no grant receipts. However corporate donations (£180) resumed after the relaxation of covid-19 restrictions on events and the tax refund on the donation given under Gift Aid in 2020/21 added a welcome £375, both of which helped to offset this. I would therefore encourage anyone who is a tax payer to consider this method of donation that comes without any cost to yourself. If anyone would like more information on this, I am happy to provide it.

Expenditure increased considerably due in the main to the large donation to Head Office towards the Cotswold Landscape project. The branch has benefitted greatly from this due the engagement of Jen Gilbert as the local officer. Secondly, in order that volunteers can use power tools on behalf of the society, they are required to undergo refresher training every 5 years. Qualified first aiders must also be present at events and work parties and refreshers are needed every 3 years, hence that increased expenditure. The cost of newsletter production and postage went back to pre-pandemic levels as the printing of paper copies resumed. Due to an error made by an inexperienced finance officer at Head Office, some expenses were deducted twice in the Gloucestershire cashbook, but I am assured that this will be correct in the current year – I will certainly ensure that the branch does not lose out because of this mistake.

There was therefore an excess of payments over receipts for the year of £12,951.04 (when adjusting for irrecoverable VAT) resulting in a cashbook value at 31 March 2022 of £15462.01 – still a very healthy balance.

Serena Meredith
12 October 2022



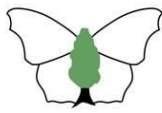
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Gloucestershire Branch, Butterfly Conservation.
Accounts for the year 2021/22 – 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

	2020/21	2021/22		Notes
Opening cashbook value	£29690.61		£28413.05	
Receipts (income)	£	£		
Subscriptions	4314.00	4314.00		
Donations - individual (inc. Gift Aid)	1526.00	688.25		
Donations – corporate		180.00		
Tax refunds - gift aid donations		375.00		1
Postage and packing on walks booklets	23.30	29.80		
Sales - items bought in (ID Charts)	263.33	18.50		
Sales - Walks Booklets	283.00	310.00		
Sales - items donated		51.00		
Grants (Bathurst Estate PBF project)	1052.00			
Service Contracts		159.10		2
Total receipts	7461.63	6125.65		
Total receipts and opening balance	37152.24		34538.70	
Payments (expenditure)				
Transfers to Head Office				
Butterfly Effect Project	3000.00			
Cotswold Landscape Project		15000.00		3
Other expenditure				
Training - conservation volunteers	126.00	890.00		4
Consultants – conservation		890.00		5
Field equipment (tools, materials, fuel, plants)	11.00	39.04		
Events - conservation (including workshops)	4859.50			6
Reserve maintenance	473.11	1551.83		7
Branch newsletter - printing & postage	10.00			
Events - fundraising costs (prizes)		18.46		
Events – promotional	-17.60	20.25		
Cost of sales (calc)	33.89	10.09		
Stationery & other office consumables	73.86	31.06		8
Postage (including for walks booklets sales)	59.95	145.23		9
Committee expenses (room hire & refreshments)	41.99			9
AGM costs (room hire, photocopying, gifts)	7.45			
Computer equipment	120.04	144.39		
Insurance		269.34		10
Expenditure overstated				
Total Payments	8739.19	19009.69		
Irrecoverable VAT		67.00	19076.69	
Cashbook value at 31 March 2022	28413.05		15462.01	

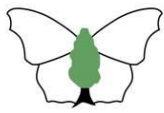
Notes:

1. Tax refund from 2020/21 donation
2. Charge for First Aid training provided to others organisations
- 3 One off contribution
4. First aid and brush cutter training



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5. Payment to contractor for work on Ravensgate Common
6. Reserve costs now administered by Head Office
7. Resumption of paper copies increased printing and postage costs back to previous levels
8. Reduction in new member letters sent
9. Zoom licence for virtual meetings and AGM Members day- no room hire cost
10. Balancing figure to agree with audited accounts – to be adjusted in the current year



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5.4 Events report

Seeing elephant hawkmoths, learning about butterflies with a quiz trail and face painting are some of the activities which families have enjoyed at the events attended by the Branch throughout Gloucestershire over the summer.

Our first event of the season was the Friends of the Earth's Eco-Event at Tewkesbury Town Hall on Easter Saturday where the children enjoyed seeing some live moths and decorating butterfly face masks. We joined other conservation organisations at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Robinswood Hill in June which was hugely popular with local families.

As part of the Stroud Festival of Nature families enjoyed a butterfly and plant identification walk at Yew Tree Farm. In July we were at Stroud Big Nature Festival in the Park talking to people about the threats to butterflies and moths including climate change, intensive farming and loss of habitat. Our showcase garden at Prinknash Abbey was the venue for two events: the first in May and the second in July to promote the start of the Big Butterfly Count 2022. A sale of garden plants, to provide caterpillar food and butterfly nectar, did well.

In August we joined the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway's Go Wild at Winchcombe festival engaging with families enjoying a ride on the trains. Unfortunately, the very hot weather and fire risk meant that only diesel trains could operate so passenger numbers were lower than anticipated.

Sadly our plans to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the creation of the first National Nature Reserve with Natural England at Cranham Common were put on hold following the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

We will be looking at what went well and lessons learnt this year before planning our events programme for 2023.

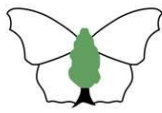
By sharing our knowledge and enthusiasm for butterflies and moths with over 600 people this summer we hope to help inspire a new generation to connect with nature providing a wealth of benefits to both people and wildlife.

Thank you to all the partner organisations that we have worked with at the events, the volunteers who have shared their passion for butterflies and moths and to everyone who supported us by joining in the fun.

Christine Blythe,
Summer 2022

5.5 Butterfly Recorder's Report

2022 will be remembered for its remarkable weather. The winter was another relatively dry and mild one with barely any snow or hard frosts but despite this the season got off to a slow start because of generally cool conditions. In the first part of April some transect walkers were not able to find suitable conditions for doing a transect. From late May things did warm up and dry up. In July we had little rain but record breaking temperatures and while we basked in the mid thirties parts of Britain exceeded 40°C. This resulted in over 700 wildfires breaking out across the country. Not good for wildlife.



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It became obvious that some butterflies changed their behaviour under these conditions. Some were flying early then roosting during the hottest part of the day and becoming active again late in the day. Red Admirals were noted flying into the shade of trees and roosting under branches out of the sun while below Meadow Browns were just sitting on shaded vegetation. By the end of July there were three fresh Small Tortoiseshells “hibernating” or perhaps aestivating in my garage although they had gone by the end of September.

My usual searches for Purple Hairstreaks in late afternoon from about 6.30pm to 7.45pm in warm and sunny conditions proved fruitless, not a single one was seen in places where I would be sure to find them in previous years. In retrospect I think it was just too hot and they may have been sitting tight in the canopy.

In the beginning of August on a hot and sunny day I was walking fields around Prescott and I encountered some Purple Hairstreaks at about 3.00pm flying around a couple of majestic oak trees but rather than fly in the sun they were flying in the north and east sides in the shade in a sector between 10° and 110°.

The dry conditions became drought and it was officially declared a drought in some areas later in the summer but the effects were noticeable from early summer especially on Cotswold limestone grassland sites with thin, well-drained soils and often steep south facing slopes like Rough Bank reserve. As summer progressed more plants began to wilt, this is not good for any larvae feeding on those plants and the adult butterflies often reject them and will not lay eggs on them. This was observed with Adonis not laying on wilted Horseshoe Vetch a couple of years ago and the populations in Gloucestershire have not yet recovered from it although this year the plants wilted after the adults had laid their eggs in May. By mid-August when the next generation was emerging we had some rain which may have been enough to save the situation with some fresh growth for the Adonis to lay on.

I was predicting that there might be second generation Dingy Skipper – there were a few, and Duke of Burgundy - I have only been told about one Duke. Although not seen in Gloucestershire I went down to the Lizard in Cornwall in the first week of October and found lots of fresh third generation Wall and some fresh Clouded yellows on a dull and windy day. In general overall numbers were down with few Whites in the spring although they picked up later in the year, few Admirals and Tortoiseshells etc. even the reliable Silver-washed Fritillary numbers were down. Pearl-bordered Fritillaries did well. Dingy Skipper and Large Blue had a good season as did Common Blue and Brown Argus in their second generations. Holly Blues were widespread, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper did well but not much else did. The season ended early. Will we pay the price for this hot dry summer next year?

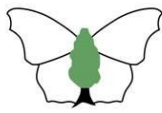
Chris Wiltshire, County Recorder.

27th October 2022

5.6 Moth Report for AGM October 2022

Weather Trends and Moth Numbers

Another year of challenging weather conditions, with Spring yo-yoing between wet and windy and clear, cold skies – both unfavourable for moths! Summer proved to be much better although many recorders are reporting that although the variation of species was good, total moth numbers are significantly lower than recent years. The extreme heatwave provoked several early emergences of “autumn” moths – Red Underwing, Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing and Straw Underwing being notable. This was certainly the case in my garden. It's too early to draw conclusions about the effect of the extreme hot weather and drought conditions and we will have to wait and see if this has any effect on next year's moth numbers.



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It has been an excellent season for migrant moths and as I write this report in late October, I am still seeing reports of species arriving from the continent. Vestal, Rush Veneer and Rusty-Dot Pearl have all been reported in great abundance as well as rarer species such as *Palpita vitrealis*, Pearly Underwing and Scarce Bordered Straw. I was lucky enough to have a Striped Hawk-moth in my home moth trap on 21 August and there was at least one other in the county during that month.

County Moth Events

28th March – Spring Moth Event. *Hartpury Orchard Centre.*

Target moth was Barred Tooth-striped. Unfortunately, we failed to locate it here but more than made up for that with a good selection of scarcities. These included Small Eggar, Northern Drab, *Acleris Umbrana* and *Depressaria albipunctella*

21st May – National Moth Night at *Bathurst Estate*

Quite a cool night but never-the-less, a good variety of moths were seen. Over 70 species with several new moths for the site and 2km tetrad, including Devon Capet. A good crowd assembled for the morning reveal, and we were blessed with a dry night and rain free morning.

12th June – National Moth Night (2). *Hartpury Orchard Centre.*

I ran a second event for the West of the River Severn as this has always been a popular location. Particularly as the hosts provide breakfast! Very well attended, both on the night and for the reveal. Plenty of showy moths, including Elephant and Poplar Hawk-moths, Blotched Emerald, Ghost Moth and Lilac Beauty. We even had a Hornet Moth visit the pheromone lure trap over breakfast!

12th August – Summer Moth Event. *Bromesberrow Estate*

On a very warm night in August the moth group met on this excellent site in the north of the County close to the Worcestershire border. Over 130 species were recorded including a possible first for County: Square-Spot Dart (well, the last one is from an old report from 1866!). A number of other notable species including *Etainia decentella* which is a first County record for west of the Severn.

Zoom Meetings

We had a number of Zoom meetings during the winter months for the Gloucestershire Moth Group. I was very pleased again with the turnout, with up to 40 people on each session.

Topics covered were:

County Moth Maps with Guy Meredith

Micro Moth Field Signs with Ben Smart

How to Identify a Moth with Peter Cranswick

Group Moth ID Session

I expect to continue with these sessions again this winter.

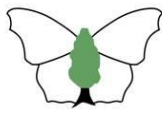
Facebook Group

The Gloucestershire Moths Facebook Group continues to grow in popularity. We now have 386 members and it's very pleasing to see younger folk now joining the group.

With so many new enthusiasts studying moths, it's important to ensure that everyone records what they see and that these vital records reach the County Recorder. It's a busy group in the summer months and it's easy for me to get bogged down attempting to ID newcomer's moths. However, I'm well supported by experienced members and it's very rewarding to be encouraging folk to contribute to conservation by recording their sightings. There is, of course, always work to be done in persuading casual moth-ers to submit records but I do feel we have made significant progress with this.

Loan Trap Scheme

I finally managed to locate all the moth trapping equipment distributed by Peter Hugo over the previous two years and this has now been PAT tested. One trap was written off, but the others are now available for loan (contact me for details). These have also been



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supplemented by two new 20W actinic “bucket” traps which are currently being trialled with great success by two new moth recorders in the county.

University Moth Challenge

I am once again assisting Hartpury University and College with this initiative which links young people with the National Moth Recording Scheme.

Assisted by several County Moth trappers we have recorded over 300 moth species at a variety of sites across the campus. Students and lecturers are also recording moths at their home locations and these records will also be added to the total submitted.

This year we will also be including records of early stages and leaf mines.

There are also several participants taking part in this from the Royal Agricultural College and I have been approached by South Gloucestershire and Stroud College who want to include moth recording in a unit they are running next year. I will be meeting one of the lecturers during the autumn to discuss a moth trap loan.

Steve French 22/10/22

5.7 Cotswolds Landscape Officer Report

Since taking on this role last September, following the end of Back from the Brink, I have been kept very busy with work on our two reserves but also on other species work on sites around the county. It has been quite the change from Community Engagement Officer but has been extremely enjoyable especially being able to work more closely with the branch and be more involved with habitat work on the ground.

Rough Bank

As work parties across our two reserves are organised and led by our brilliant volunteers, my remit on the reserves involves dealing with day-to-day issues, as well as grazing and bringing in contractors and other volunteer groups to carry out some of the larger/more specialist jobs.

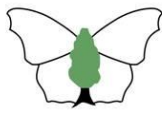
Following scrub clearance by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens along the western boundary of Great Myers, a new boundary fence was able to be installed by contractors back in February. Further scrub removal work will take place in this area this year to avoid further encroachment onto the grassland while at the same time keeping much of it intact as an important habitat in its own right.

To help make moving the cattle easier for the National Trust, improvements to the cattle handling area in Great Myers, (new sturdy fencing and a gravel track), were also completed in March.

Following a tree safety survey earlier this year, contractors completed the tree work identified as most pressing while less urgent work is being planned for this autumn/winter.

The issue of the ruts within the access strip is still ongoing, however quotes to fill the ruts are being gathered and we are currently awaiting permission to carry out this work.

The National Trust's Belted Galloway cattle have spent much of the summer on the Myers fields and are imminently about to be moved onto Rough Bank itself for the autumn/winter grazing period. Ordinarily this would extend up to Christmas, however as last year's grazing produced the shortest turf height since BC has owned the reserve and the lack of growth this year, fewer cows will be put on and for a shorter length of time. The National Trust are also



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able to use the NoFence grazing system, whereby the cows wear GPS collars, to section off first the eastern and then the western end to focus the grazing in these areas where it is most needed.

Prestbury Hill

Following the gorse clearance on The Masts last winter by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, a large area of willowherb has grown up in its place. Unfortunately, this was unable to be cut down before going to seed, due to a combination of nesting birds and then very hot weather. With the help of the Gloucester Vale Conservation Volunteers we were however able to brushcut and pull an adjacent area of willowherb on the grassland and within the heather enclosure.

To help deal with some of the scrub on site we had a visit from a contractor in August who carried out a stem-boring trial for us on a stand of hawthorn scrub on The Masts. This technique involves drilling a hole into the stem and applying neat glyphosate. The scrub then dies off over a few weeks and then can be cut down and removed. This seems to have been very successful and the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens will be coming to clear the area for us later this season. More stem-boring is planned for next year to help control scrub encroachment on other parts of the reserve.

Grazing on the reserve is currently underway although this year we have had to go elsewhere to find cattle. Unfortunately, our usual graziers, Cleeve Common informed us earlier in the year that they would no longer be able to graze the reserve for us due to needing the cattle back on the common. We have therefore sourced grazing this year from a neighbouring farmer who has been able to put approx. 30 cattle on for us which has been a great help. Plans for 2023 grazing are still in progress.

I was also able to get involved with an event at Prestbury this year. Back in July I joined Nicole Daw (Community Engagement Officer for Cleeve Common) to lead a family walk at Cleeve Common and The Masts reserve, linking in with the Big Butterfly Count. Ten families attended and enjoyed bug hunting, butterfly spotting, a go at a Big Butterfly Count and making willow butterflies.

Work for the Marsh Fritillary

In addition to work on the two reserves I am also involved in wider landscape work for some of our rarest species. This has included continuing with work that was started for the Marsh Fritillary during Back from the Brink at a privately owned site not far from the main colony at Strawberry Banks.

Back in January we organised a work party to help get the grassland back into good condition for the butterfly to colonise. Branch volunteers spent a day raking out the thick dead thatch, while the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens brushcut and raked an adjacent smaller area of grassland. Not only did this remove a huge amount of dead grass that was swamping the other plants within the sward but it also meant the cattle, planned to come on in the summer, would be able to graze the new season's growth.

Working with the National Trust, we were able to follow up this work by grazing the site with their Belted Galloway cattle. Three cattle grazed for 4 weeks during summer and did a fantastic job. They grazed around the entire site creating a variety of sward lengths but most importantly getting on top of the longest areas so that Devil's-bit Scabious rosettes (the Marsh Fritillary food plant) are now visible. Turf height measurements were taken by myself and Chris Wiltshire in April and followed up in August showed a marked reduction in vegetation height.



Elsewhere on the site, heavily grazed paddocks where I collected and scattered Devil's-bit Scabious seed last year and contractors planted out plug plants have also had the grazing relaxed to allow the vegetation to recover. These areas are already looking in better condition for butterflies in general and should hopefully help increase the amount of potential Marsh Fritillary habitat on the site.

Several visits were made to look for Marsh Fritillary adults at this site but none were seen although at least one was seen on two occasions by a member of the public and the landowner. Larval web searches carried out in August also drew a blank, however with the very promising results of this year's grazing we hope to start seeing breeding take place in future years.

Large Blue work at Rodborough Common

To help the National Trust continue to monitor the success of the reintroduction carried out by Back from the Brink in 2019, we restarted the volunteer Large Blue monitoring at Rodborough Common. Following a previously devised route, a group of volunteers walked the site counting the number of Large Blues seen during the flight period. A top count of 18 was seen by myself and Graeme Davis on 14th June.

In addition to monitoring the Large Blues, Sue Smith and I also set up general butterfly monitoring of some of the grazing compartments to help track the impacts of the grazing. A group of volunteers visited their allotted compartment during the butterfly season submitting their records to iRecord.

Duke of Burgundy work/future project development

Duke of Burgundy surveys were organised and carried out at approx. 15 sites by myself and a number of volunteers, covering known Duke sites but also known "deteriorating" sites (identified as such by previous Key Site survey work). These help us track how the butterfly is faring on these sites and identify where follow up advice/habitat work is needed.

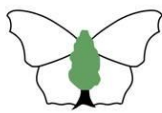
Having been invited to advise on scrub removal work at a privately owned Duke of Burgundy site, myself and Chris Wiltshire visited to map out the work required. A report was sent to the landowner and this work is set to be carried out by contractors this winter, hopefully securing a declining but very important Duke of Burgundy colony on the site.

I am now in the process of putting together a funding bid to develop a project based on the Duke of Burgundy. The aim is to provide both advice and help with on the ground habitat management to landowners across a network of Duke of Burgundy sites.

Jen Gilbert, October 2022

5.8 Sites monitoring and WCBS update

Last year, a total of 150 butterfly key sites were recorded, the most ever recorded in a year! 278 key sites have been recorded in all 13 years since our key sites monitoring project started. Records are still being received for this year so it is not yet clear how many will be recorded this year. There may be fewer as several recorders are finding it difficult to do key site recording either because of health and mobility problems or because they are busy



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doing transects or have other commitments. However a new recorder surveyed several old historic sites which was useful.

The branch has completed 43 Wider Countryside Butterfly Surveys by 30 recorders this year which is about the same as last year when Glos Branch recorded the second highest number of WCBS squares per branch in the country. Several recorders pulled out of recording their squares this year but new recorders have been found to take on most of the squares. Good numbers were recorded on several squares with 526 being recorded in July on square SP2221 at Gawcombe. However low numbers were recorded on several other squares.

Thanks to all recorders whether recording for transects, key sites, Wider Countryside or just casual records. All records are useful.

Tricia Atkinson, Oct 2022

5.9 Bill Smyllie /The Masts Report

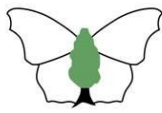
It has been a good year for butterflies on both sections of the reserve. Duke of Burgundy did well with a peak count of 23 on Bill Smyllie transect and 51 on a timed count, with the majority recorded in the southern part of the site. Adonis Blue are now getting established both on The Masts and Bill Smyllie which is great news as they weren't there a couple of years ago. Small Blue, Green Hairstreak and Small Heath also remained in good numbers and there was just one sighting of one Wall Brown.

On the moth front, a mating pair of Narrow-bordered Bee hawkmoths were seen on The Masts section and photographic evidence was produced.

We had three organized walks on the reserve. In May we met a group of a walkers as part of the Winchcombe Walking Festival and were able to show them key butterfly species. Also in May our walk for the branch had good numbers attending and warm sunny weather so good numbers of butterflies were seen. Finally, we arranged a walk in July for families of children attending a local ballet school which was well-attended. We feel it is important to try to enthuse young people about butterflies as they are our future volunteers and custodians of the land.

We held three work party days on Bill Smyllie a few weeks ago. Unfortunately, they were poorly attended with only about 6 volunteers including us most days. We are not sure how to increase these numbers. One suggestion is to email all members living in Cheltenham before the work parties. Possibly our members just assume we get lots of volunteers and they are not needed. Another suggestion is to arrange more corporate volunteer days. Jen is at present following up a contact to try to arrange one. If anyone knows a firm which might be interested in helping then please do let us know.

Our next branch work parties on the reserve will be on The Masts section in February. All the dates are in Antennae and on the branch website. Our work parties are really enjoyable and apart from the benefits of working outdoors with others you know that you are making a real difference to the reserve and helping the butterflies in the future. There will be a work party on Nottingham hill next Sunday 6th November so if you are interested then do have a word with Serena or John or myself.



5.10 Rough Bank Report for 2022 AGM

The winter grazing produced the shortest April turf height during BC's ownership of the site at just 3.0 cm. Following a dry winter and dry spring there was not a lot of growth but enough to give the third shortest July turf height of 10.2 cm. The dry weather became more extreme during July with some plants wilting, especially on the south-facing slope, this has resulted in fewer flowers for nectar and reduced quantities of nectar in the flowers that are there. It has since been declared the driest July since 1836 and with record-breaking temperatures in the mid-thirties here (the highest for UK was 40.3°). The impact of these conditions may be felt next year when there could be a reduction in the population of some species.

The butterfly numbers have generally been good on this site and are on track for giving us the fourth highest overall count in eleven years. So what has done well and what has not? A full report can be seen below.

Work parties have continued over the winter months ably led by Graeme Davis, supported by Guy Meredith, Chris Wiltshire and Jen Gilbert – our Cotswold Landscape Officer. Jen has been very helpful in organising various contracts throughout the year for tree work and fencing etc. No doubt she will mention these in her report.

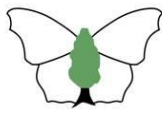
There were two guided walks carried out during the summer – one for day flying moths, led by Guy Meredith, and one by Jen Gilbert for butterflies. We also enjoyed a visit in May when various friends and volunteers were able to meet with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) from Head Office. This was partly to celebrate 10-year ownership of the site and an opportunity for the SLT to see what goes on at ground level.

The Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens cleared a lot of scrub to enable installation of a new fence in Great Myers by Tom and Trevor Howells.

- Thistle topping was again carried out by the National Trust.
- The new hedges are coming along really well
- Fewer cattle will be on Rough Bank this winter and the level of grazing will be carefully monitored
- The fence around the bund has been temporarily removed for the cattle to graze
- Fallen trees have again been a feature of the reserve – this seems to be an annual occurrence
- Invasive bramble is a continual problem and one with which volunteers find difficult to manage. More strimmer sessions would be useful.

Two management committee meetings have again been held during the year. Work parties have been arranged for this forthcoming winter period.

More than 730 moth species have now been recorded on the reserve since 2012. Highlights in 2022 were two additional national rarities, the first of which was found whilst searching one morning in May for one of the known rarities to show to visiting BC HQ staff that afternoon. By coincidence, the other was found in the daytime in July by someone searching for another of the site's known rarities to photograph. Six nationally rare species have now been found on the reserve, and 44 nationally scarce species. Taking advantage



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of the hottest nights in July, an overnight trapping session on 18th recorded a total of 194 species including a second specimen of the new rarity found in May. The temperature had only dropped to 22degC when packing up after 04:00.

Sue Smith, Jen Gilbert, Guy Meredith
October 2022

Rough Bank butterfly notes to end of July 2022

The winter grazing produced the shortest April turf height during BC's ownership of the site at just 3.0 cm. Following a dry winter and dry spring there was not a lot of growth but enough to give the third shortest July turf height of 10.2 cm. The dry weather became more extreme during July with some plants wilting, especially on the south-facing slope, this has resulted in fewer flowers for nectar and reduced quantities of nectar in the flowers that are there. It has since been declared the driest July since 1836 and with record-breaking temperatures in the mid-thirties here (the highest for UK was 40.3°). The impact of these conditions may be felt next year when there could be a reduction in the population of some species.

The butterfly numbers have generally been good on this site and are on track for giving us the fourth highest overall count in eleven years. So what has done well and what has not? The highs and lows are shown below.

Small Skipper has produced the highest count in the eleven years and there are probably more to come. In contrast the **Essex Skipper** has had its third worst year with just two seen to date compared with none last year and one in 2020. **Dingy Skipper** has had its second-best year and there may be a second generation in the pipeline across Gloucestershire. **Brimstone** numbers, based on first brood only, has produced the fifth best equal with 2014 but this may improve as the new generation are starting to appear. In general it has done better in recent years, possibly due to planting Buckthorns in the Access Strip hedge, with larvae found on these in most years. **Orange-tip** has had its worst year equal with 2020, only two seen. Other whites are starting another generation but their numbers were unusually low in the first generation.

Green Hairstreak sixth equal with last year's count of just two but this is average. **White-letter Hairstreak** has not been seen since the great count of 12 in 2018. This is due to the elms on the reserve having succumbed to Dutch elm disease and many of those in adjacent woodland having been felled. **Small Copper** just one seen to date but more likely with another generation to come. **Small Blue** has had its second-best year and there may be a few second generation adults to emerge. **Brown Argus** has had its second-worst year but there may be some second generation adults to emerge. **Common Blue** has also had its second-worst year but reasonable numbers were starting to emerge in the last week of July so this could improve. **Chalk Hill Blue** has had its third best year and although there are more to come, this position is unlikely to improve. **Adonis** is currently having its worst year and even though there is another generation to emerge in a week or so I do not think this position will change. **Holly Blue** only two have been seen so far but that puts it third equal with 2013, 2017 and 2019

Red Admiral is in its second-worst year but this may improve. **Painted Lady** is in the midst of a good season, second only to 2019. **Small Tortoiseshell** is seventh equal with 2018, a situation unlikely to change even though more are still to emerge. **Peacock** is having a bad time in its second-worst year which could possibly improve with more to emerge yet. **Comma** is definitely having a bad time, its worst year with none seen yet, but this could change. **Dark Green Fritillary** is in its fourth-best year, the last year with a higher count was 2014. **Silver-washed Fritillary** is surprisingly having its worst season but they are still on the wing and it is entirely possible that it could move up one place.



Speckled Wood is having its worst year with only two seen but more are expected over the next few weeks which may bump this up one place. **Marbled White** had an entirely unremarkable average year. **Gatekeeper** is in mid-season and has already beaten all records with its best year. **Meadow Brown** is currently in its fourth best season but with plenty still on the wing it is quite possible that it could move up to its third best. **Ringlet** is another species which had an entirely unremarkable average year. **Small Heath** is never abundant at Rough Bank but it is in its fifth-best year with the possibility that more to emerge may move it up a place.

While some species have done very well it is by no means a great year and 2022 may be remembered for all the wrong reasons! Should we revise our management?

Chris Wiltshire
County Recorder

2nd August 2022

5.11 Forest Conservation Officer's Report

It seems that many former woodland edge type habitats in the Dean have been shaded out by bracken which is now much taller and more invasive than seen in previous decades. This has had a knock on effect for species such as the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary which relies on low density bracken within the violets, which are the caterpillar foodplant. Only 5 individuals seen at one place this year on the Linear Park.

The species has been gradually declining in the Dean from 30 plus colonies, down to three for the last five years or so, holding on in just a few pockets and now down to one. I searched 9 former sites this season and found no adults flying.

Conservation grazing is here now but getting the grazing and timings right has proved difficult despite best efforts by Foresters Forest and Forestry England.

Wood Whites at Foxes Bridge have been great, possibly one of the largest colonies in the country.

Marbled Whites in new sites and good numbers.

Writing this on the 23rd October there are still two small Coppers flying in the garden.

Simon Glover
23 October 2022