



Butterfly
Conservation

**Butterfly Conservation Gloucestershire Branch 'Members' Day' and Annual
General Meeting held on Saturday 28th October 2023 at Christchurch,
Abbeydale, Gloucester.**

1) Welcome

There were 42 attendees at the meeting. Tricia Atkinson, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Mathew Oates, Rosie Woolley, Jenny Bowen-Davis, Simon Glover, Sue Dodd, Karen Nicholls, David Nicholls, Ruth Woollen, Vic Polley and Steve French.

3) Minutes of the 2022 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, proposed by Serena Meredith and seconded by Peter McGeachan.

4) Matters Arising from the 2022 AGM Minutes

There were no matters arising.

5) Reports from Branch Officers

- 5.1 Chairman's Report – Tricia Atkinson
- 5.2 Treasurer's Report – Serena Meredith
- 5.3 Membership Report – Christine Blythe
- 5.4 Events Report - Christine Blythe and Rosie Woolley
- 5.5 Butterfly Recorder's Report – Chris Wiltshire
- 5.6 Moth Conservation Coordinator's Report – Steve French
- 5.7 Cotswolds Landscape Officer Report – Jen Gilbert
- 5.8 Bill Smyllie/The Masts Report – Tricia Atkinson
- 5.9 Rough Bank Report – Serena Meredith, Graeme Davis, Guy Meredith and Jen Gilbert
- 5.10 Forest Conservation Officer's Report - Simon Glover

Full reports (See Appendix 1 below) will be made available on the branch website after the meeting.



6) Election of Officers

A number of changes are occurring this year:

Alan Sumnall has been appointed to the role of Head of Conservation for Wales and Northern Ireland. As a member of BC staff now, Alan is unable to continue serving on the Branch Committee.

Simon Glover has resigned from the main Committee and so a replacement to represent the Forest of Dean is required.

Ken Cservenka is also retiring from the main Committee.

The following elections to the Committee were agreed:

Proposal (i): Following co-option to the committee earlier in the year Ken Newcombe be confirmed as a full committee member. Proposed by Sue Smith and Seconded by Peter McGeachan. This was followed by a vote from members and duly elected.

Proposal (ii): To elect Seb Buckton as a full committee member to assist with moths. Proposed by Guy Meredith and Seconded by Peter Hugo. This was followed by a vote from members and duly elected.

Proposal (iii) To re-elect Vic Polley, Steve French, John Coates and Tricia Atkinson to the Committee. Proposed by Serena Meredith and Seconded by Chris Wiltshire. This was followed by a vote from members and therefore duly re-elected.

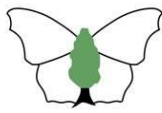
Proposal (iv): To re-elect Karen and David Nicholls, Ian Grange, Andrew Daw and Matt Darbon as Associate Members. Proposed by John Coates and Seconded by Sue Smith. This was followed by a vote from members and duly elected.

Proposal (v) Ken Cservenka and Simon Glover to be elected as Associate Members of the Committee. Proposed by Serena Meredith and Seconded by Chris Tracey. This was followed by a vote from members and duly elected.

There are now two free places on the Committee with a representative for the Forest of Dean particularly needed.

7) Any Other Business

Jen Gilbert gave an update on the Marsh Fritillary translocation project. The Back from the Brink project looked at possible receptor sites including Crickley Hill. However, the doner population at Strawberry Banks crashed and so it was not possible to take any individuals from there. In the meantime, Marsh Fritillaries have been recorded at a number of new sites in the county including the Prestbury Hill reserve and the site adjacent to Strawberry Banks is to be managed for them. Hence, it is hoped that the species can make gains without any translocations although it remains a possible action if a suitable receptor site is identified. It is a



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boom and bust butterfly subject to a parasite so it is possible that numbers may decline at sites like Prestbury Hill.

Events- Bob Smith reported that the Stroud Festival in the Park is being discontinued so will not be included on our events programme for 2024.

8) Date of the Next AGM: Saturday 26th October 2024 (to be confirmed nearer the time)

Announcement of photographic competition winners.

A video of the photographs submitted for the photographic competition was shown. Many thanks to Chris Tracey for organising this, Simon Smith who acted as judge and to all the contributors of the photographs. The winners are:

Garden Butterflies or Moths - David Elder "Gatekeeper on Shasta Daisy"

Overseas Butterflies or Moths - Graeme Davis "Long-tailed Blue"

UK Moths - David Elder "Mother Shipton"

UK Butterflies and Overall winner - Paul Sadley "Pair of Orange Tips"

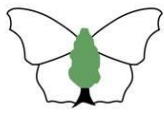
Judge's special commendation for an Under-16 entrant: Rowan Allen 'Common Blue'.

Following the refreshment break,

Simon Smith spoke on Nature Recovery in The Cotswolds

Simon Smith is the Nature Recovery Lead at the Cotswolds National Landscape, formerly the Cotswold AONB. Simon talked about nature recovery including the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan which considers the species and habitats of the Cotswolds, and what we can all do to help them flourish and spread across the landscape.

The meeting ended at 4.50pm



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APPENDIX 1: Reports of Officers of Butterfly Conservation Gloucestershire Branch for the AGM, on Saturday 28 October 2023 at 2 pm

5.1 Chairman's Report

This has been my first year as chairman of the branch after taking over from Sue Smith last year. I have to thank the committee for their support this year in particular Serena Meredith for all her help during the year and organizing this meeting and also for Sue who has always been at the other end of the phone to talk over any problems.

Last Autumn, the branch were involved with meetings with Head Office to see how we can support their new national strategy which comprises of three goals, goal 1 to halve the number of UK's threatened species of butterfly and moth, goal 2 to improve the condition of 100 of the most important landscapes for butterflies and moths and goal 3 to create 100,000 wild spaces. Regarding goal 2, the Cotswolds is one of the landscapes and the Forest of Dean is part of another landscape, a bigger network of woodland in South Wales and the South Midlands.

There were delays introducing Wild Spaces to the public and the dedicated Wild Spaces portal didn't actually get launched until September. However, Karen and David Nicholls took on the role of Wild Spaces coordinators for the branch and have been busy all the year communicating with various people and organisations to offer advice. They have advised Cheltenham Borough Council on how to improve one of their Green Spaces at Griffiths Ave in Cheltenham and also how to link their green spaces within the town.

We are very pleased that Jen Gilbert had her contract extended and stays on as Cotswold Landscape Officer. She manages both of our reserves and is also developing a project to improve the habitat for Duke of Burgundy butterflies throughout the landscape. More about this in her report. It makes such a difference to have the member of staff responsible for managing the reserves living locally.

During the winter we held our usual conservation work parties on our reserves and other important sites. However often there were few volunteers attending. If we want to manage sites effectively and see the butterflies and moths in the summer, we need to do the conservation work in the winter.

In the spring we held a talk on Wild Spaces on Zoom, followed by a talk on Purple Emperors by our resident expert, Matthew Oates. This was held in a hall at Minchinhampton and as you can imagine was informative and light-hearted. We are hoping to hold further talks for members this coming spring. We would like to go back to pre-covid times when we held one in the Stroud area and one in Shurdington. However, as many members prefer to attend talks in the comfort of their own home, we hope also to hold one on Zoom. Please let us know if you have any suggestions for talks or and also for venues in the Stroud area.

Butterflies usually start flying in April but as it was quite cold and unsettled in April and the first half of May this year, many species were late to emerge. However, we were rewarded with lovely weather at the end of May and June so the butterflies came out in force then. July and August were cool and showery which made recording difficult. However, when the sun was shining in between the showers there seemed to be good numbers flying. You have probably read in Antennae, Chris Wiltshire's article listing how each species of butterfly fared this summer. You will hear an update on this in his butterfly report.

The weather also impacted the events planned for this year. It was wet for several of the events planned to engage the public which led to one being postponed. More on this in the events report.



All the field trips went ahead although some were curtailed when a heavy shower intervened. The field trips planned on the Bathurst Estate to see Pearl-bordered Fritillaries went ahead but unfortunately the butterflies were late emerging because of the late spring so none were seen. However, Matthew took participants to see an overwintering Purple Emperor larva he had found on the estate.

Education and engagement is an important part of the work we do in the branch. We need to get more people involved to engage with butterflies and moths and help in the fight to conserve them. Ideally, we need young people to take an interest. Many of our events are aimed at families to inspire both the children and their parents. Having live moths is usually a big attraction as people aren't used to seeing the colourful and interesting range of moths we have in the county. We have a few volunteers bringing moths to events but would like a few more volunteers to help with this.

This year we co-opted Ken Newcombe onto the committee and he has taken on the role of education coordinator. He along with Rosie Woolley and Bob Smith attended a climate change conference at Rendcomb College to engage the pupils of the effect of climate change on our butterflies and moths. He is now working with a group of Duke of Edinburgh pupils from Cheltenham College for their Silver award. He has also given a talk at a primary school with Chris Tracey who brought along moths from her moth trap and has developed educational activities to use at our events. He would like to give more butterfly talks in both primary and secondary schools and also to adult groups such as U3A.

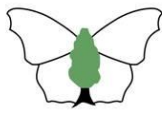
Well we are now into Autumn, the clocks go back this evening so we'll have dark evenings from now on. However our work for butterflies and moths continues throughout the winter. We'll be busy entering butterfly and moth records and planning next year's events. Most importantly we will be holding many work parties on our reserves and other sites. We need to find a way of getting more volunteers to help. We are thinking of emailing all members who live in the Cheltenham area just before our work parties on Prestbury reserve in February to ask for volunteers to come along.

We have a work party on Nottingham Hill, also known as Longwood Common, next Sunday, 5th November. It is a big site with lots of encroaching scrub and wild clematis. We only have one conservation work party each year so we need to do as much as we can on that day. Please come along if you are able or encourage others to come. They don't need to be BC members to help. We have had to change the date that was given in printed copies of Antennae. It gives Saturday 4th Nov but after it had been printed we realized that Nov 4th was the date of the national AGM so we had to move it to the Sunday. The date is correct in the electronic version emailed to members and of course on the website. If you are interested in helping at any of our work parties or know someone who might be able to help, you could contact Serena who coordinates the work parties at Prestbury and other sites around Cheltenham and Graeme Davis leads the work parties on Rough Bank.

Tricia Atkinson

5.2 Treasurer's report for the year ended 31 March 2023

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 4th November.



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The branch has a cashbook balance of £21232.12 at the year end, an increase of £5770.11 over the year. Some of this is accounted for by the transfer of £500 from the remaining budget from the Butterfly Effect to be used for publicity purposes and the correction of an overcharge of £269.34 from 2021/22. Income was increased through additional donations, events charges and sales of ID charts and plants, all of which benefitted from the resumption of in person meetings and events.

Expenditure decreased as only one edition of Antennae was paid for in the year (there are normally 2), no training or consultants fees were payable and HO failed to charge us for tool and equipment insurance. Despite the additional cost of the in person AGM room hire, materials for craft activities and mothing purchases - new traps and lures, our overall expenditure reduced by around £2680.

Since the year end, the branch has made a donation towards a new project being put together by Jen Gilbert, BCs Cotswold Landscape Officer, for which she is obtaining a grant from the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme in order to benefit The Duke of Burgundy butterfly.

Serena Meredith
Gloucestershire Branch Treasurer



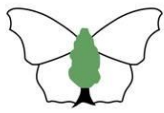
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GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH ACCOUNTS AND BALANCE SHEET

For year 2022/23 - 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

INCOME (RECEIPTS)	2021/22	2022/23	Notes	EXPENDITURE (PAYMENTS)	2021/22	2022/23	Notes
	£				£	£	
Subscriptions	4314.00	4308.00		Transfers			
Donations - individual (inc. Gift Aid)	688.25	952.49		Contribution to Cotswold Landscape project	15000.00		
Donations - corporate	180.00	110.00		From HO to Branch		500.00	4
Tax refunds - gift aid donations	375.00	125.00	1	<u>Other expenditure</u>			
Postage and packing on walks booklets	29.80	31.45		Travel and subsistence for volunteers		21.46	
Sales - items bought in (ID Charts, plants)	18.50	149.50		Training - conservation volunteers	890.00		5
Sales - Walks Booklets	310.00	354.50		Consultants - conservation	890.00		6
Events charges		251.00	2	Field equipment (tools, materials, fuel, plants)	39.04	471.11	7
Sales - items donated	51.00	278.28	2	Events - conservation (inc workshops)		85.00	
Raffle Income		41.00		Branch newsletter - printing & postage	1551.83	508.00	8
Service contracts	159.10		3	Events - promotional	18.46	129.27	9
				Cost of sales (calc)	20.25	90.05	
				Stationery & other office consumables	10.09	8.33	
				Postage (including for walks booklets sales)	31.06	-230.98	10
				Committee expenses (Zoom licence)	145.23	149.88	
				AGM costs (room hire, photocopying, gifts)		98.99	11
				Insurance	144.39		12
				Expenditure overstated	269.34		13
TOTAL RECEIPTS	6125.65	6601.22		TOTAL PAYMENTS	4009.69	1331.11	
Adjusted cashbook value @ 1 April 2022		15462.01		Notes:			
Add				1. Tax refund from 2021/22 donation			
Receipts		6601.22		2. In person events restarted - ID day and other events with plant sales			
HO transfer from Butterfly Effect Education project		500.00	4	3. Charge for First Aid training provided to others organisations not repeated			
Less				4. One off contribution - unused from project due to Covid			
Payments		-1331.11		5. First aid and brushcutter training not repeated			
Cashbook value @ 31 March 2023		21232.12		6. Payment to contractor for work on Ravensgate Common not repeated			
				7. Mainly moth trap loan scheme, pheromone lures and first aid kit replacements			
				8. Only one edition paid for in the year			
				9. Materials for promotional events			
				10. Includes previous years overcharge now corrected see 13			
				11. Resumption of in person meeting - hall hire			
				12. Not charged in error by HO due to personnel changes			
				13. Previous years overcharge now corrected see 10			



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5.3 Membership Report

Head Office continue to manage both the membership database and communications with members.

The total number of members in Gloucestershire Branch in October 2022 was 733 households. There has been an increase to 785 households and 1063 individuals as of September 2023.

Nationally Butterfly Conservation has 29,879 member households (40,722 individuals). There has been a number of membership special offers during the year, including half price membership during the Big Butterfly Count, which saw approximately 500 new joiners nationally. Some of these were likely to be new members to Gloucestershire Branch.

Whilst there have been some leavers from the Branch each month, the overall balance has been positive. It is hoped that our programme of family events, guided walks, moth trapping evenings and talks, as well as all of the special habitats within the county for butterflies and moths, all contribute to maintaining and growing our Branch membership.

Christine Blythe
Membership Secretary

5.4 Events report

The aim of our programme of events is to connect families with nature and inspire them to do something to help and support the conservation of butterflies and moths. Unfortunately, 2023 was a very mixed year due to the changeable weather.

The year started out bright and sunny and we had a fantastic day in May on Minchinhampton Common joining Stroud Valleys Partnership and several other organisations celebrating Marking Day. Marking Day is when the cows are released onto the Common for the summer grazing. The combination of a lovely setting and beer from the pub gave the event a relaxed and enjoyable feel and ensured good attendance.

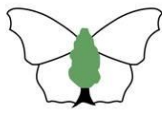
The second event on Cleeve Common in early June was attended by several families who enjoyed a butterfly and mini-beast safari followed by a picnic lunch admiring the superb view from the hilltop, face painting, crafts and a quiz trail.

We joined Woodchester Primary School for their summer fair in June when children and their families enjoyed looking at a net of live moths, taking part in craft activities and playing a large blue butterfly version of the Snakes and Ladders game.

Our return to Prinknash Abbey Gardens was quiet but those people that attended were very interested and engaged.

In July Stroud Festival of Nature was, in contrast, very busy. The people we spoke to were equally enthusiastic, with some wonderful examples of what they had done in their own gardens for wildlife.

Then in late July the heavens opened and our Big Butterfly Count event with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, on Crickley Hill, had to be postponed.



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The August weather was no better and visitor numbers were definitely down at Painswick Rococo Garden, although we persevered through the rain laying the foundations of a new bug hotel. We plan to return next year in some, hopefully, better weather.

We had a beautiful sunny day for our re-scheduled event at Crickley Hill and several families enjoyed a day of guided butterfly walks, our quiz trail, live moths and crafts. Whilst it was a bit late in the season for many butterflies, a few Chalkhill Blues were still flying. One little girl came beautifully dressed as a butterfly.

Our main challenge seems to be the promotion of our events and this will be something we look to improve upon in 2024.

Thank you so much to all of our event partners and volunteers without whose time, knowledge and enthusiasm these events could not happen. Thank you also to all those families who joined us and enjoyed a wild day out in nature.

Christine Blythe and Rosie Woolley,
Events Co-ordinators

5.5 Butterfly Recorder's Report

In order to keep this short the report in issue 68 of Antennae covered the year up to the second half of August and for the majority of species there is nothing more to add. In the first half of October we had some unusually warm days with temperatures exceeding 20°C and this enabled me to extend the transect season beyond the standard 26 weeks to week 28. In fact on October 9th the start temperature on the Stinchcombe Hill A transect was 22.2°C and I recorded one of each Brown Argus, Comma and Speckled Wood and ten Red Admirals.

Updates for the few species which continued on the wing after August are as follows:

The second generation of **Large** and **Small Whites** continued quite late and in good numbers however the second emergence of **Brimstones** continued although few have been seen compared with other years.

As expected the number of **Small Coppers** did pick up at the end of the season and even with a few probable third generation individuals around.

Brown Argus did indeed have a good second generation which continued into October.

Chalk Hill and **Adonis Blues** both continued until the end of September. The former only managed average numbers and the Adonis still in very low numbers, not showing signs of recovery from the droughts.

Red Admiral is undoubtedly the star of the show, I vote it Butterfly of the Year! Matthew's article in Antennae covers this species but as I write this I have seen two of them on the patio in my garden so they have not quite finished yet.

Comma continued in good numbers, and on Rough Bank transect I had 12 of them on a patch of brambles about 2m x 3m all feeding on over-ripe blackberries.

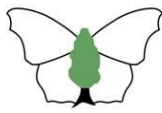
Small Heath continued in reasonable numbers this year up to the end of September.

Chris Wiltshire, County Butterfly Recorder.

5.6 Moth Report

It was quite possibly the worst start to the moth-recording year for over a decade. Winter and spring were very cold and wet and even when the daytime temperatures improved the nights seemed to be a continuous run of clear skies and single figure thermometer readings. On a

Minutes from Butterfly Conservation Gloucestershire Branch AGM, 28 October 2023
and associated Reports



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personal note, it was my worst half year since I began moth trapping in 2014 and other recorders were saying much the same. Weather apart, speculation was also rife about last year's ultra-hot weather and if this had affected larval numbers, or if it was down to other environmental factors. The turn-around came in June when we flipped to higher-than-normal temperatures and suddenly there was an uplift in moths on the wing. But of course, that was short-lived as the rest of the summer proved to be rather "patchy" to say the least. We are currently coming towards the end of the migrant moth window. Overall, there appear to have been fewer records than 2022 but some species have had a very good year, including Dewick's Plusia, Delicate and three separate records of Radford's Flame Shoulder.

There was also an exceptional record of a Spiny Hook-tip (*Watonsalla uncinula*), caught by Seb Buckton in his garden moth-trap in Stroud on 7th October. Not only is this a new moth for the county but it is also a first for mainland Britain.

I was able to purchase a number of Barred – tooth striped pheromone lures from a supplier in the Netherlands as I was keen to find out if we could find more breeding sites for this Threatened Species. There are currently only two spots in the north of the county where it is recorded. I thought that if I could identify locations for the foodplant (wild privet) between the two known sites, I may be able to "join the dots" between both colonies and establish the existence of further populations. This turned out to be a sound strategy, with two more colonies located.

I also distributed another ten pheromone lures to other recorders across the county who targeted local wild privet populations, but all were unsuccessful in locating Barred Tooth-striped. We will continue with this survey next year but in the meantime, thought should be given to if and how we protect this species in the colonies already located.

The summer has been very busy with field meetings and events including at Bromesberrow Estate with the Gloucestershire Invertebrate Group and at Hartbury Orchard Centre to support international moth week.

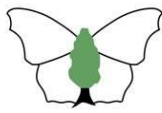
Following a request from the Estate manager at Elmore Court to support them in their re-wilding project, I arranged for a number of moth trapping sessions to take place throughout this year. There has been no moth recording here before and it appears that this a species-rich location that should be monitored closely.

We were also approached by the Community Parks Officer for Cheltenham Borough Council as they wanted baseline surveys at Griffiths Ave, one of the council's green spaces. I organised a small team of moth recorders to carry out some surveys at this previously unrecorded site.

We carried out moth trapping for an educational event for the Youth Climate Group at Westonbirt Arboretum as part of a conference about climate change and environmental careers.

I ran some moth traps at Highnam school for the School Nature Quiz Team who had just reached the finals of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's School Quiz. The children were absolutely thrilled to see so many moths and plenty of "hawk-moth on nose" selfies were taken that morning! Good to see young people engaging with nature in this way. We need to do more of this kind of thing.

I've been helping new moth recorders with the process of recording and submitting data and am very happy to continue to offer this service to all new moth recorders.



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The Gloucestershire Moths Facebook Group continues to grow in popularity and now has 440 members and it's very pleasing to see more younger people joining the group.

All moth trapping equipment has been out on loan this year and I have had requests for moth traps that I have been unable to fulfil. I plan to make 4 new moth traps for 2024.

Requests for moth recording support continue to come in at a rate I am struggling to keep up with. Many of these are from local government bodies or landowners carrying out re-wilding projects. Whilst we do have a team of enthusiastic volunteers who are willing to help with these requests, next year we will need to set some parameters around the type of support we offer and how BC can benefit from offering this support.

Steve French
Moth conservation coordinator

5.7 Cotswolds Landscape Officer Report

It has been another busy but enjoyable year with a big focus this year on developing a landscape scale Duke of Burgundy project while also continuing to work closely with the branch to look after our two reserves.

Reserves work

Rough Bank

Work to get the ruts filled in along the access strip has finally been completed after much deliberation over the best course of action and a long delay acquiring permission to carry out the work. This has been done to make the access onto the reserve safer since the deep ruts were often obscured by the grass growth. Although it currently looks very bare this will no doubt re-vegetate quickly and will be back to normal by next spring.

Further tree work is planned for this winter and quotes are being obtained following a recent tree safety survey. This included the removal of a number of dead and dying ash (due to ash dieback) along the bottom of the slope and crown reduction of a large beech tree.

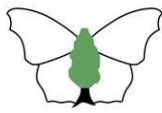
Plans for this year's grazing was organised with the National Trust and the cows are now on the far western end of the bank. As per last year, the aim is to use the NoFence GPS collar system to better target the grazing to areas that need it the most.

The Rough Bank Committee meeting was held recently to plan this autumn/winter's work parties.

Prestbury Hill

Following last year's stem-boring trial on The Masts, the same contractor returned to carry out the work on another stand of scrub, this time on the Bill Smyllie part of the reserve. 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.

Grazing on the reserve began back in August using cattle from the same local farmer as in 2022. They were moved off temporarily this week for TB testing but all being well will be back on this weekend for a couple more weeks while the weather is still good before being taken off.



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Another joint family fun day event was held with Cleeve Common in June. Families joined us for a walk around the common and The Masts reserve looking for butterflies and other insects, finishing back at our stall where our event volunteers were ready with a variety of fun activities. Picnic blankets were also laid out for families to enjoy a picnic on what was a very lovely sunny day.

A site meeting was held in September to plan this year's work parties. Plans are in place for the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens to help out with several of the tasks.

Work for the Marsh Fritillary

Work to encourage the Marsh Fritillary to colonise a privately owned site not far from Strawberry Banks has continued. The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens brush cut a large area of bramble and scrub to better connect two patches of grassland back in February while plans for grazing and further brush cutting with the Wardens this autumn/winter are in progress. Turf height measurements were taken again by myself and Chris Wiltshire in April and followed up in September to help guide the plan for the grazing. Sadly, no Marsh Fritillary were seen on site this year and no larval webs found but the restoration is still in progress so we keep our fingers crossed!

Turf height measurements were also taken at another privately owned site currently being restored with the help of the National Trust and their Belted Galloway cattle. Results are very promising and Devil's-bit Scabious is already spreading across the site. Working with the National Trust and the landowner it is hoped this could have potential to support a Marsh Fritillary population in the future.

Duke of Burgundy work

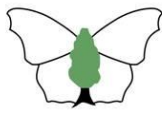
Earlier this year we put together a successful bid to the FiPL (Farming in Protected Landscapes) grant programme for funding to develop a landscape scale project for the Duke of Burgundy. Much of my time has since been spent on this project, making contact with and meeting a number of private landowners, carrying out timed counts and habitat assessments (with the help of a large number of volunteers!), identifying habitat management required on each site and writing reports back to landowners.

The next step (currently ongoing) is to put together a new larger funding bid in order to support some of the management interventions needed such as scrub removal and the installation of fencing and water troughs to support grazing. As grazing is needed on almost all sites, discussions are also in progress with the National Trust to see how they can support the project and provide grazing with their Belted Galloway cattle. Alongside this, plans to carry out some initial scrub removal on two sites this winter with the help of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and Gloucester Vale Conservation Volunteers are underway.

In addition, advice on managing for the Duke of Burgundy has also been provided at another two sites with plans to revisit in the spring to carry out surveys for the butterfly.

Jen Gilbert
Cotswolds Landscape Officer

5.8 Bill Smyllie /The Masts Report



Butterfly Conservation

Jen has already included some of the conservation work which has been going on on the reserve so I won't repeat that.

The butterflies have had a good year. The Duke of Burgundy has done well again this year with 50 recorded on a timed count on Bill Smyllie. Some are also recorded on The Masts part of the reserve but not as many as on the main Bill Smyllie part.

Marsh Fritillary has now become established on Bill Smyllie. This is a good news story. There were a few sightings of odd ones 3 years ago. Since then, their numbers have grown each year. We don't know if they appeared naturally during a warm spring or whether someone introduced them. We also don't know if their parasite is present. They have also been seen on The Masts and other surrounding sites although not in such good numbers as on Bill Smyllie. We were advised initially to try to keep quiet about their presence so that the butterfly could get established without the pressure from too many photographers and visitors.

Adonis Blue has also become established on both sections of the reserve so in late May you can visit the reserve and see Adonis Blue, Duke of Burgundy and Marsh Fritillary along with Green Hairstreak, Small Heath and lots of Small Blue.

As previously mentioned, in order to maintain this wonderful reserve and its butterflies we need more volunteers at our work parties to control invading scrub and Gorse.

Tricia Atkinson
Prestbury Hill reserve Contact

5.9 Rough Bank Report

Volunteer work parties and activities

Volunteer work parties held since November 2022 numbered 9 scheduled, with 3 additional brush cutter sessions and 2 ragwort pulls with 19 different volunteers helping out, with an average of 8 attending. Lots of bramble has been removed using a mix of brush cutting and the new hand-held slashers. These made the job much faster and easier.

A cutting was made through the scrub at the far end of the bank to create our 'Duke of Burgundy' highway linking the reserve with the valley at Dillay farm and onto Snows Farm Nature Reserve. It's hoped that Dukes may use this to colonise Rough Bank and maybe if we are lucky Grizzled Skippers.

A number of individual 'wardening' sessions to remove of some tree guards from the hedge between the Myers fields and to uproot hemp agrimony taking advantage of the scrub clearance done on work parties earlier in the year on the steep bank beneath the power lines were completed as well.

A special thank you must go to Ron Keasley who turned out on some of the scheduled days and 3 additional times with his brush cutter to attack the encroaching bramble in some very steep and uneven locations and to Chris W and Dave S for treating the subsequent regrowth with a view to killing it.

The hedgerow replanting done as part of the ash dieback replanting scheme in January 2022 has been of very limited success due to the vagaries of the weather (too hot and dry during the establishment growing season).



Butterfly Conservation

Chris Wiltshire took the usual twice yearly turf height measurements in spring and summer to check the condition of the grassland. While they were well within the requirements for the site the spring values were low and summer values high showing the biggest difference in spring/summer values since measurements began.

Field meetings

One field meeting was held on an overcast, cool and at times very wet day in July. Despite these conditions, 121 butterflies of 15 species were seen including the target of Chalk Hill Blue but not the Dark Green Fritillary. A handful of moths were also seen. A report was included in the Autumn edition of Antennae so will not be repeated here.

Species highlights

The moth count now stands at 753 species recorded since 2012, with a total of 53 species rated as nationally rare or scarce. The latest rarity was found by Guy only this week - an adult *Lyonetia prunifoliella*, a micro moth who's larvae mine the leaves of blackthorn.

Serena Meredith, Graeme Davis, Guy Meredith and Jen Gilbert

5.10 Forest Conservation Officer's Report

The cold Spring meant the SPBF emergence was about a week later than normal.

Maximum sighting was of 6 SPB Fritillary on the 13th June by Dave Green our ecologist. The other sightings were in low numbers totaling only a further 8 records by four people. They seemed to have dispersed immediately, like last year.

We have only one breeding area left which is on the Linear Park. Brandricks Green and the Rising Sun pub areas have had no records for two years. The decline seems relentless from 40 breeding sites 30 years ago.

The Forestry England Green Team of volunteers have been valiantly clearing bracken and encouraging violet growth in the fenced grazing compartments. The bracken is difficult to keep under control and more vigorous than it used to be in former years.

In contrast the Wood White has had a fantastic year and is by far the most common white butterfly in the Foxes Bridge and Cinderford Linear Park area in May and June. On top of the Foxes Bridge spoil area there is a carpet of Birds Foot Trefoil which promises masses of Common Blue next year.

I am concerned about the declining numbers of Silver Washed Fritillary in the Forest. I think this may be due to the large number of Boar which spend much time rootling around in the leaf litter and digging up the violets. We need to organise some research to see what is going on.

Simon Glover
Forest of Dean Contact