

As ever the **Branch AGM & Members Day** event on 22nd October 2011 was an occasion to enjoy a good get-together with like-minded people and to be thoroughly immersed in butterflies and moths for an afternoon.

The AGM followed its usual pattern with reports indicating that all was well with the Branch finances and that the four sub-committees were working effectively to organise and deliver activities within the Branch. In her report on the Reserves sub-committee Jenny Mallet took the opportunity to formally bid farewell to Lynn Fomison, who was presented with a beautiful ceramic plate carrying both butterflies, flowers and good wishes from members of main committee and others closely involved with the reserves. The plate was beautifully crafted by Lynn's successor Jayne Chapman.

At various points appeals were made for more people to be involved in the activities that help the branch to be a successful organisation. In particular we need a new Treasurer as Tessa Newell has completed a stint of almost six years. Someone living in the Winchester/ Eastleigh area would be preferable but not essential. Also Janet Jones gave up her position as Publicity Officer earlier this year and it would help the Branch greatly to have the expertise of someone with professional experience of publicity. In order to maximise the effectiveness of our attendance at events more helpers are needed. The Branch is pleased to welcome Paul Brock as Butterfly Recorder taking over when Linda Barker relinquishes here role at the end of this year. Thanks were given to all the Committee retirees including Cressida Wheelwright, and Penny Jeffreys was introduced as the new Branch Secretary.

It was not said on the day but getting involved in branch activities is not only very satisfying but also an excellent social and pleasurable pursuit too. Do think about skills you have that could benefit the branch.

A round-up about how butterflies and moths had fared in 2011 was given by Mervyn Grist & Tim Norriss. Mervyn used graphs and tables to illustrate both how sunny and dry the spring had been and how that splendid period for butterflies had been followed by rather poor summer weather. Mervyn's presentation also included a table showing in which stage each of our butterflies spend the winter. Mervyn suggested that those that overwintered as pupae and had thus emerged in April and May had done quite well in the conditions at that time. It seemed likely however that species that were larvae during that warm dry spell had possibly found that conditions of their larval foodplants were not ideal. The Branch website had provided Mervyn with a very useful insight into what members had been seeing and he gave his assessment of how various species had fared with two "losers" possibly being Common Blue and second brood Brown Argus.

Tim concentrated on just a small number of moth species that had done well in Hampshire during the year. His opening remark touched on migrants. The observation of a Death's-head Hawk-moth on Southsea beach had been one of the highlights of the good weather in September that brought many migrants to the south-west of England. He also mentioned the exceptional numbers of Rannoch Looper trapped in late May and early June. The

numbers of Small Marbled seen during the year were also unprecedented and resulted in the finding of its larvae in both Fleabane and Golden Samphire. However in the main he focused on resident species that had had a good year and showed the remarkable photos taken by Glynne Evans of the c. 5,600 moths he had caught in a single MV trap at Mottisfont on 16 March comprising mainly Small Quaker and Common Quaker. This led to Glynne being dubbed "Professor Quakermass". There was also a stunning picture (by Dave Green) of what can only be described as a "swarm" of *Adela reaumurella* in Harewood Forest on 25 April.

"Butterfly Conservation works" was the clear message in Dan Hoare's summary of how the Southeast Woodlands Project had been delivered and more importantly the benefits it had delivered even in the short term. In the main he spoke about the Tytherley Woods Project in our area. Most significant of these was the effect on Pearl-bordered Fritillary both with increases in populations on existing sites being achieved and colonisation of new areas where woodland management had taken place. Drab Looper, which as its name suggests just has to be a moth-ers moth, had benefited from hazel coppicing. And another beneficiary of the woodland work had been the beautiful day flying Argent and Sable. Dan concluded his talk by highlighting "Dukes on the Edge" the next major project in the Southeast region which would enable the promotion of conservation management work on both grasslands and woodlands. Dan appealed for members to get involved. Training events and other activities will be promoted on the branch web site.

If anyone was disappointed by Jeremy Thomas being forced to withdraw as a speaker then they were not heard to say so! It is hoped that Jeremy will be able to come next year instead. The gap on the programme was filled admirably, first by Sue Clarke of Wessex Environmental who gave a fascinating talk on the Mysteries of the Wood White, based on work that she & Dave Green had done over several years in various parts of the country.

She highlighted the mysteries that surround this species, mentioning both the unusual genetics of the species across Europe and the confusion that had occurred over the species in Ireland. She went on to focus on aspects of its courtship behaviour, showing video footage of the significant antennae tapping. She described the persistence of the males but emphasised that this rarely resulted in copulation. The studies undertaken, particularly the marked capture and release survey had yielded very important information about this small butterfly's strong capability to spread through a woodland, thus aiding conservation measures to improve it's favoured habitat of sheltered woodland rides. It was with great passion that Sue commended to those present the importance of just watching butterflies. She and Dave had learned a tremendous amount about Wood White by the observations they had made & she felt that discoveries about interesting behaviour of other species were just waiting to be found.

Andy Barker's talk on Climate change & Hampshire's butterfly fauna used information from Climatic Risk Atlas of European Butterflies. This can be

found at

http://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/documents/policy_documents/policy_meetings/BES_NE_Conference/Martin_Warren2.pdf

On the basis of this information, even at the lowest predicted rate of climate change, the situation for Hampshire looks quite optimistic. Whilst the county currently has 47 species, two of these might be lost by 2050 namely the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Orange Tip, but the climate in the county is likely to become favourable for migrants such as Large Tortoiseshell, Swallow-tail, possibly Black-veined White and even Scarce Swallowtail. One thing is certain and that is that the more northerly parts of the country are set to benefit from butterflies extending their range northwards as is already happening with the Comma.

It was interesting that the talks opened with Mervyn Grist describing the weather in 2011 and its effects on our butterflies, and later Andy Barker looking 50 years ahead on how butterflies might be affected if the climate changes as predicted. There is no escape from the significance of the effect of weather on butterflies and moths!

The results of the Photographic Competition are reported separately with images of the winning entries.

Report by Lynn Fomison and Tim Norriss