

Medlock & Tame Valley Conservation Association Newsletter



Spring/Summer 2014



**Welcome to the 2014
Spring edition of our
newsletter.**

Isn't it such a colourful time of the year after the winter! It's hard to be motivated to work around the grounds of Burlinson House in the winter and even the autumn when you are overwhelmed with leaves (and thus work!) but now Springtime is here, it unleashes a new sense of excitement with the rebirth of flowers, insects, birds and mammals. It's time to brush the dust off our night camera and start taking note of what lurks in the garden!

***“I go to the
woods because I
wish to live
deliberately...”***

Henry David Thoreau, Walden

...more inside

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Continued...

The work in the house is well underway with only the carpet in the committee room to be lifted; the skirting board and walls painted and the new carpet tiles laid. It will make a substantial, refreshing and much needed difference to the room!

The kitchen is well underway with the ceiling now painted and tiling undertaken as I write. Just the floor covering to put down and skirting and window frames to be fixed and then the transformation will be complete! We'll certainly be glad to see the finished result of all our hard work!

Some photographs submitted by Bryan Stringer of the tree planting in memory of Leonard Kidd at Dovestones Res. on 10/05/14. Leonard was a past Chairman of the MTVCA (see last newsletter for a fuller report).



Programme of Events 2014

Our programmes this year have been on a variety of subjects from amphibians and aquatic birds to sustainable and renewable energy.

A lot work of work has been put into the public event programmes and it is very sad to see so few of our members attending. We would like to have your feedback in case we are arranging events on an unsuitable evening of the week. If you would like to suggest specific items of interest to you for future events, we will endeavour to include these on our event list. If you cannot attend yourself please tell others about the events not only to increase numbers attending on the night, but to promote the work of MTVCA generally so that membership for future years can be secured.

Please provide us with your feedback.



Sponsor a bird box £25 – gift for family/friend

Five new woodcrete bird boxes in the grounds of Burlinson House have now been purchased and fixed to suitable trees. The boxes are warm and weatherproof during the winter, but cool in the summer for the chicks. This is due to the unique 'woodcrete' material used, (made from 75% wood and natural additives) to allow superb air-permeability. These boxes have been shown to consistently deliver higher occupancy rates than any other nest box and is backed up by a 25 year guarantee.

Each box costs around £25 and we are appealing for sponsors. 3 have already been sponsored and two are remaining. As a conservation group this is an important part of our work.

So shake out your money box and maybe even get together with a friend to sponsor a box! Become part of the history of our garden by sponsoring a box for 2014.

If you would like to take part in this little project, please let me know by reply email or 07989 147095.

Butterflies – an overview



Butterflies conjure up images of sunshine, the warmth and colour of flowery meadows, and summer gardens teeming with life. Moths are one of the most diverse group of insects on earth, ranging from spectacular Hawk-moths to small, intricately patterned Footman moths.

Sadly, four butterflies and over 60 moths became extinct during the last century. Three-quarters of British butterflies are in decline and many moths are also facing an uncertain future.

The 56 species in Britain and Ireland are under threat today from unprecedented environmental change. Butterflies and moths have been recognised by the Government as indicators of biodiversity. Their fragility makes them quick to react to change so their struggle to survive is a serious warning about our environment.

Habitats have been destroyed on a

massive scale, and now patterns of climate and weather are shifting unpredictably in response to pollution of the atmosphere but the disappearance of these beautiful creatures is more serious than just a loss of colour in the countryside.

Conserving butterflies will improve our whole environment for wildlife and enrich the lives of people now and in the future.

Why butterflies and moths are important

There are many reasons why butterflies and moths are important, both in their own right but also as quality of life indicators. The following are the main reasons for conserving butterflies and moths in the UK and around the world.

Intrinsic value

Butterflies and moths are intrinsically valuable and are worthy of conservation in their own right. Butterflies and moths are part of Life on Earth and an important component of its rich biodiversity. They have been around for at least 50 million years and probably first evolved some 150 million years ago.

Butterflies and moths are a highly diverse group comprising over 250,000 species and make up around one quarter of all named species. Butterflies are flagship species for conservation in general, and in particular for invertebrates.

Aesthetic value

Butterflies and moths are part of our natural heritage and have been studied for over 300 years. Butterflies and moths are beautiful. Many are iconic and popular.

People like butterflies

There are many references to butterflies and moths in literature, from the Bible through Shakespeare to modern day literature, and from poetry to musical lyrics.

Butterflies are used by advertisers and illustrators the world over as way of indicating that something is environmentally friendly.

Butterflies are often portrayed as the

essence of nature or as representing freedom, beauty or peace.

Educational value

Butterflies and moths have fascinating life-cycles that are used in many countries to teach children about the natural world. The transformation from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis is one of the wonders of nature. Other educational aspects include the intricate wing patterns and iridescence, and as examples of insect migration.

Scientific value

Butterflies (and moths to a lesser extent) are an extremely important group of 'model' organisms used, for centuries, to investigate many areas of biological research, including such diverse fields as navigation, pest control, embryology, mimicry, evolution, genetics, population dynamics and biodiversity conservation.

The long history and popularity of butterfly study have provided a unique data resource on an insect group unmatched in geographical scale and timescale anywhere in the world. This has proved extremely important for scientific research on climate change.

Ecosystem value

Butterflies and moths are indicators of a healthy environment and healthy ecosystems. They indicate a wide range of other invertebrates, which comprise over two-thirds of all species. Areas rich in butterflies and moths are rich in other invertebrates. These collectively provide a wide range of environmental benefits, including pollination and natural pest control.

Moths and butterflies are an important element of the food chain and are prey for birds, bats and other insectivorous animals (for example, in Britain and Ireland, Blue Tits eat an estimated 50 billion moth caterpillars each year).

Butterflies and moths support a range of other predators and parasites, many of which are specific to individual species, or groups of species.

Butterflies have been widely used by ecologists as model organisms to study the impact of habitat loss and fragmentation, and climate change.

Health value

People enjoy seeing butterflies both around their homes and in the countryside.

Over 10,000 people record butterflies and moths in the UK alone, involving getting outside and walking considerable distances. Over 850 sites are monitored each week in the UK and collectively volunteers have walked the equivalent of the distance to the moon counting butterflies. Several hundreds of thousands of people garden for wildlife in the UK, many of them specifically for butterflies and moths.

Economic value

Thousands of people travel abroad each year looking for butterflies and

moths. Eco-tours bring valuable income to many European countries and developing countries around the world (e.g. the valley of the butterflies in Rhodes and the Monarch roost in Mexico). Every butterfly and moth has developed its own suite of chemicals to deter predators and parasites, find a mate, and overcome the chemical defences of its host plant. Each of these chemicals has a potential value and could be exploited economically. For example, powerful antibiotics have been found in the Meadow Brown, one of our commonest and most widespread species.



Our butterflies are in trouble.

Butterfly Conservation and its partners have produced three influential State of Britain's/UK's Butterflies reports, which summarise the key results and conservation implications of our recording and monitoring programmes.

The most recent was published in 2011 (with previous ones in 2007 and 2001).

"The State of the UK's Butterflies 2011" was published by Butterfly Conservation in collaboration with the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, and summarises the findings of over 10 years of intensive survey, monitoring and conservation effort. The report is based on millions of butterfly records collected by over ten thousand volunteers through the Butterflies for the New Millennium recording scheme and UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme.

The report highlights the continuing decline of the UK's butterflies, measured by the changes in their distribution and population levels over a 10-year period and the implications for conservation.

Key findings include:

Many butterflies have continued to decline: 72% of species decreased in abundance over 10 years and 54% decreased in distribution at the UK level. Overall three-quarters of UK butterflies showed a 10-year decrease in either their distribution or population levels.

For the first time, a significant decrease in the total numbers of wider countryside butterflies have been recorded. The abundance of these common, 'garden' butterflies dropped by 24% over 10 years. Many habitat specialist species have continued to decline too (e.g. High Brown Fritillary, Duke of Burgundy, Pearl-bordered Fritillary), placing them at greater risk of extinction. However, there is some positive news too. A few threatened species have increased or stabilised due to intensive conservation effort over the past decade (e.g. Heath Fritillary, Large Blue, Marsh Fritillary, Silver-studded Blue). A minority of wider countryside species have continued to spread northwards, almost certainly in response to climate change (e.g. Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood).

Overall the findings confirm that the 2010 European Union target to halt the loss of biodiversity was not met for the UK's butterflies. A huge challenge remains to achieve the same aim by 2020. However, highly focussed and targeted conservation work, carried out under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and 'higher level' agri-environment schemes, is starting to turn around the fortunes of some highly threatened species. This work must continue and, indeed, be scaled-up over the coming decade if we are to secure a future for the UK's butterflies.

The State of the UK's Butterflies 2011 also stresses the important role that butterfly recording and monitoring is playing in providing a sound evidence base for policy development and scientific research. UK Butterflies are probably the best monitored group of insects in the world and act as flagship species with wide popular appeal. Butterflies are also recognised as sensitive indicators of environmental change, including climate change, and of the health of the countryside.

The Painted Lady Butterfly and Humming-bird Hawk-moth are arriving from Africa and becoming increasingly common in the UK. To find out just how common, we need your help.

Butterfly Conservation is running a project to map the arrival, spread and departure of migrant insects online. 2011 was a poor year for the Painted Lady, but a very good one for Humming-bird Hawk-moths. View the results of 2013's online survey.

If you have seen either the Humming-bird Hawk-moth or the Painted Lady in Britain and Ireland since the start of 2014, please follow the links and help us track the impact of climate change on migration.

Painted Lady

The Painted Lady is a long-distance migrant, which causes the most spectacular butterfly migrations observed in Britain and Ireland. Each year, it spreads northwards from the desert fringes of North Africa, the Middle East, and central Asia, re-colonising mainland Europe and reaching Britain and Ireland. In some years it is an abundant butterfly, frequenting gardens and other flowery places in late summer.

This butterfly arrives in the UK from Africa every year. There was a mass migration into Britain and Ireland during 2009, but there have been relatively few here since then. What will this year bring?

Extracts from Butterfly Conservation & British Butterflies and UK Butterflies website

MTVCA Special Project 2015- Butterfly & Bee Garden

If you have read the previous article you will know that our butterflies as well as our bees are in trouble. As a conservation group it is we need to do something to help this situation. We are therefore pleased to share with you our new outdoor project for 2015!

At the side of our HQ the 'side garden' is now well overgrown. It was envisaged some years ago to develop this into a flat garden area but it has recently been agreed that it would be a lovely site for a butterfly & bee garden. As well as the land at the side of the house, we have the descending steps at the front of the house (which can barely be seen as there are so many large and unwieldy plants). Again we can include this into this special project.

Both areas will be planted with hundreds of wildflowers together with insect friendly shrubs.

As well as this, it is envisaged to put a small summer house at the centre of the site so that the butterflies/bees which use the sites can be identified and enjoyed.

WATCH THIS SPACE!





Committee members

Chairman: Bryan Stringer

Vice Chairman: Paul Lythgoe

Secretary: Susan Stewart
Tel: 07989147095

Treasurer: Jean Lythgoe

Newsletter: Susan Stewart
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Webmaster: Lee Borrell

Other committee members: Katie Caine

Membership Fees

- Individual Adult: £10.00 per annum
- Family: £15 per annum
- Concessionary: £7.50 per annum

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