

## **Reports submitted to the Devon Branch Butterfly Conservation AGM 20201**

### **Devon Branch Butterfly Conservation AGM 2021 Chairman's report**

#### 1. General

Whilst inevitably the impact of Covid 19 has constrained the activities of members of the Devon Branch of Butterfly Conservation (BC) in 2021, nevertheless much has been happening both on our local stage and on the national one. Our Chair of Council, Karen Goldie-Morrison, has recently emphasised BC's major focus on engaging the public's enjoyment of and involvement in their local butterflies and moths, and the widely reported interest in nature during lockdowns which was reflected in the massive increase in volunteers recording opportunistic sightings of butterflies and moths in 2020. This is all for the good and is reflected by the interesting and important observations made by Branch members in our Branch Newsletter. May I urge both our members and non- members alike to continue to share their experiences and sightings with BC and particularly with Emma Grice, the Newsletter Editor, and with the Devon County Butterfly and Moth Recorders, Pete Hurst and Barry Henwood respectively.

#### 2. Committee Meetings

The Committee has met on six occasions this year, including four meetings by Zoom kindly organised by Amy Walkden.

#### 3. Finance

In the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March the Branch was able to transfer £7,000 worth of funds to Head Office whilst also making a donation of £460 to the Blackdown Hills Fritillary Survey. Reduced activity at Little Breach and Lydford has meant less expenditure at these reserves. At the year end our balance stood at £4,911.93.

#### 4. Publicity

The Branch has not been represented at any events or shows this year as so many have sadly been cancelled. However, from the many enquiries we receive from other organisations asking if we might participate in their events planned in the future, we anticipate that BC will be represented at these.

An article about the work of BC appeared in the Devon Air Ambulance Magazine (Helipad) in July.

The Devon Branch BC programme of field events for 2021 was regrettably severely curtailed.

We need a new field events co-ordinator. Paul Butter has decided to retire from this post. If any member is interested in taking over from Paul, please contact me or any member of the Committee. We are indebted to Paul for having guided us on so many exciting trips to butterfly and moth haunts.

## 5. The Branch Newsletter, Website and Social Media

### 5.1 *The Newsletter*

Emma Grice is to be congratulated on producing three excellent editions of the Branch Newsletter this year in difficult circumstances. Rightly she has drawn our attention in these to the importance of BC working with other like-minded organisations, both local and national, such as Action on Climate in Teignbridge, Moor Meadows, Devon Wildlife Trust and Plantlife and furthermore the need to involve children in discovering the wonders of butterflies and moths.

### 5.2 *The Website*

We recognise that the website is a very important means of communicating with our members and are always open to suggestions as to how it may be improved.

### 5.3 *Social Media*

Amy Walkden reports a steady increase in the use of Facebook as a means of exchanging information concerning butterflies and moths and the work of other conservation organisations in Devon. The Committee is grateful to her for taking the initiative in this matter.

## 6. Reserves Conservation Work

### 6.1 *Little Breach*

Conservation work essential to keep bracken under control has been carried out successfully by Peter Beale, Rick Tillet and a local contractor. John Bell, formerly Reserve Officer, has generously given the Branch his comprehensive records of butterfly sightings made at the reserve over many years.

### 6.2 *Lydford Old Railway Reserve*

Less work than was done in 2020 has been completed in 2021 but Colin Sargent maintains excellent relations with adjoining landowners, including the National Trust, and works closely with them over various matters including the need to remove overhanging and fallen trees.

### 6.3 *The Conservation Adviser and Conservation Work Parties*

Peter Beale continues to advise occupiers of land on a regular basis about how they might improve their holdings for the benefit of lepidoptera and he provides the Committee with details of his inspections and recommendations assiduously at each of its meetings.

Whilst very few work parties took place over the winter of 2020/2021, Peter in his role as Work Party Adviser has organised no less than a dozen such parties for the forthcoming winter.

## 7. Additional Matters

### *7.1 Jim Braven*

The June 2021 Newsletter contained fulsome tributes by Colin Sargent and Pete Hurst in respect of Jim Braven following his death in April. The Committee were saddened to learn of his passing. Without doubt his passionate commitment to the conservation of the colony of Heath Fritillaries at Lydford has enabled their survival and BC owes him a considerable debt of gratitude for his achievement.

### *7.2 Roger Bristow Memorial Fund*

A sum of over £1,200 was raised by way of donations to the Devon Branch of BC following the death of Roger Bristow last year. The Committee is actively considering how the funds raised might be spent in a manner which both perpetuates the memory of Roger and contributes to a wider understanding of lepidoptera by the public.

### *7.3 The Committee and other colleagues*

On behalf of Branch Members I would like to thank the members of the Branch Committee for the invaluable work they do to contribute to the ongoing success of BC in Devon.

Other colleagues including Jenny Evans (Transect and WCBS Co-ordinator), Rick Tillet (Little Breach Reserve Officer), Amanda Hunter (IYA Web Team and Twitter) and Bill Potter (IYA Web Team member) do sterling work for our members and the Committee wishes to thank them for their efforts.

**Jonathan Aylett Chairman**

### **Treasurer's Report – year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

Below is the treasurer's annual report for the Devon Branch of Butterfly Conservation showing income and expenditure for the year 2020/21 and an explanation of some of the main points.

2020/21 was obviously a very unusual year due to the Coronavirus situation which affected the activities of the Branch. Due to lockdowns, social distancing and all the other restrictions, all normal Branch activities were cancelled which obviously affected the financial situation of the Branch and, of course, Head Office.

There were only 3 items of income during the year of which the main source was the Membership subscriptions which increased by £500 on the previous year to £6513. This being due, once again, to an increase in the Branch membership.

The only donations received during the year were those given in memory of Roger Bristow which totalled the sum of £1256. There were no corporate donations.

The only other source of income was grants for the Environmental Management Scheme for maintenance at the Little Breach BC reserve which totalled £176.66.

As expected, there were no sales income due to cancellations of events because of the pandemic.

Our main expenditure is usually the funding of various Butterfly Conservation projects of which the Branch is currently funding the Blackdown Hills Fritillaries project which is being funded jointly with the Somerset Branch. Due to the pandemic, the project has been temporarily deferred. However, to enable preparatory work to be carried out ready for when the project is restarted, the Branch has made a further donation of £460.

Reserve maintenance is the work carried out on the Butterfly Conservation reserves at Little Breach and Lydford by contractors. The combined expenditure on these reserves of £905 were only about half of the previous year again due to coronavirus restrictions.

There were no newsletter expenses during the year due to the newsletter being electronic only during lockdowns etc. The only other expenses incurred were for insurance of computer equipment, our Mapmate licence. and the cost of Zoom meetings.

As there was very little in the way of expenses incurred during the year, the Branch transferred £7000 of its funds to Head Office in order to alleviate some of the financial pressures that they were incurring.

The current year has once again been disrupted by the coronavirus situation with most Butterfly Conservation projects and sources of income being either cancelled or postponed. At the present time there is no way of predicting what the Branch finance situation will be at the end of the current Financial Year. However, the Branch has received the current years membership subscription of over £6000 which will ensure that the Branch can continue funding Butterfly Conservation projects in our area.

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## Moth Report 2020

Barry Henwood (Recorder)

During 2020 a staggering 144,220 records were received by me, most of which were included in the Devon database. 127,945 of those were verified 2020 records. Every record has been checked by a visual scan and then using various software tools. These records were submitted by a total of 482 named individuals producing the longest species list ever in a year, 1,213 species compared with 1,122 for the

previous year. A few butterflies were amongst the records and passed on to Pete Hurst. A breakdown of figures is shown in the table below.

	<b>pre-2020 records</b>	<b>2020 records</b>	<b>Total submitted in last year</b>
Butterflies	4	315	319
Macro-moths accepted including aggregates	12,451	101,905	114,356
Macro-moths rejected	262	312	574
<b>Macro-moths total</b>	<b>12,713</b>	<b>102,217</b>	<b>114,930</b>
Micro-moths accepted including aggregates	2,133	26,040	28,173
Micro-moths rejected	59	739	798
<b>Micro-moths total</b>	<b>2,192</b>	<b>26,779</b>	<b>28,971</b>
<b>Total all groups</b>	<b>14,909</b>	<b>129,311</b>	<b>144,220</b>

The numbers of accepted records in last year's report are shown below.

	<b>pre-2019 records</b>	<b>2019 records</b>	<b>Total submitted in last year</b>
Macro-moths accepted including aggregates	6,051	62,513	68,564
Micro-moths accepted including aggregates	1,329	16,613	17,942
<b>Total accepted</b>	<b>7,380</b>	<b>79,126</b>	<b>86,506</b>

*Cydalima perspectalis* Box-tree Moth records have increased from 17 in 2019 to 36 in 2020 including the first record of larvae in the wild from a Buckfastleigh garden. This species became introduced to Europe from Asia and in recent years has colonised southern England.

*Catocala fraxini*, Clifden Nonpareil, records have increased from 28 in 2019 to 53 in 2020. This large spectacular species has attracted much attention including a double page spread in the Western Morning News. Its colonisation of Devon in the last 5 years has been rapid and created much excitement. In many ways it is wonderful to have such an iconic species spreading in the county but it is probably a symptom of something rather sinister – that is global warming.

Another species in the same genus *Catocala sponsa*, Dark Crimson Underwing was recorded at Plymouth, Paignton and Exmouth. There are only 3 previous Devon records. Undoubtedly these were migrant individuals. However, the species has been spreading rapidly in Europe and so there is potential for colonising Devon in the future.

2020 records include 5 new county records and additionally nine new vice-county records for North Devon (VC4) and one for South Devon (VC3).

In particular two records of *Aethes deaurana* relatively close together at Dawlish and Kenton indicated likely establishment. These represented the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> British records. The other three were all from Weymouth, the first being in 2017. With this evidence in mind a search for larvae at Dawlish on the seeds of Alexanders proved successful. Moths were reared thus adding this species to the growing list of recent colonists.

Jack Oughton recorded *Triaxomasia caprimulgella* new to Devon twice, on both occasions at the LUN clearwing pheromone lure and at two widely separated sites. These are remarkable records as the nearest vice-county where it had hitherto been recorded was Berkshire (VC22) according to the distribution map on the Butterfly Conservation website <https://butterfly-conservation.org/moths/moth-resources-and-downloads/micro-moth-distribution-maps>.

Jack also found *Caryocolum junctella* new to Devon at Castle Drogo. The distribution map shows the nearest vice-county is Glamorganshire (VC41), but other sources show that this is simply one record from 1920 and so it is possible that it is a misidentification. If so then the nearest known vice-county is Warwickshire (VC38).

*Pachyrhabda steropodes* was first recorded in Devon at Talewater in 2015 and now appears to be rapidly spreading. During 2020 records were received from Axmouth, Paignton, Plymouth, Bere Alston, Bere Ferrers, Payhembury and Dunkeswell.

Phil Barden recorded *Eupithecia trisignaria*, Triple-spotted Pug, at various sites in west Devon. The only previous record in the county was of larvae found by C.G.Bignell at Bickleigh Vale, Plymbridge in 1878.

The migrant moth *Ctenoplusia limbirena*, Scan Bank Gem was recorded new to Devon in August at Exmouth and Plymouth. Another migrant *Chrysodeixis acuta*, Tunbridge Wells Gem was recorded at Yeoford and Brayford both on 22 October. The Brayford record was the first for VC4. *Sedina Buettneri*, Blair's Wainscot was recorded new to Devon at Ide in October. This was probably a migrant individual, although it is resident in beds of its foodplant, Lesser Pond Sedge in Dorset.

*Coleophora alcyonipennella* was recorded new to VC3 and the following species new to VC4: *Stigmella paradoxa*, *Stigmella incognitella*, *Bohemannia quadrimaculella*, *Ectoedemia louisella*, *Acleris logiana*, *Acrobasis repandana* and *Eremobia ochroleuca*, Dusky Sallow.

I am very grateful to those people who have helped me with the enormous task of collating and checking records. Phil Barden shares the task of verifying the huge number of records. Phil Dean's expertise in creating automated checking of data in huge spreadsheets is immensely helpful. Darryl Rush helped with digitalising hand written records from a small number of recorders without a computer. Kim Leaver verifies and extracts records from *iRecord*. Bob Heckford is always happy to give an expert opinion when that proves necessary.

It is only possible to give a very brief summary here. If anyone wishes to learn more about Devon's moths I recommend joining Devon Moth Group <https://devonmoths.org.uk/> The Devon Moth Group Annual Report 2020 ran to 58 pages and included a full list of species recorded with the number of records per vice-county. Full details of the more significant records were included and an article on the changes in distribution of some macro-moths in the county.

## Publicity Officers Report 2021

The Butterfly Conservation stand is frequently invited to attend a number of events around Devon each Spring and Summer and is a great way of introducing the public to who we are and what we do.

For the second year running our attendance at events has been very limited due to the Corona Virus. It has been a learning curve as to what is possible and there has been some participation in on-line events.

We very much hope that next year it will be safe for us all who work as volunteers to start organising and taking part in events once again. If any members would like to help us at events or have a suggestion of events we might attend them please get in touch with the Devon Branch as we would be very pleased to hear from you.

#### Waitrose 'Give a Little Love' Scheme

This year we have benefited from Exeter Waitrose who have donated £333 to the Devon Branch who will be putting this money towards conservation work at Haldon.

Mary Harold  
October 2021