



BRANCHLINE


ISSUE 39
Autumn 2004

Butterfly Bonanza

The Community Heritage Initiative's (CHI) Butterfly Bounty project, working with Butterfly Conservation East Midlands, has been a great success, attracting over 60 participants to recording butterflies this summer across Leicestershire and Rutland.

Many more people have joined training sessions on identification of butterflies and survey skills in the field and CHI will look at more of these for 2005. Evening lectures are already planned on moths, along with training in caterpillar identification, so people will still be able to record butterflies next season, if they missed 2004 flight periods.

Butterfly Bounty in the autumn months is turning its attention to the Lepidoptera collections held by the County Council at the Collections Resources Centre, with work to make these more accessible to amateur naturalists and the general public. This

will involve checking identification and re-ordering local collections – along with adding in the hundreds of specimens recently offered by local Lepidoptera enthusiasts.

To help promote Butterfly Bounty and encourage participation for 2005 a travelling exhibition and display will be touring libraries. The display case containing butterfly paraphernalia is booked to visit five libraries in Leicestershire and Rutland.



New introductory information fact sheets will also be produced on butterfly themes and be available with this display. If you are interested in Butterfly Bounty you will be able to collect more details from these libraries whilst the display is on tour, or you can get more details by contacting chi@leics.gov.uk

From	To	Venue
August 27 th	September 22 nd	Oakham Library
September 24 th	October 16 th	Blaby Library
October 19 th	November 6 th	Hinckley Library
November 9 th	November 27 th	Coalville Library
November 30 th	December 18 th	Melton Mowbray Library



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Who are you?

Butterfly Conservation, with around 12,000 members across the UK, is the largest organisation in Europe dedicated to the conservation of butterflies, moths and their habitats. Our Head Office in Dorset is staffed by professional ecologists and experts with many years experience in helping these insects maintain what are often fragile holds on life in our rapidly changing environment.

What are your areas of interest?

While the Head Office team concentrates on national priorities, more local issues are handled by members in the local branch - in our case the East Midlands branch, which covers Leicestershire & Rutland, Nottinghamshire and S Derbyshire. These branch activities are carried out by enthusiastic volunteers from our membership. Our main interests are the conservation of locally-threatened species, safeguarding important local habitats and raising public awareness. Many older people will tell you they see far fewer butterflies today compared with when they were younger and detailed records collected over the years confirm this view. Butterflies and moths are very sensitive indicators of how our environment is

changing and the huge reductions of many species are urgent warning signs that we are harming habitats and creating wildlife-impooverished areas of the country.

What do you do?

A key foundation stone for successful conservation is survey work to understand where species are and in what numbers. Without this information we would be working in the dark. Currently, most efforts are directed at the Dingy and Grizzled Skipper butterflies - two small spring-flying species, which have recently undergone major reductions, largely as a result of loss of habitat. We have carried out a comprehensive survey in 2003 and 2004 and are now planning to work with landowners and others to manage sites where these butterflies still exist. One problem that both species face is that many of the remaining sites are brownfield sites - former railway lines, colliery sites and industrial areas, which are vulnerable to development.

If a site holding good numbers of butterflies, especially if any are of conservation concern, is threatened we will advise the planning authorities and make every effort to save the site or ensure measures are taken to mitigate any damage done to the insects.

We also give talks to local societies and groups, participate in county and national gatherings to develop plans to protect wildlife and work with farmers and others whose activities impact on large land areas.



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Where and when do you meet?

The branch organises a series of field trips each summer. These are spread across the region and give opportunities to see a wide range of butterflies, typically around 35 different species. Many people are surprised to find out that there are a lot of butterflies that are never seen in gardens and the field trips enable people to learn about these and how important it is to maintain appropriate habitats across the wider countryside.

Do you have a newsletter?

Branch members receive two newsletters a year, containing informative articles on our conservation work, field trips and other news, along with inputs and views from members.

Is there a cost to join?

Joining Butterfly Conservation is easy and standard membership costs £24 per year (just £14 for young members under 21).

How can I contact you?

To find out more about the activities of Butterfly Conservation both nationally and at local level, contact the East Midlands Branch Organiser Barry Prater, 01777 818504, barry@prater.demon.co.uk If you are interested in joining and helping with conservation work in the East Midlands, get in touch with our Membership Secretary Geof Adams on 01455 282641.

Do you have a website?

The national organisation has a website at www.butterfly-conservation.org

Volunteers find new weevil

Volunteers learning how to find and identify insects with the CHI at Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust's Ketton Quarry Nature Reserve have discovered a weevil never before recorded in Leicestershire and Rutland.

Their first find of the day was a weevil called *Mogulones geographicus*. The 'geographicus' refers to the map-like pattern on its back. This small beetle may not be rare, but like many other plants and animals, is often overlooked. Experts have checked through samples of every insect ever found in the Leicestershire and



Rutland and have confirmed that no one has reported this beetle in the area before. The natural history collections and the databases held by the County Council for the whole of Leicestershire and Rutland make it possible to check facts such as these. Without this resource and the co-operation of recorders we would not have such a good picture of our wealth of wildlife.

Records of wildlife help land managers, conservationists, local government and others to use the land wisely. Anyone can send in records or take part in surveys run by the CHI, such as Butterfly Bounty which is collecting sightings of butterflies this summer. If you have a lot of data and would like to talk to us about sharing it, please contact CHI. Thank you to all those who already send us records.



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Season Watch– Spring 2004

The Community Heritage Initiative has a variety of community surveys you can take part in. To carry out the Season Watch survey, you don't need to be an expert and you can record as much or as little detail as you like. You can do it anywhere you visit regularly, such as your garden or local park.

Start looking for signs of autumn soon. Events to note include falling leaves, ripened acorns and the final date you cut your lawn.

A volunteer recorder has sent in the following report of her observations for spring.

Report by a volunteer recorder

Fewer insects and butterflies have been observed both in covered areas and in the garden. Garden pests, especially blackfly have been prevalent, although fewer snails and slugs have been present.



Plants in the countryside and garden have produced a seemingly excess of greenery, but not the abundance of flowers one would expect. Many flowering plants bloomed early and leaves did not die down quickly.

Fewer birds have been seen in the garden and whilst blackbirds and thrushes have been busy "pulling" worms, the youngsters have not been seen. In previous years this feeding pattern of youngsters has been seen.

Trees again seemed to produce flowers and leaves reasonably early:

Blackthorn - showed best display of

flowers, as did the elder.

Goat willow - bore plenty of catkins.

Hawthorn – plenty of leaf, but less productive in flowers.

Maple - plenty of buds and flowers produced but did not bloom significantly and shed flowers profusely, possibly as a result of cold and early high winds.

Oak - a reluctant candidate too, as maple.

Sycamore - has done well, but recent high winds have caused many fruits to fall.

Ash - very slow changes observed although plenty of fruits now showing.

Elm - produced some flower clusters and leaves but now appear completely dead showing only bare brown branches.

Insects and Amphibians

Poor showing this year. Frog spawn in pond observed, but owner removed this. In our own pond no spawn was seen, but 2 or 3 small frogs have taken up residence. Newts also present and this may account for the lack of spawn.

The colony of rabbits was very active and plentiful in crop field when crop was growing. However in late May/early June- four foxes were seen in rabbit "area". This appeared to be a family group either vixen and 3 cubs or dog fox and vixen and 2 cubs. (They were a little distance away for actual identification). This group were again seen late June in adjoining pasture field playing by sizeable heap of horse manure. One animal definitely lying down watching. This month have seen dog fox coming out of crop field and one young fox in drainage ditch. However, rabbits have not been seen save one. More than likely the foxes have had some excellent rabbit dinners.



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BRANCHLINE



QUESTIONNAIRE

The Community Heritage Initiative is a five-year project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Rutland County Council, working to support natural history recorders and engage the public in recording and celebrating the natural heritage of the two counties.

One of our roles is to keep parish organisations, community and conservation groups and individuals informed of local environmental, conservation and heritage opportunities and news. Part of this is to send out mailings four times a year, including the project newsletter **Branchline**.

This questionnaire is to help us develop **Branchline**. Please do take the time to return this, as it will help us provide you with a better service in the future.

Once completed, please pull out this questionnaire and return it to :
Community Heritage Initiative, Leicestershire County Council,
Holly Hayes, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire LE4 4DG

1. Parish/group/reader's details:

Who are you? Please include your address, especially if you want to update your details or to be removed from the mailing list.

2. If we send Branchline to your organisation, are we sending it to the right person?

Yes No

If no, please write the correct name and address below:

3. When did you first receive Branchline? (First published in 1995) Please give year, or if you prefer, edition number.

4. Do you enjoy reading Branchline?

Yes No

5. Do you find Branchline....

Interesting Boring No opinion

Very relevant Relevant Irrelevant

6. Who gets to read Branchline?

E.g. parish councillors, group members, family members, passed to GP reception.

7. Do you pass it on?

Yes Sometimes Yes Always No

8. How many people do you think see your issue?

FORMAT

9. Would you like us to publish Branchline.....

More frequent Same frequency Less frequent

10. How would you prefer to receive Branchline?

By post In PDF format by email*

An email alert when new issues are published on our web site*

*Please write an email address below

STYLE

11. Do you think Branchline is presented in a legible easy to read format?

Yes No No opinion

12. Is the length of articles on average....

too short ? too long? about right

13. Is the level of information within articles in general...

too detailed? about right ? insufficient detail?

14. Do you find the scope and variety of articles.....

too much of the same? about right? too varied?



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15. What can we do to improve Branchline? Comments please.....

TOPICS

16. What articles would you like included in Branchline?
(E.g. info. on funding sources, who's who in conservation, rights of way)

17. Would you like to hear more about what local Heritage Wardens or conservation and natural history societies are doing?

Yes No No opinion

Any comments:

18. Would you be willing to supply an article for Branchline?
If so, what topic would it be on?

19. A new "Focus on" natural history organisations section is being introduced. What groups would you like to see featured?

20. Would you be willing to write a "Focus on" feature? — if so for which organisation?

21. Have any of the articles from Branchline been included in Parish or Group Magazines?

Yes No
If Yes, can you send us a copy or tell us where?

OCCASIONAL ADDITIONAL MATERIAL INCLUDED WITH MAILINGS

22. Are the leaflets/publications included with Branchline circulated?
If so where and who has access to them? E.g. leaflets for grants, new surveys etc

23. Have you found this additional material useful?

Yes No No opinion



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24. Are there any leaflets/publications you would like to receive?

25. Are there too many leaflets / should we include them?

26. (For groups) Would you like us to send out information about your group with our mailings? If so, what information?

27. Do you think the way we publish Branchline could be improved in any way?

Yes No If Yes, do you have any suggestions?

30. Do you want to remain on the mailing list?

Yes No

If No, can you please help us by telling us why you wish to be removed from the mailing list: -

31. Any other comments—please use another sheet if needed:

Please complete the following if you are happy for us to store your details on computer so that we can send you Branchline:

Name:

Telephone:

Address:

Postcode:

Email address (only if you are happy to receive email from us):

Age: under 20 20 - 40 40—60 60+

Many thanks for your time and co-operation.

The Community Heritage Initiative will try to include your views in the service that we provide.

Personal data supplied on this form will be held on computer and will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 for statistical analysis, management, planning and in the provision of services by the County Council and its partners. The County Council will treat all information as confidential.



Heritage Watch in Action Rothley Ancient Parish Boundary

A progress report July 2004

A four person team comprising the Archaeological Warden Brian Verity, his wife Janice, the Natural History Warden Marion Vincent and local historian Terry Sheppard began to survey the ancient ecclesiastical parish boundary of Rothley on 15 October 2003.



The stimulus behind the survey was the visible, ongoing destruction of the historic trees, ditches and hedgerow features that make up the ancient boundary. A photographic and careful record is needed urgently especially in the light of large scale building developments to the North and East of the parish. Terry's research, together with the O.S maps of 1884/5, has provided invaluable information on the history, direction and physical character of the boundary in the late 19th century. Map annotations such as RH for root of hedge, FW for foot of wall or *def* for defaced give graphic evidence for how things were a century ago. To date the team has covered a quarter of the total boundary that makes up the SW corner of the parish. Landowners have been generous with their permissions and local information. At least half a day every week is spent in the field plus many hours writing up the results and doing research. A halt has been called on the current rural section due to the heavy, summer undergrowth which hides ditches or wall features. Work continues to plot the boundary in the built up area of Mountsorrel South End.

Working through the winter is not the best time for recording the hedgerow element but ideal for observing the structure and size of hawthorn trunks. Hedgerow survey forms supplied by Holly Hayes are completed for every 120 metre stint using Hooper's Rule. The important point here is that we are doing the hedgerow survey in a continuous line, not a specially chosen piece, so the final result must be judged accordingly. Boundary trees, mostly Ash, have also been recorded as they are of historical importance.

An interesting rural stint has concentrated around an unnamed copse located at the conjunction of three parishes namely Rothley, Thurstaston and Wanlip at grid reference SK58091098. The map evidence indicates that it has been there since 1780. Why has it survived? It is situated in a dominant position on high ground overlooking the surrounding countryside and its oblong shape lies along an east/west axis. At ground level the copse is oval shaped and slightly raised at the centre with delineating ditches. Is this Leicestershire's first long barrow? Unfortunately aerial photographs provided by Holly Hayes provide no evidence of quarry ditches or other crop marks to support such a theory. There are 8 large Oak trees in the copse but only Ash in the hedgerows leading to it.

Thanks go to the staff at Holly Hayes for their help with information and technology. Happily the motivation of the RAPS team remains undiminished and the prospects for another exciting year, or two, of exploration look excellent.



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SOLD, AND THE WOOD IS OURS - SUBJECT TO CONTRACT

A report by Paul Sutton, Burton on the Wolds Heritage Warden

During November 2003, responses from the Parish Plan questionnaire highlighted great interest in a community wood for the village. A committee was formed to identify possible areas and a way forward. One area considered was the existing woodland on the edge of the village, known as the 'Fishpond Plantation'.



The Plantation was created around 1824 by Charles Godfrey Mundy of Burton Hall. The age of the fishponds has still to be established but are possibly medieval. The nearby icehouse was vaulted and of brick construction. The west end of the plantation was felled during World War II as it was in line with the north-south runway of Wymeswold Airfield. The East part of the plantation was lost in the 1960s when it was cleared for houses and a new village school. 3.9 acres of beautiful small wood remain in a very accessible position and, although not full of unusual and rare species, is a haven for wildlife.



Whilst working on a proposal to present to the owners for the purchase of the Plantation, amazingly it was advertised for sale during April 2004. This galvanised us into action. The Parish Council were contacted and volunteers came forward to assist in obtaining names from all those villagers who were interested in 'Saving Our Wood'. Over 250 names in total were collected, representing over 60% of village households. The Parish Council, acting on behalf of all interested villagers, wrote to the Agents expressing an interest in the purchase.



A letter asking for donations was quickly sent out to all houses in the village via our wonderful volunteer network. Within a week over £9,500 was raised. After meetings involving the Parish Council, Heritage Wardens and interested parties, a sealed bid was put in. This was accepted at the beginning of June. Donations are still coming in and to date we have received over £12,500. Both Leicestershire County Council (through the SHIRE Grant scheme) and Charnwood Borough Council are extremely supportive and interested in the project.

This was very much a joint effort involving the Heritage Wardens working closely with the Parish Council and local residents.



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Wild Attitudes Helping the Community Heritage Initiative

In response to the decline in numbers of young people getting involved in wildlife recording, the Community Heritage Initiative is consulting young people on their attitudes to wildlife and the countryside in a project called Wild Attitudes. The information collected over the summer via questionnaires and group discussions will be used to inform the future work of CHI and local groups and societies to engage more young people in natural heritage studies. The results will be reported in the next issue of Branchline.



Over the next four years, CHI will help groups of young people run projects based on elements of recording wildlife and landscape. Youth groups are encouraged to contact CHI to discuss opportunities. CHI will also help local groups and natural history societies to work with young people, and is hoping to include relevant sessions in the next training programme.

A group of pupils from Casterton Community College have been helping this process by conducting their own

survey of young people. They report on their progress here:



We are fifth year students at Casterton Community College in Rutland and we are doing a project about the environment. Our names are Carly, Daniel, Jeanette and Jason. We are working with the Leicestershire County Council to find out how a certain age group thinks of the environment. We targeted Year 5 and 6 students as we thought that age group used the countryside the most so would have a large range of answers.



We designed a questionnaire for the Year 5 and 6 students at Little Casterton Primary School to complete to find out how to make their environment a better place for them. We found out what they like and don't like about the environment, what they want to see more of and what they want to see less of, how they feel about the environment and what they would like to see built on the countryside and how often they went to the countryside. We then put the results into graphs and charts, which we put into a presentation. We have also taken pictures and we have kept a list of what we've been doing and with whom.

When the project is complete we will give our results in a report to the Leicestershire County Council. Even though the project is not finished we have all enjoyed it and have used the opportunity to work together to produce a presentation.



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Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops

The Environmental Resources Centre in Birstall will be hosting a 'Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshop' with Mark Goodwin on Monday 4th October, 7-9.30pm. Mark was BBC Wildlife Poet of the Year in 2003 and works as a community poet in Leicestershire.

'Behind the Scenes' offers the general public the chance to use museum spaces, and to explore the material in storage at these sites, as a source of inspiration for poetry. No previous writing experience is required. All events are free to the public, but you must book in advance to secure a place. Numbers on each workshop will be limited to up to 16 participants and need to be reserved. Once you have booked a place on a workshop, a map and directions will be provided for the location.

The schedule for other 'Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops' are:

Thursday 28th October, 7-9pm *The Record Office, Wigston Magna*

Pam Thompson using the archives

Monday 15th November, 7-9pm *The Collections Resources Centre, Barrow upon Soar*

Deborah Tyler-Bennett using the Fashion Collections

For more information or to reserve a place on any of the workshops, ring Nikki Clayton on 0116 2645816/2645800.

Better Communities ask "Do you need funding for your Group to learn?"

An exciting funding opportunity for local groups in Leicestershire is being launched. The Better Communities Awards provide an opportunity for local groups to improve their quality of life through Better Access to Learning.

The scheme, now in its sixth year, has a total award fund of £30,000 and offers grants to small groups, who may not want to go to larger funding agencies. Previous awards from the scheme have ranged from £100 to £5,000, bringing real benefit to local projects and those involved. Better Communities is designed to be a flexible scheme and to be as easy as possible for community groups to make applications to, and seek advice from.

This year, Better Communities wants to help small groups by supporting projects to develop and implement learning, training and personal development projects that are particularly relevant to them and the needs of their local communities.

A simple registration form is available with The Better Communities information leaflet and the scheme also offers guidance to small groups who wish to develop an idea further. For an application form and further details please contact Amy Caldwell at Leicestershire County Council on 0116 265 7033.

ABOUT BRANCHLINE

Branchline is produced by Leicestershire County Council's Environmental Resource Centre and is the newsletter for the Community Heritage Initiative, a project developed with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Rutland County Council. It aims to be a networking publication and used as an information source for parishes, groups, and individuals interested in protecting and discovering more about the area's countryside and heritage. Mailings are free of charge as a service to the communities of Leicestershire and Rutland. If you have any articles that you would like to see in Branchline, drop us a line at the Environmental Resource Centre (details below), or e-mail them to chi@leics.gov.uk. Articles are welcome and the **deadline for Winter 2004 Edition is November 1st.**

The articles supplied do not necessarily reflect the views of Leicestershire County Council or the CHI partners.



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