

Butterfly News

The Newsletter of the South Wales Branch of Butterfly Conservation
Spring 2008

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Humming-bird Hawk-moth and Painted Lady online survey with BBC Radio 4

Butterfly Conservation has developed an exciting online survey of these two migrant species in association with Radio 4's major series World on the Move and as part of the Garden Moths Count initiative. The survey will run throughout 2008 on the Butterfly Conservation website and gives us a great opportunity to raise awareness and engage with the general public. Anyone who sees a Humming-bird Hawk-moth or Painted Lady butterfly can use the simple but amazing interactive mapping on the website to zoom in on satellite images (down to the scale of your own garden) and log their sightings. This will enable us to track the arrival in the UK of these wonderful creatures on their journey from North Africa and southern Europe, and then to map their spread here during the summer. We are also keen to hear observations of interesting behaviour (such as courtship, mating, egg laying, plants used for nectaring, reverse migration in the autumn or hibernation) which can be recorded in a comments box in the online recording system. What we do know about the migration of these spectacular insects comes from observations over the centuries from amateur recorders, but there is still much to learn and we hope that the public will help in 2008.

We would be very grateful to Branches for help in promoting this survey to the public using newsletters, websites, talks, local press opportunities etc. We will be producing some attractive promotional posters and hope that Branch committee members will be willing and able to get these displayed in suitable public places, such as garden centres, libraries, nature reserve visitor centres etc. The posters will be distributed to Branch in the next month. Many thanks in advance and let's hope it is a good year for migrants!



The Humming-bird Hawk-moth, at rest and in action.

Catherine Levett

PEMBROKESHIRE MICROLEPIDOPTERA IN 2007

2007 proved to be a difficult year for moth recorders not only in Pembrokeshire (VC45) but throughout the British Isles. The season began with wonderful weather and many spring species were 3 to 4 weeks earlier than normal. However, the poor weather throughout the summer months when most moths are on the wing resulted in numbers being well down everywhere. But, in spite of the weather, some North Pembrokeshire Moth Group members decided to turn their attention to the micro moths and this resulted in some interesting records which were new to VC45.

High-light of the year was Janet Atkinson's field record in Pengelli Forest NNR of a pretty micro, *Phyllonorycter nigrescentella*, which turned out to be new to Wales. The caterpillar is known to feed on Bush Vetch (*Vicia sepium*) and probably Medick (*Medicago* spp.). The species has a very local distribution in England.

Again in Pengelli, I noted a leaf mine on Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) which proved to be *Stigmella sakhalinella*, a first for the county. In Cilgerran, Roly Gill recorded two new VC45 records – *Caloptilia robustella* and *Nemopogon clematella*. *C. robustella* is an oak feeder considered common in South-east England with a patchy distribution in Wales. *N. clematella* is regarded as locally common and the larva are recorded from fungal growths on various deciduous trees such as elm, oak and hawthorn. I found a vacated leaf mine of *Stigmella trimaculella* on Black Poplar (*Populus nigra*) in the Nevern area. It is



Phyllonorycter klemanniella, the larvae of which mine the leaves of Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).
© A.D. Lewis, 2007



Larval mine of *Stigmella sakhalinella* found on Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*). ©A.D. Lewis, 2007

widespread in England but there are few records from Wales. I was able to record 5 new county records from the MV trap in my garden: These were *Pseudatemelia josephinae*, *Oecogonia* sp. *Crociosema plebejana*, *Agonopterix propinquella* and *Phyllonorycter kleemannella*. *Pseudatemelia josephinae* is a woodland species known to feed on Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) with the larval stage apparently lasting two years. It occurs locally in southern England and northern Scotland and recorded in south Wales. The *Oecogonia* sp. is awaiting dissection as it could be one of two, neither of which has previously been recorded in VC45. *Phyllonorycter kleemannella* is locally common throughout the UK. The larva mines the leaves of Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). *Crociosema plebejana* is a sub-tropical colonist which is coastal and was first found breeding in the Scilly Isles in 1957 and has been spreading steadily north in the UK and has already been recorded from Glamorgan. It feeds on Tree Mallow (*Lavatera arborea*). Finally, *Agonopterix propinquella* feeds on thistle (*Cirsium* spp.) and occurs locally throughout the UK.

Towards the end of the season, Janet Atkinson also took *Epinotia bilunana* at MV light in her garden. This species feeds on birch (*Betula* spp.) and is very widely distributed across Europe and as far as Siberia and Kazakhstan.

Our grateful thanks go to Dr. John Langmaid who kindly determined all but one of the above species.

TONY LEWIS

The Impact of Annual Hedge Flailing on Brown Hairstreak butterfly and Suggested Solutions

1. Background.

The Brown Hairstreak butterfly, *Thecla betulae*, is now restricted in Wales to lowland parts of Carmarthenshire, eastern Pembrokeshire and south-east Ceredigion. In the 30 years up to 2000, its range in Wales had declined by 35%. It is a Section 42 Species of Principle Importance in Wales and a Species Action Plan was published in 2006. There are about 15 known populations (with egg densities exceeding 40 eggs per square kilometre) left in south-west Wales, and mostly where owners are willing to manage sympathetically. To manage these as "islands" will become increasingly resource consuming and is not a sustainable landscape scale long term solution.

2. Ecology and Impact of Annual Hedge Trimming

It lays its eggs only on the young shoots of blackthorn, a common hedgerow and scrub plant species. When the eggs hatch in April, the tiny caterpillar feeds on the young blackthorn leaves near the tips of blackthorn shoots. Research by Dr Jeremy Thomas over a six year period in the 1970s (Thomas 1974) showed that on average 80% of the eggs are destroyed each year by mechanical flailing of hedges, which removes the young growth, bearing the eggs. Therefore annual trimming removes both the over-wintering eggs and food for any caterpillars that survive and the species will be eliminated in a few years.

3. Recent Evidence in Wales.

Butterfly Conservation has undertaken surveys over the last 10 winters (when eggs can be found) to identify presence and population strength of the species on a landscape scale across its Welsh range (e.g. Smith and Clark 2005). A number of key facts emerge:

- 3.1 Most populations exist on small but ecologically important land holdings not commercially farmed. They are predominantly smallholdings, horse paddocks, a handful of traditional dairy farms or on neglected fields where they traditionally manage hedges e.g. long rotation of hedge trimming, often with laying and leaving young blackthorn scrub in situ.
- 3.2 Virtually all modern commercial farms, particularly sheep & beef cattle farms, trim their hedges every year thus removing all breeding habitat for the butterfly.

- 3.3 Studies of the economics of hedge management (Semble *et al* 1995) in very similar (climate and landscape) areas in Devon, demonstrated that three year cutting rotations result in cost savings up to 60% compared to annual cuts. Butterfly Conservations' own discussions with a hedge contractor in Carmarthenshire confirm the validity of this study to south-west Wales.

4. The Problem.

- 4.1 The main driver of annual management is cultural. The "tidy" farm culture has become a matter of local honour and competitiveness between farmers.
- 4.2 In relative terms, annual mechanical flailing is seen as "cheap" at between £15 to £18 per hour.
- 4.3 Contractors can often appear to drive the process by turning up every year and complain of damage to flails or blades if cutting is not annual. Annual flailing can be a lucrative and reliable income for them.
- 4.4 Annual flailing not only destroys Brown Hairstreak populations, but prevents hedges from fruiting thus removing food sources for wintering farmland birds and mammals.
- 4.5 Tir Gofal & Tir Cynnal only stipulate 25% hedges to be left un-flailed each year, which is difficult to police and largely insufficient to protect Brown Hairstreak and other wildlife. Single Farm Payments and cross compliance rules do nothing to deter annual trimming of all hedges.
- 4.6 Many farmers mistakenly believe that it is a duty to trim every hedge annually, partly misinterpreting SFP rules and partly from local authority pressure to cut hedges along roadsides.

5. Suggested solution.

- 5.1 It is recommended that all WAG funded farm payments are conditioned so that a minimum of 2/3 of hedges on a land holding (except those bordering and within 2m of a public highway, farm access track or other path used by the public) are to be left un-cut every year, except that any Ash, Sycamore and Willow species contained in them may be selectively cut more frequently, if necessary, without cutting other species in the hedge.
- 5.2 All official advice should recommend three year trimming rotation of hedges as this maximises cost savings to the landowner and provides benefits to wildlife.

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The Impact of Annual Hedge Flailing on Brown Hairstreak butterfly and Suggested Solutions (contd.)

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- 5.3 Encourage all public bodies (under the NERC duty) to also adopt three year trimming rotation of hedges or traditional hedge management, including their own land, and to foster planting of blackthorn in hedges and public places in the Brown Hairstreak Landscape Area.
- 5.4 In the revised Tir Gofal scheme, the financial incentive (based on profit foregone) would be increased if a 3m in-field margin was included to allow scrub to develop on grassland prescriptions, in the Brown Hairstreak Landscape area.

By these measures, the continuing range contraction and loss of local populations of Brown Hairstreak can easily be reversed across its historic geographical range in Wales. If this is done across Wales it will keep the message clear to all land owners and benefit other wildlife.

6. References

Semble, D., Bishop, C. & Morris, J. (1995) The Economics of Sustainable Hedge Cutting. A report to the Devon Hedge Group. Silsoe College, University of Cranfield.

Smith, R.G. and Clark, M.J. (2005) Brown Hairstreak in Carmarthenshire: Egg surveys and Habitat Assessment 2002 – 2004. Butterfly Conservation Report No. S05-10.

Thomas, J.A. (1974) Ecological Studies of Hairstreak Butterflies, PhD thesis, University of Leicester.

Richard Smith (Conservation Officer, Butterfly Conservation South Wales Branch)

Russel Hobson (Head of Conservation, Butterfly Conservation Wales)

With thanks to members of the Brown Hairstreak Action Group and Tir Gofal Farmers Association.

Mobile phones help conserve butterflies...and moths

In the UK, the average consumer replaces his/her mobile phone every 18 months. It is estimated that 15 million mobile phones are replaced each year in the UK, so there is huge potential for charities to raise valuable income from schemes that encourage the recycling of mobile phones!

Platinum, gold, silver and copper are all found in mobile phones. These precious metals, as well as various plastics, can all be recycled, reducing landfill and helping to prevent environmental damage.

We have teamed up with the recycling company, **Greener Solutions** so that Butterfly Conservation will receive £2.50 for every old mobile phone that our members and supporters recycle – irrespective of the age or condition of the phone.

Greener Solutions have printed a supply of reply envelopes for us (at no cost to Butterfly Conservation). If you would like a supply please get in touch. If you have an old mobile phone you no longer want, please use these envelopes to recycle it, or pass the envelope onto a friend or relative. The income we generate from this scheme will help to fund our conservation work throughout the UK.

This scheme gives us an enormous opportunity to raise extra income (and to do more to encourage recycling). I would particularly like to hear from you if you think you could persuade any

local companies or other public outlets – large or small - to support our scheme among their staff or customers. I can provide any quantity of reply envelopes on request!

If you think you can help me to extend this scheme, would like more reply envelopes or have any questions, please call me on 01929 406018 (direct line) or email me at pmackie@butterfly-conservation.org

Poppy Mackie

Development Officer (Supporter Fundraising)
Butterfly Conservation Head Office

Welcome to New Branch Members

Once again, the Branch Committee would like to express its gratitude for the support of all local Branch members. It is particularly encouraging to welcome new members, so a warm welcome to you all. We hope you enjoy your Branch membership and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our Branch events. So we offer a big welcome to:

Mr A R Allard	Monmouth
Mr C Manley	Llanelli
Dr K Seddon	Penarth
Mr and Mrs D L Redhead	Oxford
Ms A K Denton and Mr G A Hopwood	Llanrhystud
Mr C and Mrs L D Watson	Caerphilly
Mr P and Mrs B Leeke	Goodwick
Mr H Conway	Aberystwyth
Mr J K Williams	Llanelli

Notes from the Brown Hairstreak Action Group Meeting

The meeting was held on 6 February 2008 at Cressley Cricket Club and West Williamston Nature Reserve in Pembrokeshire

Clare Williams (Butterfly Conservation Wales) opened the talks and highlighted the issue of annual flailing in Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, with old age of Blackthorn and browsing main problems in Ceredigion; the need to continue surveys to ensure whole range is covered; the need to continue egg count monitoring; and to promote good hedgerow and woodland management on all farms.

Clare was followed by Dave Rogerson (Tir Gofal) who highlighted the need to know where Brown Hairstreak are to ensure capital works programmes in Year 1 and 5 do not harm populations; the need for farmer training and that annual flailing of hedges in agreements is not allowed under Tir Gofal (at least 25% must be left untrimmed in any one year).

David Redhead, from the Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation highlighted how difficult it is to follow whole lifecycle and advantage of doing egg counts; the extent of our knowledge about variation in Blackthorn and forms preferred by Brown Hairstreak and the low survival rate of larvae. It has been estimated that only 8% survive to pupate.

The fourth speaker, Richard Smith (BC South Wales Branch) highlighted whether stump cutting or coppicing was the better form of management. Brown hairstreaks seem to prefer sucker growth. He also pointed out the importance of small-holdings to Brown hairstreak and the importance of a landscape approach to conservation rather than worrying about each hedge as it a mobile species.

The key issue to the populations of Brown Hairstreak butterflies was the problem of annual flail mowing of Blackthorn hedges and hedgerows. It was emphasised that there was a need to raise awareness of impact on Brown Hairstreak and other wildlife such as Welsh Assembly Government, the Highways Authorities and Welsh Assembly Trunk Road Estate, planners in both Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, local authorities and young farmers.

There was also a need to highlight economic savings of moving to a three year cutting rotation. The problem was how to we make contractors aware of this need. One suggestion was that 'badging' of farms would make contractors aware that Brown Hairstreak populations were present. Another suggestion was for a Best Hedge Award to counter Best Flailed Hedge competitions.

Copies of the talks available on request from Clare Williams, BCW.

WALES LEADS THE UK ON WILDLIFE INFORMATION

An important milestone was marked on Wednesday 28th November at the National Museum of Wales, with a launch event to mark the completion of the network of Local Records Centres (LRCs) in Wales was attended by over 70 invited guests.

Wales is the first country in the UK to achieve full coverage of LRCs, and this great achievement was marked by Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Sustainability and Housing, who formally launched the network. In addition, speakers gave their assessment of the value of LRCs from a range of different perspectives: David Parker, Director of Science for Countryside Council for Wales talked of their involvement in the establishment of the network, Paul Sinnudurai spoke on behalf of Brecon Beacons National Park Authority on how LRCs make his life easier, David Clements talked about the network from a Consultant's perspective, Barry Stewart looked at the benefits for a voluntary recorder and Derek Moore added his observations.

The launch event also saw the unveiling of a new website (<http://www.lrcwales.org.uk>) which acts as a gateway to the web sites of the individual LRCs.

In the press release for the event, Adam Rowe, Manager of SEWBRc said: "This is an exciting time for all who are involved in the establishment of the Wales-wide LRC network. Marking the completion of the network gives us a great opportunity to thank our funders as well as the unsung heroes of biodiversity conservation - the volunteer recorders. The launch also marks a new era for the Welsh LRCs - one in which we will work together to improve the accessibility of Wales-wide biodiversity data, as well as to push forward technological developments to improve the quality and delivery of our services."

So congratulations to all that have been involved in getting the LRC network up and running, and a big thanks to all who have supported the Record Centres.

David Slade

A country-wide White-letter Hairstreak recording project [2007 – 2009]



Whilst the White-letter Hairstreak (WLH) has been identified as a UK Priority Species, it is also a rather elusive arboreal butterfly that may not be recorded effectively by either casual observation or transect. The experience of a number of recorders in England and Wales is that both WLH, and the species' larval food plant elm, are often more common than is generally appreciated, and it is hoped that this project will confirm whether this is repeated across the species' range.

Full details of the project and a wealth of associated information can be found at

<http://w-album.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/>.

The project is quite simple. Over 200 10 km squares have been randomly selected across and beyond the species' recorded range ~ actually, 4 have been taken from each 50 x 50km block. Then, a single target 1 km square has been randomly selected within each 10 km square. The resulting map is a key element of the website resource and has up-to-date details of progress and results, although details of the target squares will also be available direct from ourselves. The project will run from 2007-9, giving plenty of time to develop our skills and complete the survey, and we also hope that it will encourage further recording at a local level alongside this project.

Probably the best way to proceed is to visit the target 1 km square during April or May when the green/yellow seed discs can be abundant on elm, so that some fairly healthy elm of any kind can be found as easily as possible. With a little practice, elm can be found throughout the year, as can in season the eggs, larvae and sometimes pupae of WLH. However, it may be that elm cannot be found at 1 km, so the next step is to look at the standard 2 km tetrad holding the 1 km target, then finally the 10 km square, beginning the search as near as possible to the 2 km square. Please keep the coordinators informed regarding observers intending to survey specific squares, elms found and WLH confirmed, or not. Please, don't try to find only a specific species of elm or worry if you can't identify the type – the butterfly doesn't appear to be bothered!

The project is designed to be simple, so we suggest looking for strong male activity over elms and also adjacent ashes, maples and limes etc, where males can be very numerous and active, chasing and clashing around the canopy, especially as the morning warms up, or through the late afternoon. Be aware that this activity, in the south at least, is strongest and most easily observed in the first week or two of the flight period, and whilst many records of nectaring WLH come through July, this tree-top activity is at its height during late June & early July, and can often be seen from mid June in the south of England. At first, some

observers may be unsure as to whether the small dark butterflies seen are actually WLH, but confidence will grow with experience, and it is quite usual to find strong colonies on single healthy trees. Early in the season, confusion with the slightly larger and more silvery Purple Hairstreak and the orange/brown Vapourer moth may be reduced as these tend to fly a little later, whilst Black Hairstreak may be seen near blackthorn within its restricted range.

In its simplest form, the project aims are an unbiased survey of the national distribution and range of WLH to give a simple percentage presence for WLH at 1 km, 2 km or 10 km (or absent) and to find the degree to which elm is populated by WLH within its range

It may be the project will identify regional and habitat differences in terms of both elm and WLH.

For example, suitable elm may be more limited in broad habitat types such as suburbia, moorland, upland, marsh or intensively managed farmland, or where elm has been devastated by Dutch Elm Disease. If robust elm, preferably with some flower buds or seed, isn't found at 1 km or 2 km, then for analysis please suggest a reason, which may indeed be just chance absence. Yet it may still be possible to find elm at the 10 km level in valleys through uplands, or in parks in highly urban areas, and will such trees hold WLH? Searching must only involve land that has public access so again if there is no public access that can be stated as a reason.

We would like the project to enthuse observers from all parts of the country, whether you are presently a White-letter Hairstreak fiend or not, and that participation will be enjoyable, rewarding and widespread. Anyone who is really keen might even look at areas when on holiday or visiting different parts of the country. All contributions will be most welcome.

Although this project is web site based, we can post a map and further details to anyone who would like to know more but doesn't have access to the Internet

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New Royal Mail Stamp Issue Insects in Action



The Royal Mail will be issuing on 15th April, a set of first class commemorative stamps featuring ten rare British insects (depicted above). The species featured on the stamps are:- Adonis Blue butterfly, the Southern Damselfly, Barberry Carpet moth, Silver-spotted Skipper butterfly, Stag Beetle, the Noble Chafer, the Hazel Pot Beetle, a Field Cricket, a Red-barbed Ant and the Purbeck Mason Wasp. First Day Covers will be available for those of you interested in collecting and can be obtained by visiting their web site at <http://www.royalmail.com>. As well as first day covers there are also special presentations packs and stamp cards available.



JOB VACANCY

West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC) are looking to recruit a Local Records Centre Manager who will be responsible both for managing the running of the Local Records Centre as a node in both the Welsh country-wide network of LRCs and the UK's National Biodiversity Network. For more information and to download an application form, please go to the web site at <http://www.wwbic.org.uk>

National Moth Night and Day, 2008

National Moth Night and Day 2008 will take place on Saturday, 7th June. The target species are the White-spotted Sable (*Anania funebris*), an attractive Pyralid moth, Bordered Gothic (*Heliophobus reticulata*) and Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth (*Hemaris tityus*).

The White-spotted Sable is a new UK Biodiversity Action Plan species and is the first micromoth ever targeted by NMN. It is a day-flying species in open woodland and grasslands.

Bordered Gothic is known from south-east and east England although it is feared that it is extinct.

Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth is another day-flying species and is also a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species. It frequents unimproved grassland and has been recorded in south Wales.

For the first time NMN is targeting a habitat as well as moth species and the habitat chosen for this year are orchards. These are generally under-recorded and have also recently been designated as a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat.

Please submit your records, either through your County Recorder (see Page 8 of this newsletter for details of your County Recorder) or direct to Butterfly Conservation's headquarters in Wareham

More detail can be seen on the web site <http://www.nationalmothnight.info>



The White-spotted Sable moth, Anania funebris, one of the target species for NMN 2008

© Rob Petley-Jones

County Moth Recorders in Wales

Butterfly Conservation Head Office have recently issued an up-to-date list of the County Recorders for moths throughout the United Kingdom. Below, for reference, are the names and contact information of the Welsh County Recorders

Anglesey - All moths

John Harold, Hen Ardd, Carreg y Gath, Rhiwlas, Bangor, LL57 4HD
Email: jhmoths@yahoo.co.uk
Tel: 01248 361126

Breconshire - All moths

Norman Lowe, 6 Tai Canol, Llan-gorse, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7UR
Email: norman@enviro-consulting.com
Tel: 01874 658453

Caernarvonshire - All moths

Julian Thompson, Pensychnant Conservation Centre, Sychnant Pass, Conwy, LL32 8BJ
Email:
julian@pensychnant.fsnet.co.uk or
julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com

Ceredigion - All moths

Carol Fielding, Countryside Council for Wales, Plas Gogerddan, Aberystwyth, SY23 3EE
Email: c.fielding@ccw.gov.uk

Carmarthenshire - All moths

Jon Baker, 14 Job's Well Road, Carmarthen, SA31 3HG
Email: mothboy8@aol.com

Denbighshire - All moths

Bryan Formstone, 15 Beech Avenue, Gresford, Wrexham, LL12 8EL
Email:
bryanformstone@dsl.pipex.com

Flintshire - All moths

To be confirmed

Glamorgan - All moths

Barry Stewart, 36 Pencaerwn Road, Penyrheol, Gorseinon, Swansea, Glamorgan, SA4 4FU
Email: moonmoths@ntlworld.com
Tel: 01792 539447

Merionethshire - All moths

Andrew Graham, c/o Trawscoed, Llanuwchllyn, Bala, Gwynedd, LL23 7TD
Email: angrhm@globalnet.co.uk
Tel: 01678 540370

Monmouthshire - Macro-moths

Martin Anthoney, 23 Malvern Close, Risca, Newport, Gwent, NP11 6QY
Email:
martin@chemlep.demon.co.uk
Tel: 01633 612272

Monmouthshire - Micro-moths

Sam Bosanquet, 14 Conway Drive, Steynton, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, SA73 1JA
Email: s.bosanquet@ccw.gov.uk

Montgomeryshire - All moths

Peter Williams, Pandy, Commins Coch, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8LG
Email: peter.williams@waitrose.com
Tel: 01650 511583

Pembrokeshire - All moths

Ron Elliott, 10 Flemish Court, Lamphey, Pembrokeshire, Dyfed, SA71 5PA
Email: pembs.leps@tiscali.co.uk
Tel: 01646 672508 (h) 07974948048 (m)

Radnorshire - All moths

Pete & Ginny Clarke, 9 Dany-bryn, Glasbury on Wye, Hereford, HR3 5NH
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Sponsorship of Butterfly Conservation by NFU Mutual

Postage for this newsletter is now paid by NFU Mutual for three issues per year as part of their sponsorship of Butterfly Conservation

