

Local Heritage Initiative – A report of the benefits from grant aid to The Friends of The Cliffe.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Friends of the Cliffe were awarded a Local Heritage Initiative grant during 2000 with the aim of improving knowledge of biodiversity at The Cliffe and to help restore important heathland habitat.
- 1.2 Within the rules of the LHI grant system an end of project report is required to examine the benefits of the award.
- 1.3 This report aims to illustrate the benefits of the grant to The Friends of The Cliffe through a brief insight into the specialist survey work and other aspects that funding enabled during the 2000-2002 period.

2. FINDINGS

- 2.1 The LHI grant funded a range of specialist ecological study over 2000-2002.
- 2.2 This ranged from butterfly recording and moth trapping, detailed survey work of bees, wasps, flies and small mammal recording.
- 2.3 Summaries of the invertebrate recording work are contained within Appendix I of this report. A number of nationally notable and a Red Data Book species were identified directly through LHI funded work.
- 2.4 Specialist invertebrate habitat management advice was sought from a nationally recognised expert.
- 2.5 A summary of the small mammal survey is contained within Appendix II of this report.
- 2.6 LHI funding also enabled:
 - display items for the notice board (see Appendix III)
 - creation of a database of records (see Appendix IV)
 - conversion of photo archive to CD-ROM
 - proper storage of Friends of The Cliffe slide photography archive
 - purchase of Honda generator for group events
 - purchase of tools for volunteer work parties
 - membership of BTCV
 - small group public liability insurance
 - habitat management work – tree felling
 - habitat management work – heather seed sowing
 - habitat management work – ragwort removal

2.7 As well as these benefits other indirect benefits came as from the scheme;

- increased awareness amongst the local community of the project
- increased participation by the local community
- increased contact between The Friends of The Cliffe and local schools
- offers of volunteer time after funding ceased

3. FUTURE BENEFITS

3.1 It is hoped that the group will be able to use the wealth of ecological knowledge acquired during the project period as a spring board to seek protection for the site. We now are beginning to develop an understanding of how important the site is within the county and region and hope to convince others with this knowledge.

THE CLIFFE – INVERTEBRATE SURVEY 2001/2002 PLUS HISTORICAL DATA – REPORT TO THE FRIENDS OF THE CLIFFE.

i. - SUMMARY

1. An invertebrate survey was carried out upon The Cliffe, an area of lowland heath, woodland and old sandstone quarry, between Shrewsbury and Oswestry in Shropshire. The site is approximately 25 hectares in size. In addition to survey work a compilation of other records from 'The Friends of the Cliffe' archive was brought together and combined with new records. This was then supplied back to the group in electronic and paper formats for ease of future use.
2. This report and some expenditure have been financed by a grant from the Countryside Agency under **The Local Heritage Initiative** scheme. Much of the survey work and associated determinations have been carried out on a voluntary basis. An approximate total of 500 hours have been spent on the project split between fieldwork, determining samples and "museum time".
3. Voluntary time was also committed to the project by staff from Liverpool Museum, whom we would like to thank for their time and expertise. In return voucher specimens of some of the species captured during this survey were given to the Liverpool Museum collection.
4. A total of 444 species of insect were identified by a combination of targeted survey work and database searches during the survey period. Of these one Red Data Book species and several Nationally Notable species were found. The following number of groups and species were noted;
 - lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) - 159
 - diptera (true flies) - 109
 - hymenoptera (bees, wasps, ants, galls & sawflies) - 108
 - aranae and opiliones (spiders and harvestmen) - 32
 - coleoptera (beetles) - 15
 - odonata (damselflies and dragonflies) - 10
 - orthoptera (grasshoppers and crickets) - 4
 - isopoda (woodlice) - 3
 - hemiptera (bugs) - 3
 - dermaptera (earwig) - 1
5. The Cliffe was found to be of particular importance for aculeate hymenoptera (bees, ants and wasps) with a good assemblage of species recorded. Also some good records of heathland associated Diptera (true flies) were noted, particularly "robber flies" (Asilidae). Species of importance were noted as follows;
 - aculeate hymenoptera (bees and wasps) – 1 RDB3 species
 - aculeate hymenoptera (bees and wasps) - 6 Notable b species
 - diptera (true flies) – 2 Notable species

- aranae (spiders) – 1 Notable species
- coleoptera (beetles) – 1 Notable species

6. An **RDB3** species is characterised as one which is rare and has been recorded within 15 or fewer modern 10 km squares nationally. A **Notable** characterised as one which is scarce and has been recorded within 16 – 100 10 km squares nationally.
7. As well as rarity value the value of insect assemblages was noted. This was particularly relevant to aculeate hymenoptera and lepidoptera (butterflies). Butterflies recorded included green hairstreak and purple hairstreak, both recognised as of medium regional importance.
8. Habitat management guidance was sought from Carl Clee, a recognised national and international expert, on aculeate Hymenoptera.
9. In conclusion we recommend continued survey and management focussed particularly upon the invertebrate fauna of the site and would wish to see some form of statutory protection given to the site to safeguard this very special piece of lowland heath habitat.

SMALL MAMMAL SURVEY ON THE CLIFFE 2002

A small mammal survey was carried out over the summer and autumn of 2002. The aim was to provide information on what species were present on the site.

All of the Longworth traps used had holes drilled in their sides to prevent shrews from becoming trapped. They were provisioned with both mealworms and a mix of seeds and nuts. The traps were checked twice a day and then reset if necessary.

RESULTS

19th-21st June.

10 traps were left out for 2 nights in the heather/grass area. *Nothing was captured*

9th-11th July.

10 traps were placed along the southern hedge line and left for 2 nights
4 wood mouse were trapped and then released on the 10th

27th-29th July

10 traps were left adjacent to existing mammal runs in the tussocky grass and left for 2 nights. *Nothing was caught.*

18th -21st September

10 traps were set and left for 3 nights. They were placed in pairs:

2 in the grass and bracken next to the new scrape: *2 wood mice 19th, 1 bank vole 20th*

4 in open woodland near to the new scrape: *3 wood mouse 19th, 1 wood mouse 20th, 2 wood mice 21st.*

4 in the hedge line along the southern boundary: *Nothing was caught on any day*

Over the period of the survey 4 of the traps were triggered but when checked were empty, the meal worms having been eaten. This suggests shrews had eaten them before vacating the trap.

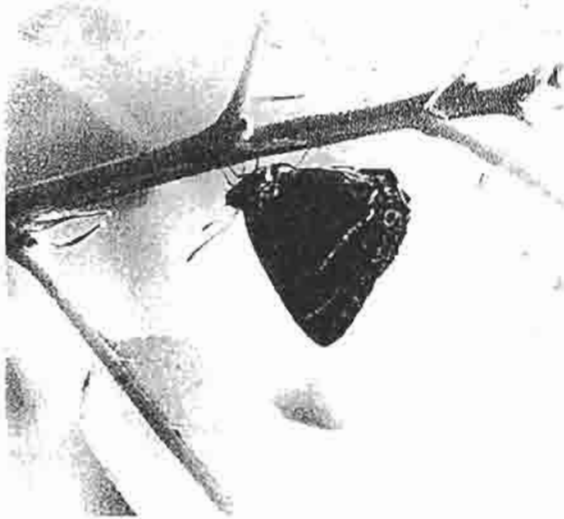
Further to the trapping two hours were spent searching for nibbled hazelnuts and examining the remains. It is possible to identify the species by the teeth marks left behind
Bank voles and squirrels were identified

SUMMARY

Both wood mice and bank vole were found on this site. Empty sprung traps indicated the presence of shrews. Pygmy and common shrews are both likely to be present. Further trapping may produce evidence of other species such as field vole.

The Friends of The Cliffe - *Insects Upon Oak*

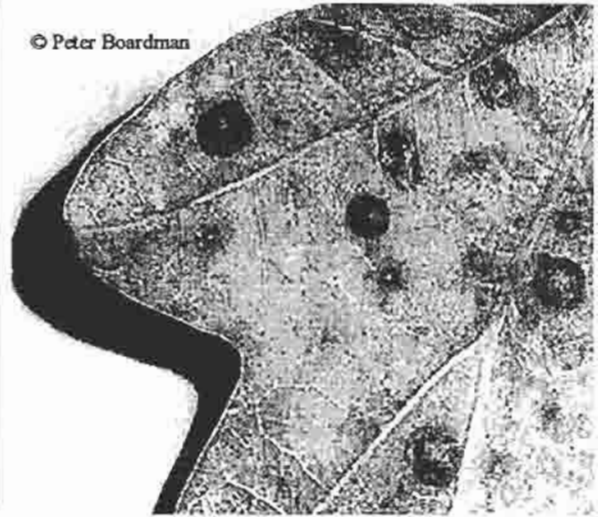
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Look for the **Purple Hairstreak** butterfly during July flying around the tops of Oak trees. Sunny, sheltered canopies are best with afternoon or evening sunshine, though they can be active on sunny mornings as early as six a.m. ! The butterfly spends its' life at the top of the oak feeding upon aphid honeydew instead of plant nectar.

The underside of an oak leaf liberally coated with Common Spangle Galls. The galls are caused by a tiny gall wasp, *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*, females of which emerge in spring and lays eggs on oak buds. The new generation of grubs induce the formation of currant galls on young leaves and buds before the mated females lay eggs on leaves again.

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The Scarcely Silver-Line is a quite uncommon moth away from its' habitat of Oak woodland. It is on the wing from late June through July and this specimen was attracted to a light trap beneath Oak trees on The Cliffe, before being photographed and released.