



MALVERN HILLS CONSERVATORS
MANAGING THE HILLS

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fight continues to save Worcestershire's rarest butterfly

A chance to see one of Worcestershire's rarest butterflies, the Grayling, takes place on Monday, 17th July starting from North Hill car park in Malvern at 11 am. The two-hour walk is led by Mel Mason from West Midlands Butterfly Conservation and provides an opportunity to see how well the butterfly has responded to the huge conservation effort that took place last winter. Already the first Grayling of the season has been reported on 23rd June which is the earliest date ever recorded.

West Midlands Butterfly Conservation (WMBC) has joined forces with the Malvern Hills Trust in an effort to save Worcestershire's rarest butterfly. During last winter, WMBC organised 365 volunteer hours of work while MHT contributed even more volunteer days to improve the habitat particularly around North Hill where the remaining populations survive.

Mel Mason from West Midlands Butterfly Conservation who helped to organise the work said, "The Grayling butterfly has been recorded along the eastern slopes of the Malvern Hills since at least 1853 and once occurred along the full length of the hills. Its range has declined dramatically in recent years and it is struggling to survive. The butterfly needs bare rocks open to the sun around which they fly during a few short weeks in July and lay their eggs on short tufts of fine grasses. Unfortunately, many of these favoured areas are becoming smothered by encroaching gorse, broom and bramble which is bad news for the butterfly".

Mark Roberts, Deputy Conservation Officer for Malvern Hills Trust said, "Large areas of scrub have been removed from the rocky outcrops that are essential for the Grayling's survival. Re-establishing more open grassland on the higher slopes with a mix of trees and scrub on the lower slopes encourages the greatest diversity of wildlife for everyone to enjoy."

West Midlands Butterfly Conservation are hoping that the Grayling will respond to the work undertaken and the population will rise.

The event on 17th July is the first of three Grayling walks organised by WMBC, MHT, and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust during July 2017. Please contact Mel Mason on malverngrayling@btinternet.com for more information about the walks and how people can assist with future conservation efforts

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

A photograph showing a Grayling butterfly is attached. For further photos or other information please contact Mel Mason.

Butterfly Conservation is the largest insect conservation charity in Europe with nearly 15,000 members in the UK. Its aim is the conservation of butterflies, moths and their habitats. It runs conservation programmes on over 60 threatened species of butterfly and moth and manages over 30 nature reserves. Further information www.butterfly-conservation.org Much work is delivered through the charity's regional branches and the West Midlands branch holds an annual programme of events aimed at raising awareness of the region's butterflies and moths (www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk)

The **Malvern Hills Trust** manage over 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres) of land on the Hills and Commons of Malvern. The Conservators were established under the Malvern Hills Act 1884. There have been four subsequent Acts in 1909, 1924, 1930 and 1995. The Malvern Hills Acts were set up to protect the rights of Commoners and the public and to prevent encroachment on the Malvern Hills, lands and commons.

Under these and other relevant Acts the Malvern Hills Conservators shall manage the Hills to:

- Preserve the natural aspect
- Protect and manage trees, shrubs, turf and other vegetation
- Prevent unlawful digging and quarrying
- Keep the Hills open, unenclosed and unbuilt on as open spaces for the recreation and enjoyment of the public
- Conserve and enhance biodiversity, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Scheduled Ancient Monuments on its land.

The Conservators are also a registered charity (charity number 515804)

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Mel Mason (West Midlands Butterfly Conservation) on 01684 565700
Beck Baker (Malvern Hills Conservators) on 01684 892002

The earliest Grayling ever recorded emerged on 23rd June 2017

