

The Butterfly Observer

Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Newsletter No.53



**Butterfly
Conservation**

AUTUMN Issue 2012

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1. Chairman's Message

After a pretty wet, and thus poor butterfly summer, I write these few lines with something of a heavy heart, as we have had quite a shake-up of the Branch committee since the last newsletter. Sadly I have to report the death of Steve Hoskin, a long standing, hard working member of the committee, who leaves a significant void, and whose obituary appears later in this newsletter.

I have also received and accepted the resignations of our Treasurer, Dave Spencer and our Branch Contact, Secretary and Membership Secretary, Keith Wilson.

1. Chairman's Message continued.....

I would like to thank them both for their contributions to the branch.

As Branch Chairman, the committee has asked me to issue the following position statement on behalf of the branch.

The Committee is aware that many (but not all) of you were contacted via an email in late August by our then Branch Secretary Keith Wilson. The email contained a request from our Chairman, Philip Hambly, encouraging our members to offer their services as Secretary, Membership Secretary and Committee members. Unfortunately, Keith also enclosed a personal and private invitation to encourage the membership to support a new "Butterfly Breeding and Release Group" of which Keith is a member, which did not form part of the Chairman's remit.

Some (but not all) of you have received a further communication from Keith, requesting your support at an inaugural meeting of the Breed and Release Group. Several members of Cornwall Butterfly Conservation (CBC) have subsequently contacted the Committee, as they were concerned about the status of such a venture.

CBC have no connection or affiliation with this group or its aims, and will not support any action on the group's part until we are confident that those actions will not conflict with Butterfly Conservation's national policies and directives.

I am pleased to be able to report that we have already recruited a new Secretary, **Amanda Scott**, who has taken up her role, and brings with her a great range of skills, as does **Lyn Wills** who has taken up the post of Membership Secretary, and **Peter Tyler**, who joins the Committee as Treasurer. A warm welcome to them all, and to **Leon Abbott** who has also joined the Committee.

3. Committee Members Sought

Can You Spare a Few Hours per Month?

Cornwall Butterfly Conservation (CBC) are currently recruiting for a couple of **Volunteer Committee Members**. As a Branch we are hoping to continue our growth in membership, and expand our education and conservation work over the coming 12 months.

The people we are looking for will be reliable, methodical and impartial. They will feel comfortable working with others and be willing to explain the work of the Branch.

If you are able to fill one of these important and crucial roles, or would like an informal chat to learn a bit more please contact our Secretary: Amanda Scott on 01209 862792 (evenings only please) or by email at ascott9618@gmail.com.

If you'd like to help with the running of the Branch, initially without any specific responsibilities, please get in touch.

4. Editorial

Well, here we go with my second effort at the Newsletter. If you sent me an article and I haven't printed it, please forgive me, I suffered a catastrophic computer failure the day after the guarantee expired, and lost a lot of data, but hopefully I've retrieved most of it. If you did, and it isn't printed, please re-send it to me at apmcarey@aol.com. I've also been away, and have been celebrating my 60th birthday, which turned into a rather prolonged event, so my apologies for this edition being a little late.

The next edition will hold the **AGM** papers, which is to be held on **Saturday 16th March 2013 at St Erme**, so get the date in your diaries now.

4. Marbled White Introduction At Lethytep

Earlier this year we were advised by Head Office that they were happy for us to attempt an introduction of the marbled white at Lethytep, near to Pelynt. This project has been several years in the planning by Philip. Those of you who have attended any of the events held there will be aware of the work that has been undertaken, and is further described here.

Habitat

First and foremost the habitat has been well prepared over a number of years by Phil Hambly who has ensured that the correct type of grasses i.e. Red Fescue and Sheep's Fescue have been sown, these being the main food plants for the Marbled White, together with an excellent selection of wild flowers for the adult butterflies to nectar on.

Philip's reserve has never contained any Marbled Whites, although the butterfly does exist in a colony approximately 5 miles away, no migration has ever occurred to his property, so that any introduction would not have an impact on any existing Butterflies.

The Marbled White in Cornwall appears to live in small colonies to the east of the County in a line from the river Camel in the North to the Fowey river in the South.

It would seem therefore that to introduce them at Lethytep would not only improve the coverage of the Marbled White in Cornwall but by the method of breeding would provide a colony with much stronger genes than if livestock had been taken from small existing colonies.

Livestock

The original plan was to use the breeding stock which came from Yorkshire to cross breed with Cornish specimens to ...

ensure that the final insects carried some local genes, but due to the awful weather we experienced this year the emergence times at the identified local sites ie (Rock Dunes and Delabole Quarry) varied so much and only specimens from Rock, where large numbers emerged almost at their normal time were used to cross breed.

The Delabole Quarry site was as much as two weeks behind this year and they only appeared in small numbers with a maximum of 12 specimens being seen at any one visit, which was a huge drop from the previous year when it was reported that some 200 had been seen, so obviously no specimens were taken from this site for the breeding programme.

It was only possible to cross breed specimens from Yorkshire with males and females from Rock where early morning visits were made to obtain newly hatched females. This is not 100% accurate but it is unusual for females to mate more than once and these captured specimens were carefully monitored for this reason.

It was unfortunate that the season was such a cold and wet one and this delayed the emergence of the wild specimens, and even the flowers used by the adult Butterflies for sources of nectar (Knapweed and Scabious) were not in bloom.

Four of my bred specimens had emerged prior to those in the wild but these were fed on a honey and water mixture to keep them alive until some wild stock could be obtained.

After a slow start some cross pairings were obtained and a large number of ova were deposited in a cage (which had a black lining) so that the white ova were easy to see.

These together with a good quantity of adult specimens were taken to Lethyep, along with the remaining chrysalids which were about to emerge, the adults were released and they made a wonderful sight flying all over the designated area

Philip had identified as the best spot for the release, the weather was bright and sunny.

The ova were scattered all over the area just as they would have been in their natural habitat and it is understood that the adults were seen flying over the area for quite a number of days.

So despite the bad weather the introduction was completed with perhaps not as many specimens as we had first anticipated, now we have to wait until next year to see if it was a success or failure.

Barry Ofield



Cornish Marbled Whites by
Andrew Carey

5. Steve Hoskin

Paul Browning writes:

It is with great sadness and a sense of loss that I report the death of Steve Hoskin, a committee member of Cornwall Butterfly Conservation and a good friend. Steve was born in Cornwall and lived here all his life, much of which was devoted to learning about and caring for wildlife.



Steve joined Butterfly Conservation in 1992. In 1993, in Godolphin Wood (a favourite site of his) he was persuaded by Adrian Spalding to join the committee of the Cornwall branch, of which he remained an active member until his death this year (it was in that same wood that Steve persuaded me to join the committee).

Steve is missed not least for his wealth of knowledge and experience. He took a key role in an official introduction of the High Brown Fritillary to Cabilla Wood, breeding stock taken from Devon. Unfortunately the introduction failed due to factors beyond Steve's control. One of his pet projects was to try to increase the range of the Brimstone in west Cornwall by persuading people to plant Alder Buckthorn trees on their land, using plants propagated by himself and his friend, Phil Harris. For part of his time on the committee his knowledge and experience were put to good use in his role as Conservation Officer for the branch.

In 1999 Steve had an accident at work which left him with a badly damaged leg. From then on he was invariably in discomfort and often suffered serious pain. Despite this he regularly attended field-trips and conservation work days where he was always ready to share his knowledge and

and expertise. When he began focusing attention on Cornwall's beetles he quickly became our field-trip expert on the subject.

On a number of conservation work days his contribution was more immediately appreciated, as he manned the gas stoves and prepared a cooked lunch for the volunteers; these lunches brought people together in a way that cold packed lunches fail to do, and are remembered fondly.

One of the remarkable qualities Steve possessed was that of tolerance. While he often had strong views about things, it was always possible to argue conflicting views without causing any personal conflict; he may not always have agreed with decisions made by the committee or views held by others but he always respected the right of other people to come to their own conclusions based on their own particular experiences.

Despite the constant pain he had to endure from the damaged nerve in his leg, Steve was invariably cheerful in the company of others. His love of nature was infectious and his camaraderie a delight. I have no doubt that all who knew him well will miss him for a long time to come.

Steve's funeral took place at Godolphin Methodist Church on July 10th 2012 and was very well attended. The day was mainly cool and dull, but during our walk to his grave a couple of Ringlets made an apt appearance.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to those who will miss him most: to his daughter Carly, his estranged wife Clare, his mother and three brothers and his partner, Hilary who looked after him to the end.

6. Secrets of the Painted Lady Migration Solved

One of the longest standing mysteries of migration has finally been solved after scientists discovered where the UK's Painted Lady butterfly population goes each autumn.

The butterfly, a common immigrant, migrates from the continent each summer to UK shores in varying numbers.



But up until now scientists did not know if the Painted Lady made the return journey at the end of the summer, like the closely related Red Admiral, or simply died in the UK.

In one of the largest citizen science projects ever conducted, scientists from Butterfly Conservation, the NERC Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Rothamsted Research amongst others, have discovered exactly what happens to Painted Ladies each autumn.

More than 60,000 public sightings of the butterfly during 2009 were collected across Europe including radar images tracking butterfly movements across southern England with 10,000 British observers taking part.

Scientists discovered that the Painted Lady did indeed migrate south each autumn but made this return journey at high altitude out of view of butterfly observers on the ground.

Radar records revealed that Painted Ladies fly at an average altitude of over 500 metres on their southbound trip and can clock up speeds of 30 mph by selecting favourable conditions.

The findings also revealed that the species undertakes a phenomenal 9,000 mile round trip from tropical Africa to the Arctic Circle – almost double the length of the famous migrations undertaken by Monarch butterflies in North America.

The whole journey is not undertaken by individual butterflies but is a series of steps by up to six successive generations so Painted Ladies returning to Africa in the autumn are several generations removed from their ancestors who left Africa earlier in the year.

Richard Fox, Surveys Manager at Butterfly Conservation, was one of the report authors. He said: “The extent of the annual journey undertaken by the Painted Lady butterfly is astonishing. This tiny creature weighing less than a gram with a brain the size of a pin head and no opportunity to learn from older, experienced individuals, undertakes an epic intercontinental migration in order to find plants for its caterpillars to eat.

“Once thought to be blindly led, at the mercy of the wind, into an evolutionary dead end in the lethal British winter, this amazing combination of mass-participation citizen science and cutting edge technology has shown Painted Ladies to be sophisticated travellers.

We are extremely grateful to the many thousands of members of the public who reported Painted Lady sightings and contributed to this extraordinary discovery.”

Radar in Hampshire operated by Rothamsted Research revealed that around 11 million high-flying Painted Ladies entered the UK in spring 2009 with 26 million departing in autumn.

Dr Jason Chapman, a researcher at Rothamsted Research, who led the radar studies of Painted Ladies, said: “The apparent lack of a return migration of the late-summer generation of Painted Lady butterflies was one of the greatest enigmas in insect migration ecology.

But, through a combination of traditional monitoring by butterfly enthusiasts and new radar techniques, we have finally solved this long-standing puzzle. Migrant insects continue to amaze the public and research community alike as they are capable of carrying out the most remarkable journeys."

The results of this fantastic project will be of interest to all who are interested in our migrant butterflies. The report, by Stefanescu *et al* (2012) - **Multi-generational long distance migration of insects: studying the Painted Lady butterfly in the Western Palaearctic**, was published in the International Journal of Ecography in October 2012.



7. Bee Tower Hamlets

Patrick Saunders writes: In February I built these bee towers in my Garden. I have been surprised how quickly they have been used by bees and wasps.

By May bees are resident or present, *Osmia rufa*, *Osmia leania*, *Hylaeus hyalinatus* and *Megachile sp.* By June further bees *Anthrophora furcata* and *Anthidium manicatum* are investigating holes but not sure they are going to be residents.

Five (5) Wasp species are either resident or have been prospecting

Ancistrocerus sp. (prob *oviventris*). *prob Trypoxylon attenuatum* (Slender Wood Borer Wasp) *prob Ectemnius continuus* (a digger wasp) *Chrysis ignita* (a cuckoo wasp) *Trychrisis cyanea* (Ruby tailed wasp) and *Saggya quinquepunctata*.

Saggya quinquepunctata I think is the only sighting in Cornwall since the 1970's, which illustrates how useful such an intervention can be.



Chrysis Ignita
A cuckoo Wasp



Osmia Leania
A Bee



I have had tube based designs of bee houses on a shed for a number of years, but these are more difficult to sit next to and observe. Another advantage of the bee tower block design is that the roof seems a really great place to land on to warm up and then either hunt or forage. The thermal heat sink aspect of the breeze blocks makes them also really attractive.

How to make the Bee Towers

Get a few half or complete breeze blocks. NOT the heavy concrete things but the lighter insulation ones, they may be called thermalite. Stack them so they wont fall down. Drill into the southern faces with a range of drill bits from 3mm -10mm.

Breeze blocks are porous and you need to keep bees dry. So put an overhanging slate with a heavier stone on top.

Philip Hambly, our Chairman, designed some alternative houses, "First I cut the blocks with handsaw to shape the roof, then stuck the slates on with Gripfill. I knock the wooden stake in with sledgehammer, then drill 1/2 inch hole vertically down into the centre of the stake about 5 inches deep.

Use some round 1/2 inch round iron bar about 11 inches long and drop it into the hole drilled into the stake leaving 6 inches sticking up.

Have some 6 x 1 inch tanalised plank, cut it to the length of your block base, drill a 1/2 inch hole in the centre and drop that down over the iron bar to support the block.

Finally drill 1/2 inch hole in the centre of the base of your block and just drop that onto the iron bar. You can lift it off whenever you need to. "

"Simples" says Philip.



8. Field Trip to Lantic Bay Report by Leon Abbott.

On Saturday 8th September some 19 people met Paddy Saunders in the National Trust car park at Lansallos. The weather was hazy sun with high cloud and a gentle breeze, which turned into a glorious afternoon once the cloud passed over.



The main party left the car park at 1.10 or thereabouts, leaving our chairman Philip Hambly to wait for the latecomers (Sean and Jo, but we won't go into why they were late or where they had been!!?)

We went down through the village, and joined the track down through a wooded valley and arrived at the coast path close to West Coombe beach. We set off eastwards, towards Polperro before taking a path to the left which took us to a known Clouded Yellow field, where lunch was taken, but alas, no Clouded Yellows were seen.

After lunch we returned to the coast path, where we saw more butterflies, and some other insects, including a robber fly which gave great views, and photographs were taken. Once back at West Coombe Beach the party split, some to explore the beach, and others took a leisurely stroll back up the hill to the car park. We saw:

- Speckled Wood x 2
- Red Admiral x 6
- Small Tortoiseshell x15
- Small Copper x 4
- Meadow Brown x 25 - 30
- Green veined/small white x 2
- Common Blue x 1
- Holly Blue x 1
- Wall x 1
- Painted Lady x 1

- Silver Y moth x 30+
- Robber Fly x 1

What a lovely, sunny afternoon to finish the field-trip season, and many thanks to Paddy Saunders.



**Cornwall Butterfly Conservation proudly
announce another social evening**

WILD QUIZ!

Saturday 24th November

**St Erme Community Centre
Castle Field, Trispen, nr Truro, TR4 9BH**

Evening starts at 6.30pm - **WILD** Quiz starts
at 8pm

£5.00 per head includes pasty and cake
Licensed bar with good beer

PIT YOUR WITS AGAINST OTHER WILDLIFE LOVERS!

Teams of up to six - Prizes for the **WILD
Winners, **WILD** Losers and the best
WILD Team name!**

WILD gifts & **WILD** goodies to buy and a
WILD raffle.

**To book : contact Jo on 01872 540371 or
Amanda on 01209 862792**

**email : [publicity@cornwall-butterfly-
conservation.org.uk](mailto:publicity@cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk)**

10. Transect Walkers & OwnerSquare Recorders

Let's see your results, please! Don't be shy! If you walked a transect this year or promised to record the species seen in a 10K square then please get in touch with me. You can email me the results, ring me or post a written copy.

If you have been recording the sightings in an area or can remember which species you have seen then please get in touch and we can fill out an OwnerSquare form together. Both of these schemes enable us to get a picture of the numbers and distribution of our Cornish butterflies. We rely on you so please help.

Jim Barker, An Arth, Alexandra Road, St Ives, Cornwall
TR26 1BX; Tel: 01736 794134

Email: jimfrances@talktalk.net



Holly Blue at Pontsmill (Spring 2012) A Carey

11. Porthwarra & Gwennap Head Field Trip

The weather forecast for the day was terrible until after noon so I decided to try and cancel the walk by putting a message on the website. Many apologies for the fact that I failed to turn up since the weather cleared well before noon. Laurie and Helen Oake **did** go for the afternoon & sent me a list of sightings:

1 x Large Skipper, 1 x Clouded Yellow, 2 x Large White, 1 x Small Copper, 25+ Common Blues, 12+ Painted Ladies, 15+ Red Admiral, 15+ Small Tortoiseshell, 1 x Peacock, 5 x Small Pearls, 4 x Wall, 20+ Gatekeeper, 1 x Meadow Brown and 40+ Grayling. Phil Harris also turned up in the afternoon and met several other Butterfly Conservation members on the headland. Other species seen by Laurie and Helen during the summer:

Small Skipper, Silver Studded Blues, Speckled Woods & Ringlets. Small Heaths have also been seen there this summer. In the 10k OwnerSquare SW42 Green veined White & Green Hairstreak were also seen by Laurie and Helen at Kenidjack and Penberth. Many thanks to the Oakes for their sightings.

Next year I will definitely be there whatever the weather!

Jim Barker



Peacock - despite the weather, quite common in my garden this summer.



A flush of 6 spikes of Bee Orchid were found in the Wilderness at Par Beach whilst looking for butterflies! (This is the rough ground between the road and the river at the western end of the beach.)

Andrew Carey

Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Committee & Contacts

Chairman: Philip Hambly
Lethyep, Penadlake, Lanreath, Looe, PL13 2PG (01503) 220385
philip@lethyep.co.uk

Branch Secretary, Amanda Scott
Falmouth (01209) 862792 or mobile 07747 864184
Ascott9618@gmail.com (evenings only please)

Membership Secretary Lyn Wills (details to follow)

Treasurer: Peter Tyler (details to follow)

Newsletter Editor & Press Officer: Andrew Carey
The Barn Polglaze, Fowey PL23 1JZ 01726 833040 (ex dir)
apmcarey@aol.com

Field Trip Organiser: Lee Slaughter
2 Trinity Street, St. Austell. PL25 5LY (01726) 817505 (ex dir)
leelisa1998@aol.com

Transect Co-ordinator: Jim Barker
'An Arth', Alexandra Road, St. Ives. TR26 1BX (01736) 794134
jimfrances@talktalk.net

Conservation Officer: Paddy Saunders
Pasadena, West Looe Hill, Looe PL13 2HJ (01503) 262567
paddysaunders@tiscali.co.uk

Publicity & Fundraising Officer: Jo Poland
1 Two Burrow Hill, Zelah, Truro. TR4 9QH (01872) 540371
publicity@cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk

Webmaster: Shaun Poland
1 Two Burrow Hill, Zelah, Truro. TR4 9QH (01872) 540371
shaun@blackfish.co.uk

Paul Browning
Penhale Jakes Farm, Ashton, Helston. TR13 9SD (01736) 763677

Phil Harris
59 Carnarthen Street, Camborne. TR14 8UP 0775 4583101 (mobile)
phil.harris@duchy.ac.uk

Carly Hoskin
51 Hawthorn Way, Threemilestone, Truro TR3 6TU (01872) 858653
cmhoskin@hotmail.co.uk

Adrian Spalding
Tremayne Farm Cottage, Praze-an-Beeble, Camborne. TR14 9PH (01209) 831517
a.spalding@spaldingassociates.co.uk

Leon Abbott(details to follow)

Contacts:

Recorder: Dick Goodere
3 Churchtown Road, Gwithian, Hayle, TR27 5BX (01736) 753077
gooderes@talktalk.net

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