

# ***The Butterfly Observer***

*Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Newsletter No. 42*



**Chequered Skipper, Glen Loy, near Fort William, Lochaber District, Western Scotland, 1st June 2008.  
Photo © L. Slaughter. Article page 13.**



**Butterfly  
Conservation**

*Winter 2009*

## Editorial

**S**adly, I have to announce the sudden death of Donna Whitlock. She died peacefully in her sleep of a heart attack on Monday 16th February. She was 60 and since moving to Cornwall was a keen supporter of Cornwall Butterfly Conservation and the Cornwall Moth Group. Donna, an enthusiastic lepidopterist, together with her partner Rick Connolly, were often seen supporting us on our field trips. She was also a prolific artist and musician. Full of life with a bouncy personality, she will be sadly missed by us all. We offer our condolences to her family and loved ones at this time.

On page 13 of the last issue, I mentioned the possibility of obtaining permission from the BBC to copy 'Born to be Wild' for distribution amongst our members who may have missed it. Unfortunately this was not possible. My apologies to those who would have liked a copy.

Our main feature in this issue appears on pages 13 to 18 where Lee Slaughter writes a comprehensive article about a visit, with his family, to Fort William, Scotland in search of the Chequered Skipper during late May and early June 2008.

Page 6 sees Sally Foster informing us of the BTCV Butterfly Project on Bodmin Moor whilst Jim Barker, our Transect Coordinator, has written an interesting article about the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) to be found on page 7 with additional information from HQ on pages 8 and 9.

Pages 10 and 11 are taken up with a mention of Cornwall's principal butterfly sites - not complete by any means, so your expert help is needed to make it more comprehensive!

Tim and Sandy Dingle are again holding their fund-raising 'Garden Open' day - details can be found on page 12.

Finally, our field trips for this season can be found on pages 18-23

~ Ed.

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## Chairman's Report – Winter 2009

**Y**o there and a happy New Year to everybody. Last year was probably the wettest summer we have ever lived through, and now it's deep winter and apparently one of the coldest. As I look out of the window and watch people playing snowballs, I long for the heat of the sun, as we all do, just like the hibernating butterflies, so let's cheer up!

Our AGM was a gathering of the great and the good. I worked it out that we had over a thousand years of knowledge to share between us on a cold winter's day. Did anybody count how many brave souls turned out in a force 8 gale with rain etc. to share this event? Was it 40 or 50 people? I didn't think to count. Perhaps someone should have been recording, that's what we're supposed to do with these rare specimens!

Many thanks to Paul Browning for his most interesting slide show. Amongst the slides were a few tricky ones for us to guess at.

Phil Boggis did an excellent job auctioning the books donated by John Cooke and others (I didn't get their names). A total of £168.60 was raised for future funds through donations, the sale of goods and the raffle. The book auction by itself raised over £120. Well done, and a great idea for future meetings and many thanks to the Committee for another year of hard work for the cause. We warmly welcome two new members onto the Committee namely, Christine Hylands and Jim Barker.

Just to prove we're suffering a bad winter, I've been reading some back

issues of our magazine and Roger Lane, in February 2001, beat his 12 year record by seeing all the common species of hibernating butterfly in the wild by the 16th of February, plus a couple of Painted Ladies, one being the rare North African ab. *pallida*. We'll be lucky to see any species this year at the moment with all this snow around. At the moment our field management trip to Luckett, at the weekend, is looking in jeopardy as the place was under snow according to the news this morning but that doesn't mean that we haven't got a chance of an extremely good, warm summer to follow. Only time will tell.

Cheers for now.

~ Phil Harris, Chairman, February 2009.

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## Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Annual General Meeting.

The Annual General Meeting of the above branch was held at Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Headquarters, Allet on Saturday 17th January 2009.

1. Apologies were received from Sally Foster and Carly Hoskin.
2. The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2008 were accepted as a correct record and there were no matters arising.
3. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He was delighted that there seemed to be record attendance and apologised for not having quite enough chairs to accommodate everyone. He thanked the Committee for their hard work over the year and also those non-committee members who contribute so much behind the scenes. He reported that we were sad to see Steve Bassett resign from the Committee and thanked him for the many years of dedication. He was pleased to report that we had two new members willing to stand for the Committee but that there were still vacancies to be filled. Phil commented that we had a television star in our midst following Barry Ofield's appearance on television when he was filmed releasing his home bred Heath Fritillaries at Greenscombe Wood in torrential rain! As far as the Butterfly Year was concerned, although the news was mostly depressing because of the second successive dreadful summer, there were also some positive things to report. Phil mentioned an unusually good year for the Silver Studded Blue on Upton Towans and the discovery of a new Marsh Fritillary site where more webs were counted than anywhere else in Cornwall. This may well turn out to be one of the best sites in the country. Some species were generally down in  
over.....

**Please note deadlines for contributions are as follows:**

- ♦ Winter issue: 1st. February
- ♦ Spring issue: 1st. May
- Autumn issue: 1st. September

numbers while the crashes of other species appeared to be more site-specific. In any case, there might have been under-recording because of the limited fine days available for monitoring. He ended on an upbeat note, reporting that the Jet Stream was now back where it should be and that we were due a good summer!

4. The accounts for the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008 were presented and adopted. The opening balance on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 was £3,683.56 and the closing balance on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008 was £2973.34. The reason that expenditure had exceeded income was because of the donation of £1000 to the Morecambe Bay Project to save the High Brown Fritillary. This was considered to be a very worthwhile project to support and our funds are now on the way to recovery. Phil Harris expressed a personal wish to build up enough funds to purchase our own reserve one day so that it could be managed, as we wanted. Christine Hylands who has volunteered to be our new Membership Secretary said she was also prepared to look at ways of fundraising for the branch.

5. Phil Boggis, Paul Browning, Phil Harris, Steve Hoskin, Carly Hoskin and Jess Tatton Brown submitted themselves for re-election to the Committee. Maggie Goodere, Lee Slaughter and Adrian Spalding retired in rotation but also submitted themselves for re-election. The block election of the committee members was proposed and carried unanimously. Two new committee members, Christine Hylands and Jim Barker were proposed and seconded and duly elected to the Committee. There were no nominations from the Floor.

6. There being no other proposals, the following were confirmed by the meeting as:

Chairman  
Treasurer  
Secretary

Phil Harris  
Paul Browning  
Maggie Goodere

7. Points raised under AOB included the following:

- It was felt important to encourage volunteers by promoting the claiming of expenses when helping with conservation work and it was suggested that there should be a claim form for those involved in working parties which could be downloaded from the website. Obviously, wherever possible, there should be car sharing.
- There was an enquiry about the Marsh Fritillary at Tregonhay (Carbis Moor). There had been much hope for this new site managed by Natural England but unfortunately the rather tenuous population of Marsh Fritillaries seems to have now disappeared, probably through over-grazing.
- The problems relating to the declining population of Heath Fritillaries at Deer Park near Luckett was raised and the need for more than one conservation day per year here was emphasized. Management issues were discussed in relation to both Luckett sites and decisions will have to be made after this year's work as to whether it was worth continuing to

work on Deer Park. The reintroduced Fritillaries at Greenscombe appear to be doing well. Paul Browning has been involved in meetings with the Duchy, Natural England and other interested parties, but the complexity of habitat management is well demonstrated on the Deer Park site. Removal of vegetation, for instance, as Paul pointed out, can sometimes cause even more problematic species to take their place.

- It was suggested that we should explain and pinpoint the location of some of our target areas for conservation work on the web-site, our magazine, or in a separate leaflet so that members had a better understanding of why and where we were targeting resources which in turn may encourage them to get involved. Non-members felt that they could make a better contribution if information was more accessible on the web-site or in the media.
- Jim Barker explained the Transect Butterfly Monitoring scheme and also outlined proposals by BC to introduce a new scheme which will involve random 1km squares within which volunteers are requested to walk (two parallel lines across the square) recording butterflies twice a year in July and August. This will have the advantage of requiring much less time commitment and will be less biased towards butterfly rich places. Jim would welcome new volunteers and an interesting suggestion was made to contact other wildlife organizations such as the Cornwall Bird watching Preservation Society to see if their members would be prepared to submit data in relation to butterflies while out in the field. Other non BC members could be invited to participate via the web-site.
- The Committee had been contacted in relation to the Cornwall Biodiversity Initiative to provide a representative to sit on the Committee three times a year. No volunteers were forthcoming but it was suggested that representation may be on a rotational basis and hopefully this will be sorted out at the next committee meeting.
- A suggestion was made that the Committee should be empowered to make an award to individuals or organizations outside the membership of BC but who had made an outstanding contribution to Butterfly Conservation. This was endorsed by the membership.

8. Paul Browning then delivered his illustrated presentation entitled "Through the Year with Cornish Butterflies". There was something for everyone in his talk as he reviewed last year's butterfly successes and failures, addressed conservation issues and challenged our identification skills. He also showed stunning photographs, mostly taken by himself and other local branch members, including some very unusual butterfly aberrations. Members also enjoyed making their own contributions to Paul's observations and there was good audience participation!

9. The Chairman thanked Paul for his excellent presentation. Refreshments were served and the raffle was drawn. The final event of the day was the auctioning of books kindly donated by John Cooke, which raised over £120. Many thanks for John's generosity.

~ Maggie Goodere (Secretary)

## Thanks to BTCV for another Year of Work on Bodmin Moor.

### BTCV Butterfly Project on Bodmin Moor.

**T**he BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) butterfly project focused on the Marsh Fritillary and Pearl-bordered Fritillary on Bodmin Moor and this summary covers the achievements of their last round of funding. The SITA funding for the project came to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 and ran from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007. In this time frame BTCV delivered 32 practical conservation days and 4 survey days. In total BTCV have worked at 10 different sites on the moor.



**Tom David guiding volunteers and a local landowner on a Pearl-bordered Fritillary Survey Day at De Lank Quarry.**

They worked with 136 different volunteers as well as 25 students from Sir James Smith School in Camelford and 12 students with learning difficulties from Duchy College in Wadebridge. In total, over the period of the project, it

amounts to approximately 400 volunteer days. Throughout the project, Tom David (Coordinator for the project) tried to recruit local volunteers but the success of this has been limited and this is an area where we must keep working.

Natural England, through Dave Hazlehurst and George Brew, has also used BTCV to carry out work on the Moor. This has included running a natural break at Kerrow Common (near Blisland) and repairing hedges and hanging gates at Fellover Brake.

Links with landowners, Dominic Fairman and Ian Skinner (De Lank Quarry), have been further developed and new links made with landowners such as Dave and Angela Clark at Tor Down Quarry. This has been a key factor to the success of the project.

CBC organises a programme of winter conservation days dedicated to improving the habitat for BAP species. Cornwall is fortunate in having good populations of BAP species and members of CBC are very keen to prevent any further declines in our rare butterflies. However, finding enough able members to work on the numerous sites is extremely hard work. It has therefore been very rewarding for members of CBC to work with BTCV to halt the decline of these very important species.

During the BTCV project a great deal of work was achieved to improve habitats. Monitoring of several sites has been on going for several years and an

improvement of butterfly numbers has been detected on some sites. Habitat management at De Lank quarry has been particularly encouraging and butterfly numbers have increased.

During this and the previous project there has been a good working relationship with other organisations. Phil Harris (Chairman of CBC) and Peter Mycock from Duchy College have joined forces on some conservation days and will be continuing their good work on several sites. Thanks also to Caroline Bulman for her input into the conservation of the Fritillaries on Bodmin Moor. Also the Natural England staff, Dave Hazlehurst and George Brew have taken a keen interest in the survival of these species and have been very supportive to Tom David. CFAG continue to guide conservation work on the Moor and are actively seeking further funding to continue all the good work carried out by many different people and organisations. Ash Pearson from BTCV has kindly volunteered to make a further funding bid so all the good work of the past few years is not wasted and we can build on the very good relationships that have developed with some of the landowners and local residents.

~ Sally Foster, August 2008.

*My apologies to Sally for overlooking this article which should have appeared in the autumn edition.*

~ Ed.

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## **Transects, Squares and the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS)**

**W**hat is a transect? It is not a crossword but a country walk. Frances and I have been walking our particular transect up a country lane near St. Ives since 2001. Frances needs to attend to her horse every afternoon and then walk the dog; it is a simple matter to always have a notebook in the car. If the conditions are suitable then a count is done. At least one walk a week is required by the scheme and even in 2008 it was possible to do the walk in good sunshine and at 14 degrees plus every week between April and October. Frances has improved her knowledge of butterflies from Large Whites in 2000 to almost all the Cornish species. When looking for butterflies you also see other insects and plants so therefore the interest increases.

At present Cornwall has eleven transects logged with Butterfly Conservation and up to five more are intended for next year. UK-wide, there are over 1300. It is a heavy commitment to walk a transect unless, like us, you have another reason for being on the walk. At Gwithian Green they have a rota and that works well. The data for all these transects is sent to BC in the first instance who then pass the data to UKBMS.

So what is the UKBMS? The United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, although it uses volunteers, has some funding from DEFRA to produce figures for butterflies and thereby biodiversity. Butterflies are sensitive and very visible indicators of environmental change. Now there are some problems with transects; it is a big time commitment and we tend to monitor the favourable places. Who finds over.....



a poor piece of ground to walk when a butterfly-rich one is available? So the figures will give a biased and probably rose-tinted view of the numbers UK wide.

This brings me to the squares. This is a new idea, copied from the British Trust for Ornithology and has been piloted in four areas so far: Highland, Norfolk, Somerset plus Bristol and South Wales. Random 1km. squares are set up and volunteers are requested to walk two parallel lines across the square twice a year in July and August. This requires a lot less time commitment and will provide a more complete set of data for the scheme. Finding a route across the square is usually the most complicated part of the operation as some or all of it may be private land. This is where good negotiating skills come in. Results so far have been encouraging with 42 of the British species being counted along with one Queen of Spain Fritillary. The scheme is to go national this year so we are on the lookout for volunteers. Any offers? Norfolk managed 27 squares in 2007 and were the best with South Wales and Highland managing 13 each.

Yes, there is help available. Volunteers do not even have to know their butterflies although it will be easier if they do. Demonstration walks or even workshops can be set up to help in this respect and if we have enough volunteers then a square very close to your home should be available. British Trust for Ornithology walkers will be asked, through their scheme, to help and this should swell the numbers. Please contact me or Maggie Goodere, our secretary, if you can help, or even if you would be interested in knowing more:

Jim Barker, Transect Coordinator for Cornwall Tel: 01736 794134. Full details are on the back cover of this magazine.

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*Following on from Jim's excellent article, and not wanting to 'steal his thunder', I have been asked by Headquarters to publish the following which also gives further background information.*

*~ Ed.*

## **The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) goes ahead in 2009**

**By Dr Katie Cruickshanks, WCBS Coordinator**

**A**fter two years of pilot testing, a new method of monitoring butterflies in widespread habitats, such as farmland and upland moorland, is to be rolled out nationwide this year.

The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey method has been developed by Butterfly Conservation and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology as part of the UKBMS project.

The existing transect network provides invaluable data on the status of butterflies, yet widespread habitats are under-recorded. More information on the fate of butterflies in these areas is needed. The new survey is intended to fill these gaps by complementing, rather than replacing, the existing transect network.

The pilot testing has thrown up some interesting information. Last year, despite the unsettled weather, nearly two thirds of the 1km squares visited in 2007 were revisited by volunteers. In total 40 species were recorded.

Importantly all 23 target species were detected in both pilot years which means that trends can be analysed to test whether classic transects provide



a truly representative picture of butterflies in the UK landscape as a whole.

Volunteers who have participated in the pilot testing have shown considerable enthusiasm and it is hoped this will continue to grow.

There has been close involvement with the British Trust for Ornithology and the method is based on the highly successful Breeding Bird Survey. We hope that many BTO recorders will be returning to their bird sites this summer to collect butterfly data as part of the survey along with many new surveys completed by BC recorders.

The new method involves making a minimum of two visits to a randomly selected square near to your home between May and August to count butterflies along two 1km. survey lines running roughly north-south through your square. The survey will be coordinated centrally by BC but we aim to find a champion in each branch to help find willing volunteers. We are aiming for 20 squares per branch.

Please email [survey@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:survey@butterfly-conservation.org) or call 01929 406036 to register interest in taking part and you will be contacted in early spring with instructions and the location of your random 1km. survey square. Keep an eye on [www.butterfly-conservation.org/wcbs](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/wcbs) for more information.

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*Following on from a recent request from Headquarters regarding the reporting of any sightings of the Large Tortoiseshell, some records were sent in to Headquarters with specific reference to reports found in the Butterfly Observer issues 30 and 32. Below is Headquarters' reply:*

*~ Ed.*

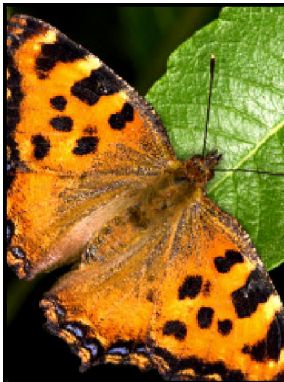
## **News from Headquarters:**

**8 January 2009**

### **Experts cannot confirm recent claims of a re-colonisation...**

**A**ccording to recent reports the extinct Large Tortoiseshell butterfly is making a comeback. Scientists at Butterfly Conservation can find little evidence to support these claims.

Richard Fox, Surveys Manager said: "It is far too early to say it has



re-colonised Britain. All we have had is more than usual numbers seen - but it could be more than usual numbers migrating to Britain from Europe, or butterflies being released by irresponsible breeders.

It would be fantastic news for the butterfly world if the Large Tortoiseshell did re-establish itself here as a native species and there is a chance it might. The fact the Large Tortoiseshell continues to thrive on the Continent suggests it may one day get a foothold back in Britain, as long as habitat is protected and the weather allows."

If you spot a Large Tortoiseshell, Butterfly Conservation would love to hear from you. Please email details of your sighting and a digital photograph to [info@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:info@butterfly-conservation.org) and also to our local recorder, John Worth at: [jowan@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jowan@tiscali.co.uk)

At our 2009 AGM we were asked to provide general information for volunteers and friends who would like to join us on Conservation Days, transect walks and field trips. The details of these field trips maybe found, from time to time, in links and notices on our web-site at: [www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk](http://www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk), particularly those of the BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers). We would like to remind everyone that these events are open to all, and are not restricted to members only.

To assist newcomers and casual visitors, especially those who join us for the summer holidays, a map has been drawn up of our more common colony sites and the principal butterflies found there. Compiled February 2009.

Welcombe & Marsland NR, Devon & Cornwall Wildlife  
 Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
 Silver-washed Fritillary  
 Dark Green Fritillary  
 Marbled White  
 Purple Hairstreak  
 Ringlet  
 Dingy Skipper  
 Occasional Grizzled Skipper

National Trust, Dannon chapel (SX0382)  
 Large Blue  
 Grayling  
 Small Copper  
 Green Hairstreak  
 Occasional Silver-studded Blue

Rock Dunes (SW9375)  
 Marbled White  
 Green Hairstreak  
 Small Copper

Penhale Sands (Perranporth) (SW7757)  
 Silver-studded Blue  
 Dark Green Fritillary  
 Brown Argus  
 Common Blue  
 Grizzled Skipper (ab. *taras*)  
 Dingy Skipper  
 Small Copper  
 Small Heath  
 27 species in total found here

Bunny's Hill, Bodmin (SX11)  
 Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
 Small Pearl-bordered  
 Dark Green Fritillary  
 Silver-washed Fritillary

Hayle (Upton Towans, Phillack (SW5740)  
 Silver-studded Blue  
 Brown Argus  
 Dark Green Fritillary  
 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary amongst other common species

Goss Moor (SW9360)  
 Grizzled Skipper  
 Small Pearl-bordered  
 Dingy Skipper  
 & Small Copper amongst others

Porthgwarra (SW3721)  
 Grayling  
 Dark Green Fritillary  
 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
 Wall Brown  
 Small Heath

Cudden Point (SW5427)  
 Silver-studded Blue  
 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (2nd brood)

Kynance Cove, The Lizard (SW6813)  
 Grayling  
 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
 Wall Brown  
 Small Copper  
 Clouded Yellow (most summers)

Truists (SS2117)

Although not an exhaustive list of sites or species, the main ones are included and will be updated occasionally. You would be unlucky not to find the species listed at these sites in season. Not included are the wide ranging species such as the Speckled Wood, Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Comma, Peacock and Painted Lady and neither are rarities such as the Large Tortoiseshell, Monarch, Camberwell Beauty and High Brown Fritillary as well as other rare migrants.

Tuckingmill & Lank area,  
Bodmin Moor (SX 0977)  
Pearl-bordered Fritillary,  
Small Pearl-bordered  
Fritillary  
& Marsh Fritillary amongst  
others

Luckett, (Greenscombe Wood)  
(S X3972)  
Heath Fritillary  
Marbled White  
Ringlet  
Small Copper  
Silver-washed Fritillary

Brenay Common with  
Red Moor (SX0561)  
Marsh Fritillary  
Small Pearl-bordered  
Small Heath  
Silver-studded Blue  
Green Hairstreak  
Small Copper

Murrayton Monkey Sanctuary  
coast path (SX 2854)  
Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
Dingy Skipper & others

Rame Head & Penlee Point (SX4249)  
Possible Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary  
Green Hairstreak  
Clouded Yellow (most summers) &  
many more

If you are a member of a local Bird Watching Preservation Society or the British Trust for Ornithology, we welcome your butterfly sightings at these sites or indeed any others when you're out and about. In fact, you do not have to be a member of any wildlife society to share your records or sightings with us or join us on field trips and Conservation Days. All records to: [jowan@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jowan@tiscali.co.uk) or 20 St. Clare Flats, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 2PR.

Tim and Sandy Dingle are again hosting another 'Garden Open' day at their home at Poundstock. All monies raised will be in aid of Cornwall Butterfly Conservation for which the Committee and members are very grateful. Last year they managed to raise £166-80. **They have asked whether any who are good at arts and craft can help out with the children's activities (making butterfly wings).** If you can, please contact Tim or Sandy on 01288 361356 ~ Ed.

## Garden Open for Butterflies

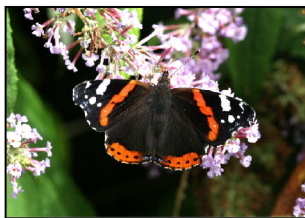


Butterfly  
Conservation

### THE BARN HOUSE HIGHER PENHALT, POUNDSTOCK

Take the Millook road by the Widemouth Manor Hotel  
and follow the signs on the day.

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July**  
**11 – 5 pm**



As well as an interesting and colourful garden, there is a walk on which a variety of butterflies should be seen. Children will have the opportunity to make butterfly wings. There will be a Butterfly Conservation display and plant stall.

**CREAM TEAS**

## Revisiting a Colony of the Chequered Skipper Butterfly in the Fort William Region of the Western Highlands of Scotland during the Summer of 2008.

I first made the long drive to Fort William in the Western Highlands of Scotland during the summer of 1988 in the hope of finding this beautiful, rare and most localised of our skipper species. I had absolutely no idea of where to look as during the 1980's there were no 'Site Guides' books to show you exactly where to



Ben Nevis, Fort William, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2008. Photo © L. Slaughter.

find all of our nation's species (especially the rare ones) - down to the nearest 6 figure map reference, so armed with my cherished two part photo ID paperback of 'British Butterflies' by George E. Hyde published in 1973 by Jarrold, I spent 5 days in blistering hot weather sleeping in my car by night, avoiding millions of midges and trekking along edges of for-

ests, woods and streams. I found myself wading through thigh high tracts of uninhabited land, mainly in Glens within 10 miles or so of Fort William. On the third day I chanced to drive along the 5 mile single track road in the virtually uninhabited Glen Loy which follows the winding river Loy about 6 miles north of Fort William, just west of the Caledonian Canal. It was ideal for parking off road to sleep in the car for economy reasons. It was there that I saw an unfamiliar species rapidly darting between the grass and Bog Myrtle and it alighted on a frond of Bracken. To my delight I realised it was a Chequered Skipper in a fairly worn state but it sat there basking in the bright sunshine for me to enjoy for 30 seconds or so. I saw 4 more that day which were all worn and concluded that the 14th of June must be fairly late in their flight season. I found the species at no other location over the next two days and headed south in search of the Swallowtail in the Norfolk Broads.

I returned each year for the following seven years, for short breaks during late May or the first week in June, and found this delightful little species in several locations and in much fresher condition than in 1988. It seems that 2-3 weeks earlier is the main emergence for this species. I always visited Glen Loy as my main area since I had discovered it there. Every year there were a good number of adults flying in a fairly restricted area about 4 miles along the little road, in amongst sparse, low growing Bog Myrtle on slightly boggy ground within 20 yards of the river Loy, which unless preceded by drought, always necessitated the wearing of Wellington boots. What a delight it was to watch fresh Chequered Skippers flitting amongst the vegetation, the males furiously chasing off other males who ventured into their

over....



territory, returning 20 seconds later to exactly the same leaf on the same branch of the same Bog Myrtle bush. Females of this species were not often seen with only 3



**Glen Loy, Lochaber, Fort William. Chequered Skipper colony breeding habitat. 7<sup>th</sup> June 2008. Photo © L. Slaughter.**

or 4 of them to every 20 - 30 males! I was later to read in several books that the female of this species, once mated, wanders off for up to 1 mile or more in search of egg laying opportunities. The most prolific year, in my experience, was a single day's visit on 1st June, 1992 in hot sunshine

when I must have seen over 50 Chequered Skippers at this colony which seemed to centre around an area of 80 yards long by 30 yards wide. This presumably had a perfect microclimate, which ideally suited this lovely species. 1995 came a close second with at least 35 different adults seen over a 3-day period.

I only visited Scotland twice more over the following few years and to different locations, 1997 and 2000, but not during the quite short flight period of this species.

Life was busy after this with getting married and having two children and although always yearning to return to the Fort William area of Scotland in early June, I always made excuses why I could not justify the



**Glen Loy, Lochaber, Fort William, 1<sup>st</sup> June. First Chequered Skipper to be photographed. Photo © L. Slaughter.**

time or expense to undertake the 1300 mile round trip from my home in Cornwall. However, my wife and I vowed to have a one week holiday somewhere in the United

Kingdom during the summer of 2008, so I suggested taking our two young sons aged 4 and 2 to Fort William, although sleeping/camping in the car was obviously



**Mating pair of Chequered Skipper butterflies '*carterocephalus pal-aemon*' photographed by Lee Slaughter at Glen Loy, Near Fort William, Lochaber region of Western Scotland on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2008. Camera – Canon 350D Digital SLR with a Tamron 90D Macro lens.**

out of the question! A lovely looking cottage was found on the Internet and booked for the 1<sup>st</sup> week of June, which had fine views of Ben Nevis and was only 3 miles from Glen Loy where the Chequered Skipper butterfly used to be found!

We drove up over two days, 30th to the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2008, arriving at our rented cottage in blazing sunshine at about

4.30pm on the Saturday afternoon and unpacked our bags. We had a fairly early night but could not keep any light on after 10.00pm as many midges would appear out of thin air and bite within a couple of minutes of turning on any inside light! However, it was daylight by 3.00am due to being much further north than at home in Cornwall.

After hearing the early dawn birds singing and returning to sleep, I eventually awoke at 7.45am, got up and dressed before anyone else had woken. I headed out in the car and drove the few miles to Glen Loy. The sky was clear blue and it was already quite hot in the bright sunshine. Arriving at the start of the road to Glen Loy, I



**Photo of mating pair taken after moving from bracken to grass. Glen Loy, Fort William, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008. Photo © L. Slaughter.**

I wondered if there had been any major changes in the land management or had much of it been razed to the ground for coniferisation since my last visit 13 years ago? My concerns were

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unfounded as the first mile looked just as I had remembered it. I parked about 1½ miles down the road and from there I walked amongst the trees next to the road, to a small clearing near a forestry wire fence, which looked suitable for seeing a wandering butterfly. Within 10 minutes a familiar insect was seen 'skipping' past me, and came to rest on the Purple Moor-Grass '*molinia caerulea*' with its wings open. The Chequered Skipper was still at Glen Loy! The golden yellow spots on its wings are in stark contrast to the dark brown almost black base colour and is like no other species found in Britain - it makes a fantastic sight. Alas! As soon as I dared to dig my camera out from my bag it shot off and disappeared. I decided to press on, driving further into the Glen to where the main colony used to be centred more than a decade ago.

Upon approaching the site of the colony, as I had remember it, I noticed that a huge swathe of conifers on the other side of the river Loy must have been felled a few years ago and planted with another crop of what looked like 50,000 or so Christmas trees that will once again cover the lower slopes of those nearby hills. This had meant that for some years there had obviously not been as much shelter for the colony, situated on this side of the river, which the conifers had once afforded. Had this had any effect? I parked at my old small pull in/passing place and started walking into familiar territory, feeling quite anxious as to what I would see.

The habitat looked pretty much as it had done 13 years ago although it was quite dry due to this area of Scotland having suffered drought-like conditions for the last 4 weeks with virtually no rain! After 25 minutes had passed I had seen NO Chequered



**Chequered Skipper, Glen Loy, Lochaber, Fort William, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008.**  
Photo © L. Slaughter.

Skippers at all and, as I knew this species liked the close proximity of moisture or a stream or small river, I walked slowly eastwards towards the start of the Glen, following the River Loy. Eventually, after nearly half a mile, I spotted a Chequered Skipper and took several photographs. I then saw two more within a few seconds of each other! There was a small ditch, which was no more than a couple of feet deep but quite long and was very sheltered which was attracting the butterflies. Altogether I saw at least 8 Chequered Skippers along the length of this ditch, all of which I think were males and each one defending its own little piece of territory within the ditch. The ditch was no more than 10 yards from the riverbank, and

retained more moisture than most of the rest of the surrounding habitat. I walked around a corner, through a couple of Birch trees and suddenly I saw an unfamiliar butterfly flying awkwardly towards me, chased by a Chequered Skipper. It came to a halt and revealed itself as a mating pair of Chequered Skippers being harassed by a male of the same species! How lucky was I?

All this, and it was not even 10.00am on my first full day here! The oversexed male flew off leaving this mating pair to their personal business and me to take some lovely photographs of them 'in cop'. In all the years I have seen this species I have never observed a pair mating. Maybe, I suppose, I have not been looking at the right time of day, as it was barely mid-morning.

I was about half a mile from where I used to see the butterflies back in the 1990's and can only assume that over the years they had moved, little by little, further eastwards as the microclimate changed. There is much habitat in this and other glens which looks similar but it is only when you walk into it and take a closer look, that it then reveals the small differences in vegetation, and other factors, such as the ground level or nearby shelter from trees, Bog Myrtle bushes or light, casual grazing which affects the microclimate, making all the difference to this species' requirements.

Up until 11.30am, I saw at least 28 Chequered Skippers, mainly males but probably 3 or 4 females. The sun was very hot, and annoyingly, there were a large number of flies that would simply not leave the vicinity of my head! Again, I had noticed that where a colony exists, most are males, as the females wander some distance away looking for suitable egg-laying sites.

I returned to my family by 11.45am, very hot and tired and ready to take them up on the gondola cable car and into the mountains at Anoch Mor, near Ben Nevis. There is a restaurant up there at 2,250 feet altitude where we had lunch. However, it clouded over during the afternoon with light drizzle, so I was glad that I had ventured out early that morning to see the butterflies in the sunshine because this species just disappears when the sun goes in and then it is like looking for a needle in a haystack!

I visited Glen Loy once more, 3 days later, again fairly early in the morning and whilst I did not see a mating pair, I did see a similar number of Chequered Skippers and took some good photographs with my digital camera. On both days however, the most numerous species by far was the Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillary butterfly, which must have been flying in their hundreds! Whatever the perilous state of this fritillary species back in England, there certainly is no cause for concern, at present, for this species in this area of Scotland!

One interesting moth, which I had noticed on both the days I was in Glen Loy was the Argent & Sable which tends to fly between the Birch trees but seems to be difficult to get near enough to photograph. Once seen, this moth cannot be mistaken, in flight, for any other, such is the contrast in its black markings and lovely white wings. Another moth found here was the very interesting sub-species '*scotica*' of the Pebble Hook-tip, which obliged nicely for my camera. This is far paler than the main species '*falcataria*' found further south in England.

My wife and I were lucky enough, later in the week, to see and photograph a female Chequered Skipper in the garden of our rented cottage nectaring on  
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flowers on a grassy bank by the edge of the lawn! This species would not breed here as the habitat is unsuitable however, this shows that the female of this



species does wander quite some distance from its colony in search of egg-laying sites and of course would need to take on board nectar to keep up her strength.

It is heartening to note that despite all the threats to most of our native butterflies, the Chequered Skipper seems destined to survive, at least in Glen Loy, for the foreseeable future, even if the butterfly shifts its breeding area when certain conditions dictate.

**Pebble Hook-tip (*Drepana falcatoria* ssp. *scotica*). Much paler than the English species. Glen Loy, Fort William, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008.**

**Photo © L. Slaughter.**

I can thoroughly recommend this beautiful and wild area of Scotland to anyone who loves the great outdoors and the wildlife that inhabits it. Do take on board however, that whilst my family and I enjoyed wonderful weather for most of the week, we were quite fortunate, as this region has a higher than average rainfall compared to most other parts of Britain. If you leave a trip like this for seeking out this wonderful butterfly to the last minute, and the weather forecast is poor, it is better not to risk it because this species loves sunny weather. Years ago many frustrating hours were wasted by me looking for roosting adults in overcast conditions - all to no avail. Once I searched fruitlessly for 3 hours and then the sun came out for 10 minutes and I saw 4 adults during that time. They all disappeared again as soon as the sun went behind the clouds! You need a lot of dedication and a great deal of patience, which will hopefully be rewarded eventually. If anyone is interested in visiting this area in search of this species then I will be happy to assist in giving local details to help you find the butterfly.

My sincere thanks for the patience and support of my wife Lisa Slaughter and sons Robert and Michael without which this trip would not have been possible.

~ Lee Slaughter, February 2009.

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## **CBC Butterfly and Moth Field Meetings 2009.**

### **Saturday 25th April - 10:30 - Monkey Sanctuary Coast path at Murrayton.**

Yes! You can see the Pearl-bordered Fritillary in April at this site due to its sheltered southern aspect. Other species include, Speckled Wood, Green-veined White, Small Copper, Common Blue, Orange-tip and possible Dingy Skipper. Please bring a packed lunch and good walking boots.

Leader – Paddy Saunders - Phone 01503 262567 for directions and further details. Meet at map ref. SX285546, in Murrayton Monkey Sanctuary car park. ***(Please note; the sanctuary will not be open and no one should wander off, away from the car park without Paddy Saunders present to guide you through to the cliff path.*** This meeting will be deferred to the next day at the same time if the weather is inclement. Please advise Paddy if you are coming.

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May - 1:00pm – West Goss Moor, Nr. Indian Queens.**

The course of this old railway line harbours one of only two surviving colonies in Cornwall. We will be looking for egg laying female Grizzled Skippers noting their egg laying sites. We may also try a nearby area of Goss Moor to see if there is another population extant of this species where there was a recent reliable record. Dingy Skippers should also be seen!

Leader – Phil Harris.

Meet at map ref. SW931599, on the lay-by along the old A30.

For details and directions phone Phil Harris on 07845 984426.

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May - 2:00pm – Bunny's Hill, Nr. Cardinham, Bodmin Moor.**

Bunny's Hill is an easily accessible site and is one of the best places in Cornwall to see the Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly at close quarters. Please do bring your camera as photography is comparatively easy at this locality. Brimstones are usually seen together with Small Heath, Holly Blue, Orange-tip and possible Dingy Skipper. There is plenty of easy parking available.

Leader – Lee Slaughter.

Meet at map ref. SX117675, at the fork in the road.

For details and directions phone Lee Slaughter on 01726 817505.

**Thursday 21st May - 11:00am De Lank Quarry, St. Breward, Bodmin Moor.**

***\*\*\* Please note that this trip is on private land and must be pre-booked with Sally Foster in advance by ringing her on the phone number below giving your name and the numbers wishing to attend. Strictly limited numbers only as De Lank Quarry is a working quarry! \*\*\****

We will be seeking out existing colonies of Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries and looking carefully to see if these have spread. We will also be looking for new ones, since large amounts of habitat management work have been carried out over the last few years in this area of Bodmin Moor by various organisations and local landowners who are hoping to benefit this species. Other spring species should also be seen. Bring a packed lunch and good walking boots.

Leader – Sally Foster.

Meet at map ref. SX098754, in De Lank Quarry car park.

For details and directions phone Sally Foster on 01736 753259.

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May - 1:00pm – Fellover Brake, Tuckingmill, St. Breward.**

This site still holds one of Cornwall's finest colonies of the nationally threatened Pearl-bordered Fritillary which can be seen over a wide area of well managed bracken covered hillside. Walking boots are essential due to the steeply sloping and uneven site. Orange-tip and Brimstone should also still be on the wing.

Leader – Phil Harris.

Meet at map ref. SX089779, in the small lay-by at Gam Bridge.

For details and directions phone Phil Harris on 07845 984426.

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**Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May - 1:00pm – Breney Common, Nr. Lanlivery.**

Our annual visit to probably Cornwall's largest Marsh Fritillary colony. Good numbers of this species should be seen together with Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Heath, Brimstone, Green Hairstreak and usually, a few interesting moths too! Photography is easy at this site so do bring your camera and good walking boots. Leader – Phil Boggis.

Meet at map ref. SX053610, Breney Common car park.

For details and directions phone Phil Boggis on 01726 66124.

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June - 1:00pm – Carkeet (River Vale Farm), Bodmin Moor.**

A new locality, which during 2008 has turned up possibly Cornwall's largest Marsh Fritillary colony! Good numbers of this species should be seen together with Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Photography is usually easy with Marsh Fritillaries, so do bring your camera and Wellington boots as this privately owned site can be wet underfoot!

Leader – Paul Browning.

Meet at map ref. SX215728, at the edge of the road by the track running northeast, sign-posted Carkeet Farm.

For details and directions phone Paul Browning on 01736 763677.

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June - 1:00pm – Greenscoombe Woods, Luccombe.**

One of Britain's rarest and most threatened butterflies, the Heath Fritillary, still exists in Cornwall in the specially managed habitat at its original main Cornish colony at Greenscoombe Woods, Luccombe. It became extinct there after 2002 and was reintroduced to parts of the woodlands in the summer of 2006 where it re-colonised and became re-established. The site has been much improved by clearance and management work. We are very grateful to local recorder and expert on this species, Richard Vulliamy, who will lead us around and show us the best areas to observe this butterfly and advise what past and current management work is benefiting this threatened species. The butterfly is breeding well now at Greenscoombe Woods and it is always a joy for enthusiasts from Cornwall, Devon and often much further a-field, who visit these woods, to marvel at the many Heath Fritillaries that can be seen throughout June each year. Bring a drink and your camera.

Leader – Richard Vulliamy.

Meet at map ref. SX389737 in Luccombe Village car park.

For details and directions phone Richard Vulliamy on 01579 370411.

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June - 9:30pm – Kilminorth Woods, Seaton Valley, Looe.**

**Mid-summer Mothing For The Scarce Merveille du Jour.**

We have high hopes of seeing this RDB3 moth here again near the Oak trees that it breeds on. The sedentary Scarce Merveille du Jour moth has almost certainly continuously bred in the West Looe Valley since shortly after the last Ice Age! This meeting is organised by Cornwall Moth Group. The moth light will be on from dusk until late but meet at 9:30pm. Please bring a torch and wrap up well.

Leader - Phil Boggis.

Meet at map ref. SX248538 at the entrance to Lower Kilminorth Woods, sharp left 250 yards before Looe Bridge coming from a westerly direction on the main road.

For full details and directions phone Phil Boggis on 01726 66124.

**Saturday 20th June - 2:00pm Perran Sands and Penhale Sands, Perranporth.**

A mid-summer ramble over Britain's highest sand dunes complex to see large numbers of freshly emerged Silver-studded Blues. We would also hope to see Large Skippers, Small Skippers, Meadow Browns, Common Blues, Dark Green Fritillaries, Scarlet Tigers and Humming-bird Hawk-moths. This event always turns up unexpected surprises in moths or butterflies. Please bring a drink, a sun hat, sun protection and good walking boots.

Leaders - Lee Slaughter and Phil Boggis.

Meet at map ref. SW774553 in the lay-by opposite the turning to Rose.

For details and directions phone Lee Slaughter on 01726 817505 or Phil Boggis on 01726 66124.

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June – 11:00am Gwithian Green, Nr. Hayle.**

A mid-summer visit to this local nature reserve which is managed and monitored carefully by a number of enthusiasts. We should see good numbers of Silver-studded Blues, Meadow Browns, Large Skippers, Small Skippers, Small Heaths and Dark Green Fritillaries. We should then be able to explore the dunes during the afternoon for more butterflies, given time. Good walking boots, packed lunch and sun cream are all essential.

Leader - Sally Foster.

Meet at map ref. SW586412 close to the track entrance. Heading from Portreath towards Hayle on the B3301 coast road, past Godrevy and take the track to your left just before Gwithian.

For further details ring Sally Foster on 01736 753259.

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June – 9:00pm – Pontoys Mill, Nr. St. Blazey.**

**Mid-summer Moths At Pontoys Mill.**

A moth evening of recording together with the Cornwall Moth Group and the Friends of Luxulyan Valley commencing at 9.00pm for 9.30. Please bring a torch and warm clothing. Free parking at the Pontoys Mill car park. Past moth events here have attracted more than 125 species in one evening's recording at a single locality!

Leader - Phil Boggis.

Meet at map ref. SX073562. Spacious car park at the end of the single-track road.

For details and directions phone Phil Boggis on 01726 66124.

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July – 11:00am Upton Towans, Nr. Hayle.**

A lovely walk through the extensive coastal dunes by Gwithian at Upton Towans. We hope to see many Dark Green Fritillary butterflies and would like to count/estimate numbers seen and also any behavioural features in either the males or females of this spectacular species. The 2<sup>nd</sup> brood of Small Heaths should now be appearing and it would be good to look closely at each adult seen with particular attention to some of the females, which we have noticed seem to be larger than other females and much deeper in colour. Other summer flying species will also be seen including Silver-studded Blues, Common Blues and maybe Brown Argus too! Please bring a packed lunch, drink, sun cream, and good walking boots.

Leaders - Dick & Maggie Goodere.

Meet at map ref. SW579398 at the entrance by the gate to the CWT area.

For full details and directions phone Dick or Maggie Goodere on 01736 753077.

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**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July – 10:30am Penlee Battery CWT Reserve & Penlee Point (possibly moving on to Seaton during the afternoon).**

This event is held in conjunction with Caradon Field And Natural History Club (CFNHC).

This reserve usually has excellent numbers of Marbled Whites, which are absent from mid and west Cornwall but often more than 100 can be seen here without much trouble. Small Heaths and Dark Green Fritillaries as well as Gatekeepers, Large and Small Skippers are always present. Six-belted Clearwing and Thrift Clearwing moths will be searched for with pheromone lures. We may move on to Seaton during the afternoon to search for Clouded Yellows at a location where they have been observed over-wintering and walk up the Seaton Valley to see Silver-washed Fritillaries and possibly Purple Hairstreaks.

Leader - Leon Truscott.

Meet at map ref. SX436491 in Penlee Battery car park.

For full details and directions phone Leon Truscott on 01752 812023.

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July – 1:00pm Bunny's Hill, Nr. Cardinham, Bodmin Moor – Also Treslea Downs.**

We will be searching for Dark Green Fritillaries and keeping an eye out for the remote possibility of High Brown Fritillaries too! Silver-washed Fritillaries will also be on the wing as well as Grayling butterflies at Treslea Downs, which is just 2 miles distant from Bunny's Hill. There must be new discoveries to be made at both these two valuable sites as they are only normally visited in May for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

Leader - Phil Harris.

Meet at map ref. SX117675 Bunny's Hill at the fork in the road.

For details and directions phone Phil Harris on 07845 984426.

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July – 11:00am Delabole Quarry, Delabole, Nr. Camelford.**

This is a new site for our field trips and we are extremely grateful to Dave Conway for leading this for our group. Previous visits made here by Dave have produced many sightings of Marbled Whites and Graylings, which are not often seen on our field meetings. Graylings are not often found inland in Cornwall and the discovery of good numbers at this location is good news for the species in our county where it is now mainly restricted to parts of the coast. Good walking boots essential.

Leader - Dave Conway.

Meet at map ref. SX074836 in Delabole Quarry car park.

For details and directions phone Dave Conway on 01208 77686.

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August – 11:00am Kynance Cove, Nr. The Lizard.**

Be prepared for a beautiful walk at this famous locality for lepidoptera. We would certainly hope to see most of the following species: Grayling, Dark Green Fritillary, Clouded Yellow (including Helice), Small Heath, 2<sup>nd</sup> brood Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Common Blue, Wall Brown, Gatekeeper, Painted Lady and Red Admiral. Please bring a packed lunch, drink, sun cream and good walking boots. Park in the main Kynance Cove car park and meet near the toilet block at the southern end of the car park.

Leader - Phil Boggis.

Meet at map ref. SW688132 in the main Kynance Cove Car Park.

For full details and directions phone Phil Boggis on 01726 66124.



### **Various Dates – Lepidoptera House, Bodelva, Nr. St. Blazey.**

County moth expert John Gregory has very kindly offered to set moth traps on various occasions in his large garden and the following morning will look to see what moths have turned up the previous night. This would normally be about mid-morning (exact time to be agreed with John Gregory in advance). He invites anyone who is interested in identifying moths, both micro and macro, to (by pre arrangement) take part in identifying and recording whatever moths arrive at Mr Gregory's garden. There is a wide range of habitats surrounding the property (including The Eden Project) so a large variety of species of moths can be recorded throughout the year.

Leader - John Gregory.

Meet at map ref. SX050554 at "Lepidoptera House", Bay View, Bodelva, St. Blazey. For details and to arrange to take part and visit John Gregory, please phone John Gregory on 01726 813265.

~ Lee Slaughter, Field Trip Organiser, February 2009.

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### **National Moth Night 2009**

A date has now been fixed for the next National Moth Night, the annual celebration of moths and moth recording which is run by Atropos and Butterfly Conservation. NMN09, the eleventh such event, will take place on the nights of Friday 18th and Saturday 19th September 2009. Two nights are included because of the eccentricities of the weather at that time of year. However, it also provides even more of an excuse to go mothing in new and exciting places. The theme of NMN09 will be migration and there will not be any specific target species or habitats. More details about the migration theme will be circulated nearer the time, but please make a note of the dates in your diary now.



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Jayne Herbert, our web-mistress, is offering her Web Design and Hosting facilities. We thank her for all she does for our website.

~ Ed.

#### **Web Design and Hosting**

**By**

**Jayne Herbert**

**Cornwall Butterfly Conservation's Web Manager**

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**Email: [contact@jayne-herbert.co.uk](mailto:contact@jayne-herbert.co.uk)**

**Telephone: 01736 363167**

The opinions expressed in the articles of this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Cornwall Branch, or Butterfly Conservation.

## Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Committee and Contacts

**Chairman: Phil Harris**

59 Carnarthen Street, Camborne. TR14 8UP ..... 07845 984 426 (mobile)  
[phil.harris@duchy.ac.uk](mailto:phil.harris@duchy.ac.uk)

**Secretary: Maggie Goodere**

3 Churchtown Road, Gwithian, Hayle. TR27 5BX ..... (01736) 753077  
[gooderes@talktalk.net](mailto:gooderes@talktalk.net)

**Treasurer: Paul Browning**

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

**Membership Secretary: Christine Hylands**

13 Roskear Road, Camborne, TR14 8BT ..... (01209) 610192  
[Christinehylands@yahoo.com](mailto:Christinehylands@yahoo.com)

**Newsletter & Moth Officer: Phil Boggis**

6 Tremena Gardens, St. Austell. PL25 5QH ..... (01726) 66124  
[phil.boggis@btinternet.com](mailto:phil.boggis@btinternet.com)

**Field Trip Organiser: Lee Slaughter**

2 Trinity Street, St. Austell. PL25 5LY ..... (01726) 817505 (ex dir)  
[leelisa1998@aol.com](mailto:leelisa1998@aol.com)

**Transect Co-ordinator: Jim Barker**

'An Arth', Alexandra Road, St. Ives. TR26 1BX ..... (01736) 794134  
[jimfrances@talktalk.net](mailto:jimfrances@talktalk.net)

**Conservation Officer: Steve Hoskin**

25 Coulthard Drive, Breage, Helston. TR13 9PF ..... (01326) 563462  
[sdhoskin@hotmail.com](mailto:sdhoskin@hotmail.com)

**Carly Hoskin**

25 Coulthard Drive, Breage, Helston. TR13 9PF ..... (01326) 563462  
[cmhoskin@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cmhoskin@hotmail.co.uk)

**Adrian Spalding**

Tremayne Farm Cottage, Praze-an-Beeble, Camborne. TR14 9PH ..... (01209) 831517  
[A.Spalding@spaldingassociates.co.uk](mailto:A.Spalding@spaldingassociates.co.uk)

**Jess Tatton-Brown**

4 Eliot Road, Truro. TR1 3TQ ..... (01872) 241903  
[Jess@lettuceandlovage.com](mailto:Jess@lettuceandlovage.com)

**Contacts:**

**Barry Ofield (Heath Fritillary Breeding Program)**

Oakland Cottage, Pendoggett, St. Kew, Bodmin. PL30 3HQ ..... (01208) 880616  
[Bofie@homecall.co.uk](mailto:Bofie@homecall.co.uk)

**Recorder: John Worth**

20 St. Clare Flats, Penzance. TR18 2PR ..... (01736) 362438  
[jowan@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jowan@tiscali.co.uk)

**Butterfly Migration Information: Roger Lane**

25 Warwick Drive, Buckler's Village, Holmbush, St. Austell. PL25 3JJ ..... (01726) 67944  
[RogerLane65@aol.com](mailto:RogerLane65@aol.com)

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**Cornwall Branch Website:** [www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk](http://www.cornwall-butterfly-conservation.org.uk)

**Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Yahoo! Groups:**

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/cornwall-butterfly-conservation>

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