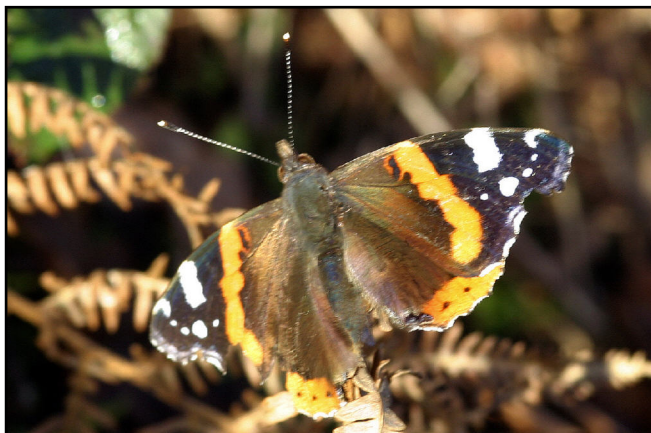
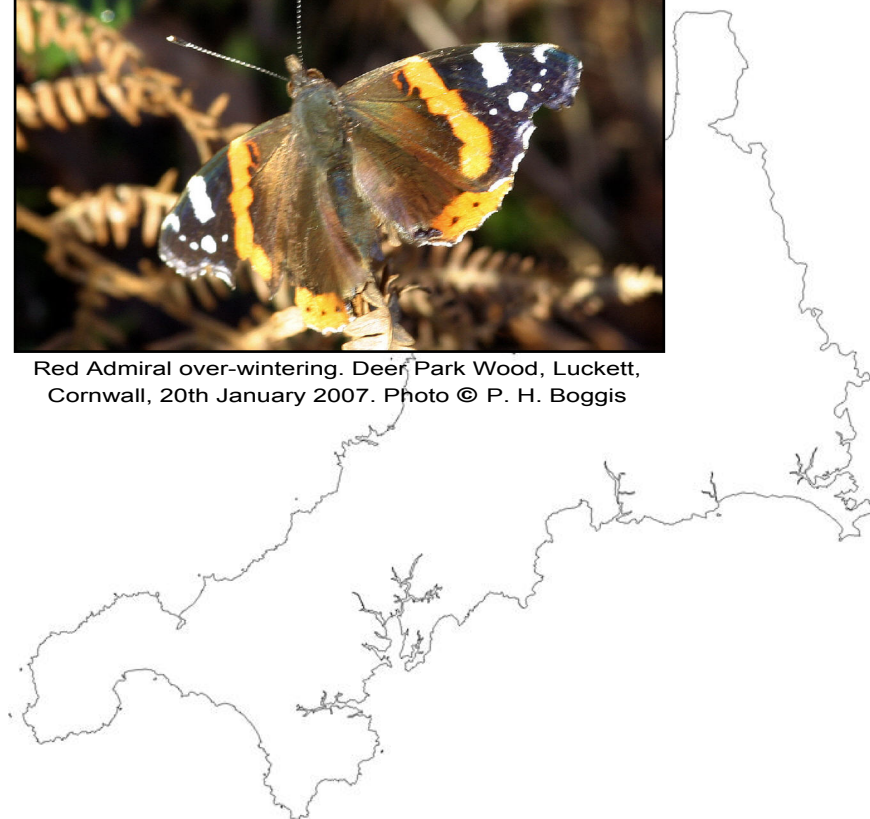


The Butterfly Observer

Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Newsletter No. 36



Red Admiral over-wintering. Deer Park Wood, Lockett, Cornwall, 20th January 2007. Photo © P. H. Boggis



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Winter 2007

Editorial

Featured in this issue are several articles and reports regarding this year's exceptional numbers of over-wintering Red Admirals (see cover photo). Also included are some photographs taken at the Deer Park Wood Heath Fritillary



Four-spotted Footman, Poltesco, 27/07/04

Conservation Day on the 20th January (page 15). Roger Lane also gives an in depth description of a possible Pale Clouded Yellow sighting (page 11). Prof. John Wachter adds to the reports of the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary in West Cornwall that were published in the last issue (page 5). Phil Harris makes some interesting observations regarding the Peacock also on page 5. An article on the Yellow-legged Clearwing is featured on page 6. I hope you find the series of articles on this fascinating group of moths

both interesting and informative. Details of a late Speckled Wood and the Isles of Scilly subspecies can be found on pages 13 & 14. This season's field trips are published on pages 16 -18. **National Moth Night** this year will be held on Saturday 11th August. Target species for Cornwall are the Jersey Tiger and the Four-spotted Footman (above). Please see the foot of page 14 for full details. Our new Yahoo! Groups is now up and running at: <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/cornwall-butterfly-conservation> Please feel free to join and add your comments, views and photos. Please note that any records sent in are for information purposes only and will not be treated as official records. Ed.

Chairman's Report - Winter 2007

2007 - Let's get started!

There's lots to do and more butterflies to find and look after! Last year we achieved a great deal with input from our active members who are the unsung heroes of conservation, indeed, they were all out there using their energy, brain-power and making use of our money. I have listened to, and read of people in the media, talking green issues and I wondered where they had been for the last 20 years. Whilst we have been active for quite some considerable time, it's hardly been noticed what's been done!

I hate winter and surely butterflies do as well, since, even by our standards, it's been raining nearly every day with very little sunshine. Now we are promised cold weather next week (20th January onwards) - thanks and great! Time to do other things, yes, but it's not the same as those sunny days we all enjoyed last summer right up until the last days of October. It seemed the good weather would just go on and on. If you believe the weatherman on the 'box', this year is going to be even hotter - how do they know that? We shall see. What's on the list for this year? Well, I will personally endeavour to look for the White-letter Hairstreak, as I have found more and more good sized elm trees this winter, all easily accessed from the Camel Trail - a beautiful area where there was definitely a good sized

colony of these hard-to-see butterflies in the past. Most of the other counties in England have re-found their colonies. It's time to get the binoculars out, also, where have all those Red Admirals gone? A lot of them didn't leave in the autumn. I've only heard of one butterfly, but with virtually no sunny weather, they can't fly around much and could still show themselves, providing the weather is a bit more to their liking. **(About 18 were seen at Trenarren, Black Head, St. Austell by Roger Lane on Tuesday 16th January and he has seen them most days in January up to the time of this report as have several other people. See later report – Ed.)**

On the conservation front, as usual, about 17 people gathered at the Heath Fritillary site on the 20th January to very carefully have a go at scrub bashing to keep on top of the natural succession which would strangle the site if it was not tackled on a year-by-year basis. Call it gardening if you want, but it keeps the insect alive. More conservation dates to be arranged later. Do try and get involved, as they are good fun at this time of year. May I say; isn't it ironic that most people who work in conservation spend so much time at a computer in the office when we know that nothing changes for the butterfly until we get out there and get dirty on the land, putting it back in good shape with our hands? Volunteers at this level are still the backbone of our wildlife diversity in this country.

Talking of diversity, the future of local colonies of moths and butterflies on brownfield sites is looking bleak as the price of land and property goes up. Developers and tourism are scrutinising everything that is under-developed. I am thinking of old builder's yards, railway cuttings and odd corners at the edge of your town or village where our Common Blue and Small Copper etc., fly. The developers see the potential to make lots of money. Every town or village in Cornwall will receive its share of new housing. Usually this occurs first on brownfield then greenfield sites, which have less diversity; therefore, the Cornwall we have known and enjoyed in the past is disappearing at a faster rate than ever before. It seems Cornwall is the place to develop in the future and the population will keep rising, putting pressure on all sites.

Isn't it sad that most butterflies on these sites have no protection in law, as they are considered common and not worth bothering about? Why must we have to wait until they become rare, at sometime in the future, requiring an action-plan to save them? Surely it makes sense if they are declining, to take action now, and secure the future before species shrink year by year? Offices, houses and roads are not in danger; our biodiversity is. Sorry to get so serious; we know this world will never be perfect, but we all must fight our own particular corner for our flora and fauna.

Phil Harris, January 2007.

Please note deadlines for contributions are as follows:

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

Many thanks for your co-operation.

Ed.

Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the above Branch was held at Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Headquarters, Allet on Thursday 9th November 2006.

1. Apologies were received from John Wacher, Roger Lane and Adrian Spalding.
2. The minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2005 were accepted as a correct record. There were no matters arising.
3. The accounts (previously circulated) for the financial year 2005-2006 were adopted. The Treasurer reported that the balance on 1. 4. 06 was £3,280.38 and on 1. 10. 06 was £3429. 89.
4. Steve Bassett, Paul Browning, Sally Foster, Maggie Goodere Phil Harris, Steve Hoskin, Barry Ofield, Lee Slaughter, Adrian Spalding submitted themselves for re-election to the Committee. Phil Boggis, Roger Lane and John Worth retired in rotation but also submitted themselves for re-election. The block election of the Committee was proposed and carried unanimously.
5. There being no other proposals, the following were confirmed by the meeting as:

Chairman	Phil Harris
Treasurer	Paul Browning
Secretary	Maggie Goodere

6. The Chairman reported on a very busy but rewarding year (apart from worries about the effect of global warming), particularly in respect of work carried out in the Bodmin area and in relation to the Heath Fritillary on the sites near Lockett. The re-introduction of the Heath Fritillary to one of these sites had received substantial publicity in the Press and on TV and Barry Ofield is continuing with his breeding programme. Phil felt that there were now certain areas that we needed to be less anxious about as they were being looked after in a very practical way by regular working parties.

The Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary survey, which is ongoing for another year, had revealed a very positive picture for the county and it may be that West Cornwall has the largest concentration of this butterfly in the country. It would be useful to have similar distribution maps of the Dark Green Fritillary. Although there had been concerns about the extent of pony grazing as a means to encouraging the return of the Choughs to the Lizard, most butterflies at present seem to be benefiting from the regime. On the other hand there were concerns about over-grazing on the new nature reserve at Tregonhay, and it remains to be seen whether the long term effects for the Marsh Fritillary will be positive. Phil reported on a very well organised open day on this site and it would be helpful to have regular records kept of both moths and butterflies sighted there in the future.

On a more worrying note, Phil registered his concern about the threat to the Dingy Skipper as a result of the proposal to develop a particular Brownfield site. The butterfly is a candidate BAP species which may buy time to set aside a protected area or prepare other mineral sites to receive it.

7. Points raised under AOB included the following:

- ♦ Tim Dingle reported on the progress of the North Atlantic Coast Project. The funding had initially been for the development phase but it will not be known until next spring as to whether the main bid for Lottery funding for this Higher Level Stewardship Scheme has been successful.
- ♦ Phil Boggis wished appreciation to be recorded for all the behind scenes work accomplished by Adrian Spalding.
- ♦ Tim Dingle also gave an update on the Fritillary Action Group. He reported that numbers for the scarcer fritillaries have been quite good this year and attributed this to a combination of weather and conservation work. In addition to contributions from CBC members there have been lots of enthusiastic volunteers from BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers). A proposal to obtain funding for a permanent manager for the Bodmin Moor Project is being discussed.
- ♦ Lee Slaughter expressed concern about the repeated burning of Bunny's Hill and whether this will cause long term harm to the Pearl-bordered Fritillary.
- ♦ Congratulations were conveyed to Phil Boggis on what he has accomplished in his recent role as producer of the newsletter. Phil was concerned that a few members had not received recent copies and wished anyone in a similar situation to let him know.
- ♦ We were reminded of the importance of submitting records to John Worth and it was felt of particular importance that the Goss Moor records from Natural England are also sent to John.
- ♦ Dr. Tom Brereton had sent a message to keep up the good work in relation to time counts and transect recording. In addition to the obvious benefits of such regular monitoring, statistics are always useful for grant applications.
- ♦ Barry Ofield drew the attention of the meeting to an excellent report produced by Betsy Vulliamy on the Heath Fritillary. Volunteers are needed to carry out more planting and clearance work to ensure this butterfly's survival.

8. A short break for refreshments was taken during which time the raffle was drawn.

9. The Chairman then introduced Paul Browning who took us on a journey around Spain "through time and space" by showing us the most wonderful and extensive selection of his slides of butterflies taken during numerous visits to that country. He pointed out that whilst Spain has huge conservation issues connected with agriculture, tourism and the supplying of cities and coastal areas with water, the Government is beginning to take these problems seriously. However, because the country is so huge, many areas fortunately are still unchanged by development. An effort is being made to map both flora and invertebrates. The Chair thanked Paul for a very special presentation and the excellent quality of the photography was greatly appreciated by the audience.

Maggie Goodere (Secretary).



Peacock Eureka!

What a moment! There I was walking around Gwithian Towans in late October counting lots of late-season butterflies in warm sunshine, when suddenly it dawned on me that I had counted 16 Peacocks, all on sand-hills and a long way from any trees or cover. These butterflies were not flying around but just basking on the ground and all of them were found beside, or close to, rabbit holes. My theory is that they had crawled out for a bit of sunbathing, in the midday sun, and would shortly return to their hibernaculums in the rabbit holes. Although I did not see them return as I couldn't wait for another 3 hours or so for the sun to set, I am sure this could be the only answer.

I don't remember reading in any book that Peacocks use rabbit burrows to hibernate in but I suppose that an insect could adjust itself to the back or front of this miniature 'cave' to gain the ideal microclimate for successful winter hibernation and take advantage of any warm days in spring to emerge and then retreat back again when conditions became unsuitable.

Has anybody out there seen this before? If so please contact me as I am now very interested in this behaviour and will make sure to be in the same area around March to try and observe the Peacocks in the same positions and spend some time watching them before sunset. Hopefully, they can be observed returning underground and so prove this theory which has caught my imagination.

P. M. Harris, 17th January 2007.

Observations of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary in West Cornwall. Additional Contributions from Prof. John Wachter.

1. Before beginning detailed surveys, I made the following general comment from observations between 1987-92:

'Widely distributed on coastal slopes from St. Ives to Porthleven, but never more than a few in any given area.'

I began detailed surveys in 1994 with the following results:

2. **Zennor Head** (SW 449395)
22 May 1994 - 3 specimens
6 June 1995 - many (10+)
17 June 1996 - 4
17 June 1997 - 4
4 June 1998 - 1
18 Aug. 1998 - 1 (2nd. brood)
3. **Gurnards Head** (SW 433386)
22 May 1994 - 2
4. **Botallack (Crown Rocks to Wheal Cock)** (SW 363337)
22 May 1994 - 1
6 June 1995 - 10+

5. **Gwennap Head** (SW 365218)
22 May 1994 - 2
6. **Rinsey Cove to Trewavas Head** (SW 593269)
5 June 1996 - 2
5 Aug. 1997 - 5 2nd. brood
15 June 1998 - 1
5 May 2000 - 5
7. **Upton Towans** (SW 5739)
16 Aug. 1998 - 3 2nd. brood
19 May 1999 - 2
20 Aug. 1999 - 2 2nd. brood
4 June 2001 - 1
10 Aug. 2001 - 4 2nd. brood
26 Aug. 2003 - 1 2nd. brood
19 June 2004 - 1
16 May 2005 - 1
8. **Gwithian Green** (SW 588415)
5 Aug. 1999 - 1 2nd. brood
9. **Phillack Towans** (SW 568391)
26 May 2001 - 1

I can also confirm many of the sites listed in the Butterfly Observer 35 (Autumn 2006).

J. S. Wachter, 1st February 2007.



Yellow-legged Clearwing (*Synanthedon vespiformis*) – Linnaeus.

With the wider use and availability of pheromone lures to attract the males of this interesting family of moths, the understanding of their distribution and abundance has greatly increased in recent years. Previously, lepidopterists were somewhat restricted to looking for signs of the larval presence rather than observing the adult stage, primarily because most moths of this family are elusive, rather erratic in flight and therefore difficult to see; they do not come to mercury vapour moth traps, being day flyers, and could easily be confused with other orders of insect, especially Hymenoptera.

The Yellow-legged Clearwing is a Notable B species. It occurs in between 31 and 100 10Km squares. All but one of the Cornish SESIIDAE are classified as Nb, the exception being the Lunar Hornet (*Sesia bembeciformis*). It is personally believed that, due to our increased understanding of its distribution in the ensuing years, this classification of its abundance will be updated.

Although a resident species, the Yellow-legged Clearwing could loosely be described as invasive of a particular altered habitat. This is simply because it is especially found where oaks have been felled within the previous three years. Larvae are also found on Sweet Chestnut, Wych Elm, birches and

cherries. The moth lays its eggs on recently cut stumps or in wounds and calluses on the trunk. The eggs are probably also laid between the bark where often the larva may be found feeding during August and through to the next May. The adult stage is found from June till August.

It was with interest that Tom Sleep, who has been instrumental in breeding and introducing the Heath Fritillary to Luckett, decided to take his pheromone Lure 'VES', to Greenscoombe



The above photograph illustrates the site where the Yellow-legged Clearwing was observed. Note the stacked oak branches and the pheromone lure on its stick in the centre of the photograph.

Wood last June (2006), since there had been substantial felling of sessile oaks



Yellow-legged Clearwing, Greenscoombe Wood, Luckett, 30th June 2006. Photo © P. H. Boggis.

to aid the re-introduction of the Heath Fritillary. His hunch was rewarded by the observation of this moth found in the vicinity of the previous year's felling. This immediately excited other members of the Cornwall Moth Group, who upon hearing the news, soon followed in his tracks to 'try their fortunes' as well. It was noted that several moths appeared at the pheromone lure after 1pm. After a cursory investigation they flew off, never to re-

turn. This behaviour may have been due to the pheromone not being 'quite right' for the male. Perhaps this is because the suppliers recommend using several types of pheromone in any given area thus 'mixing the scent' so to speak. The male illustrated was attracted to the pheromone at 3pm and quite some distance from the others that were observed earlier in the day. Several hours had been

spent investigating the original area where the moths first appeared, but to no avail. Is there some significance in this observation? Do the moths remember the scent and then, not being 'interested', not bother again? Moth enthusiasts across the county who have access to pheromone lures for this species may care, later this year, to visit the new reserve at Carbis Moor. The entrance is at SX001603, the reason being that in order to open up a pathway to facilitate easier access for the public, a number of sessile oaks required felling. It is therefore with interest that this June and July we may discover the Yellow-legged Clearwing at this new reserve and look forward with interest to the results.

Another place that has benefited other species, due to clearance work, has been the Large Blue site on the north coast. There is now a thriving colony of Graylings where none, it is believed, existed before. Many "brownfield" sites have been re-colonised with a number of butterfly species but some of these old industrial mine workings are now unfortunately ear-marked for re-development and this has raised concerns that there may be a significant loss to the counties' Lepidoptera fauna.

Phil Boggis (CBC Moth Officer) January 2007.

MIGRANT BUTTERFLIES IN CORNWALL - 2006 **by Roger Lane, Migration Officer**

The Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*).

Since there are suspicions of immigrants as early as February of this butterfly, it is strongly believed that this species apparently successfully over-winters in large numbers. The earliest 'replenishment' of Red Admirals is in mid-March. My earliest immigrants were on the 13th March 1995. On arrival these immigrants take up temporary territories on sunny woodland floors (but soon move on). The volume of arrivals increases throughout the summer and certainly into October. There have been 4 years when the last visible migrations of 100+ were on 1st November! In 1995 these were still moving northward at least until the 3rd November. This was the year in which I spent the whole 'summer' studying *Vanessa atalanta* migration. To up-date readers, I walked out toward the Gribben this year on the 1st November to be met with a 'straggling army' of Red Admiral immigrants, again all flying north in typical 'strung-out' fashion, coming in off the sea. There were certainly in excess of 100 on just ONE headland!

Now, to add to the confusion, it is well known that September is their main emigration month (October in 2006!) and this usually coincides with their peak immigration, so that it appears initially that "chaos reigns"! In fact it is quite easy to distinguish the two, since all the outgoing emigrants fly due south, whilst all incoming immigrants fly N/NE. This takes place and maintains direction **whatever the wind direction** (the butterfly can angle its body to maintain its direction) but activity will be less, the stronger the wind.

(Cont. over)

These basic directions apply only to Cornwall (and proximity). As if this were not enough, to my great surprise, in 1995 Red Admiral EMIGRATION started on 31st July until 3rd August, when immigration took over again, but this is exceptional (pre-September).

Wintering.

In years of late emigration, many more than usual 'linger' to over-winter (which has happened on a grand scale this year, 2006). There are at least 3 - maybe 4 times as many Red Admirals over-wintering this winter. I know of two sites with 30+ wintering (each in one garden, albeit large ones!) and many with between 5 and 15+ butterflies, totalling 100+ within a 5 mile radius of St. Austell. Presumably this was due to the late (November) immigration, in addition to the national late emigration. One last fact concerning over-wintering Red Admirals in 2006, is that more are over-wintering further to the North than usual, with dozens, doubtless scores, in the Midlands and North – but enough on wintering.

Basically then, although Red Admirals may start arriving as early as March, it is not until May/June that numbers arrive and lay eggs to produce July/August broods - 1st British brood, while a 2nd British brood can emerge very late, mostly in September; however, in 2006, they apparently emerged well into October when many pristine specimens appeared. Although continuously-brooded, I doubt that a 3rd British brood often occurs, if ever. Judging by my Pontsmill study area (Buddleia groves) in 2006, after a batch of Red Admirals passed through in July and early August, there was a real dearth from mid-August and even into September, unheard of in my years of recording. I presume this 'hiatus' was made up for in late September/October, but the Buddleia was over and they would have gone onto cliff-ivy, from whence they would have commenced their late emigration, but why the 'hiatus'? - I don't know. It was said that in some eastern areas up to 90% of Red Admirals were parasitised by a small wasp - from the continent(?) The great surprise to me this year was the plethora of Red Admirals in October, and for the first time I can recall, there were several 'calm' days for late cross-channel emigration. Despite that, hundreds more were 'trapped' in the South West - or was it of their own volition and are now over-wintering?

Roger Lane, 12th December 2006.

The Red Admiral's Amazing Winter (2006/2007) – Addendum.

Reasonable numbers of Red Admirals were seen in December (30+ day-sightings personally), but this belied the numbers over-wintering due to the few calm, sunny days we saw. Although one was seen in St. Austell on 1st Jan 2007 - (**report from Robert Crowle via Lee Slaughter - Ed.**), this singleton made the 13th county in which Red Admirals were seen on the first day of 2007 (Nick Bowles)! Then thanks to the wind & rain, very few were seen in the first half of the New Year. Anyone who had not seen the autumn build-up may have the impression that they had somehow 'disappeared'. Then on 14th January 2007, the higher ambient

temperatures, combined with morning sun, produced sightings of 3 Red Admirals, one of which was utterly pristine, without a flaw. The 15th Jan 2007 set a new record (for me) of 8 Red Admirals. No less than FIVE of which were immaculate and 'like velvet'. It could not escape my notice that each was basking. One individual was examined down to 1 metre, and to me, there was little doubt that this was a new brood having emerged from 14th Jan 2007 onwards. I may say that in 20 years I have never known a January, February or March 'new-brood' with the exception of one individual apparently having emerged on the 17th February 1990 which was immaculate amongst the worn or faded wintering individuals. I believe Mike Tucker, author of "The Red Admiral" - British Butterfly Conservation Society, had never been lucky enough to see a winter emergent, except further south in Europe (Dordogne), where it apparently occurs as the 'norm'. (Nor did he necessarily accept my observation!) Now I submit that all the courtship chases I witnessed almost daily in October/November 2006 led to mating, ovi-positing, larval growth, pupation and emergence to adult status from mid-January 2007!

The area of Trenarren has fields and paths fringed with nettles, with every requirement for a Red Admiral, including the long and late flowering Mahonia, (on which 25 were counted one morning in November alone!). As if to support my observations, the numbers of Red Admirals increased to 18 plus on the morning of the 16th January 2007, this being a healthy underestimate! Since two or more pairs were engaged, overhead, in a true courtship flight, both at the same time on 16th January 2007! I believe the climate IS changing and even if the 'egg to adult' process (greatly elongated in previous British winters to several months) has now been reduced to c.10 or 12 weeks, due to the extremely mild 2006/2007 winter, giving rise to a British brood of adults from at least 14th January 2007 (if you like, a 3rd British Brood for 2006, uncompleted-until 2007). However, this is one observer's opinion only, and it is unlikely that many up-country 'experts' will agree, despite the fact that Red Admirals were seen in 13 counties on 1st January 2007!

Roger Lane, 20th January 2007.

The photograph of a Red Admiral taken at Deer Park, Luccombe on the 20th January 2007 during a Cornwall BC Conservation Day, and featured on the front cover, certainly bears out what Roger is saying regarding over-wintering during this milder period we are experiencing - indeed much more like Spring! The insect was observed basking in the weak afternoon sun for about 15 minutes. At around 2pm, when the sun finally went in, the butterfly immediately folded its wings and vibrated them much like a moth warming up to fly. Whereupon, the butterfly was observed flying up onto the bough of an ivy-clad oak to roost.

Ed.

The Butterfly Observer - Winter 2007

Roger has kindly forwarded his records for December 2006:

Butterflies 2006

1st December to 31st December, 2006.

DATE	Notes	SITE	GRID.REF 1Km.Sq.	Notes	NOS. & SPECIES
1st Dec '06	Cloud all day		Zero Butterflies		
2nd Dec '06	Some sun	Holmbush, G	SX0353		1 x Red Admiral
"		Mt. Edgecombe Hospital	SX0251		6 x Red Admirals
"		Lower Porthpean	SX0350		1 x Red Admiral
"	Cloud	Trenarren	SX0348		2 x Red Admirals
2nd Dec '06		Pontsmill, S	SX0755	Zero Cl. Yellows	2 x Red Admirals
3rd Dec '06	Gales	Trenarren	SX0348		2 x Red Admirals
4th Dec '06	"		Zero Butterflies		
5th Dec '06	"		Zero Butterflies		
6th Dec '06	"	Mt. Edgecombe Hospital	SX0251		2 x Red Admirals
"		Lower Porthpean	SX0350		2 x Red Admirals
7th Dec '06	Cold NW	Also 8th, 9th, 10th Dec	Zero Butterflies		
11th Dec '06	Cloud	Holmbush, G	SX0353	Disturbed?	1 x PEACOCK
12th Dec '06	Cloud	Also 13th, 14th, 15th D	Zero Butterflies		
16th Dec '06	Brighter	Trenarren	SX0348		2 x Red Admirals
"		Charlestown	SX0451		1 x Red Admiral
"		Biscoverey	SX		1 x Red Admiral
17th Dec '06	Sunny	Trenarren	SX0348		3 x Red Admirals
"		"	"		1 x PEACOCK
"		"	"	My Latest	1 x COMMA !
18th Dec '06		Also 19th Dec.	Zero Butterflies		
20th Dec '06	Frost & Sun	Holmbush, G	SX0353		2 x Red Admirals
"		"	"		1 x PEACOCK
21st Dec '06	Frost & Sun	Mt. Edgecombe Hospital	SX0251		1 x Red Admiral
"		Lower Porthpean	SX0350		1 x Red Admiral
"		Lobbs Shop	SX		1 x Red Admiral
"		Trenarren	SX0348	Zero Rd. Admirals	
22nd Dec '06	Frost & Sun	Trenarren	SX0348		1 x H.B.Hawk-Moth
23rd Dec '06	Dull & Cold	Also 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th	Zero Butterflies		1 x Red Admiral
28th Dec '06	Dull & Wet	Also 29th, 30th & 31st	Zero Butterflies		

R. Lane. 25 Warwick Drive, Buckler Village, Holmbush, ST. AUSTELL, Cornwall, PL25 3JJ

PALE CLOUDED YELLOW, *Colias Hyale*) Polkerris North, (Par) 9th November, 2006.

Background & Circumstantial evidence:

The year, both here in the coastal fields, and 2 Kilometres inland at Pontsmill, has produced three broods of Clouded Yellows, (*C. Croceus*), all documented. Counts at Pontsmill and Polkerris have exceeded 50+ on several occasions yet only a relatively small portion of the fields can be seen, due to land use at Pontsmill, and constrictions of the coastal path between Par and Polkerris. Sufficient to say perhaps, that the fields are flower-rich (particularly Hawksbit sp at Par/Polkerris), their most used nectar plant, and under-sown with Red Clover, their food plant. Not too much will be said about Clouded Yellows, since there is no direct correlation between 'good' Clouded Yellow years and 'good' **Pale** Clouded Yellow years.

Suffice to say then, being out 5 or 6 days per week I have logged between 500 and 1,000 Clouded Yellows this year, **including**: 30+, f. var. 'helice' of the 1st brood; 40+ f. var. 'helice' of the 2nd brood and 4+, f. var. 'helice' of the 3rd brood. (Total 74+, 'helice', mostly of the white f. var. Hubner, but with a range of other colours, including c.10 of the 'rare' pale yellow variety). On 9th November 2006 I had seen a surprising total of 30+ pristine, 3rd brood Clouded Yellows (plus 5+, worn Clouded

Yellows) at the **Pontsmill** colony (i.e. 35+, in a one-way count). This is the latest date by far when I have seen so many (in one 2-acre field). I went on to do a count at the coastal colony at Par to Polkerris, but it was 1 hour later and exposed to a 'sea-breeze', as were the Clouded Yellows, thus I saw only 10+ before they 'went-down' (presumably), unless emigrated. Nevertheless, 45+ can't be bad for 9th November! The late season has been verified by many national sightings, particularly of Red Admirals, of which there appear to be c.3 times the norm over-wintering in Cornwall; perhaps more. There have been 11+ species recorded nationally within November (12 with my Pale Clouded Yellow!)

Details of the Pale Clouded Yellow, (*C.hyale*) sighting, of 9th November 2006

I had seen the 'last' of the Clouded Yellows along the SW Cliff Path, some 15 minutes back, and was about to enter the scrubland section of the path south, down to Polkerris. This was at **Grid. Ref: SX092523**, where the coastal path is 6 feet from the cliff edge, and 100 feet above the sea! My passing disturbed the butterfly from its evening roost on coastal gorse, apparently.

I first saw it flying, buoyantly, across dry grasses toward the cliff edge and immediately I knew it was something different from the summer's c.1,000 Clouded Yellows! Indeed, it was not even like **any** of the c.10 **types** of f. var. 'helice' I had seen. Fortunately it returned from the cliff-edge, due to meeting updraft (?) and then I was able to see that it was a delicate lemon-yellow (with touch of primrose?) Its flight was more buoyant than that of the many Clouded Yellows, with a certain 'delicacy' about it, not like Clouded Yellows. In any case the whole demeanour was **most** unlike any Clouded Yellow I had seen (nearest has been a pale yellow 'helice'). In fact I was fairly sure what it was from the first glimpse! **Then** it flew over the cliff-edge, **but** alighted about 2 feet down (with rocks 100 feet below!). Thus I was able to see it 'at rest' when it folded its wings, to show the same under-wing spot present in a Clouded Yellow. However, the main, obvious, almost ostentatious difference, in flight and at rest, was the almost complete absence of **any** black/brown edging to the wings, unlike any *C.croceus* (particularly the f. var. 'helice') that I have ever seen! Indeed, from Emmet & Heath's plate 3, I would be tempted to ascribe it to *Colias hyale* (Linnaeus) ab. *obsoleta* Tutt, of the male Pale Clouded Yellow. **But** there is the problem of Berger's Clouded Yellow, (*C.alfacariensis*), although most of these **apparently** show even more wing margin than 'mine' did. It is considered by me that Berger's Clouded Yellow is also more sedentary to Europe, and less likely to be wandering about Great Britain in early November.

The nearly pristine example I saw is thought to have been a 2nd, or even 3rd brood example (partial in 'good' years) of a Pale Clouded Yellow, which may have bred into being in G.B. (or was alternatively a late immigrant). I favour the former, in which case others maybe (or were) around. However, active observers in Cornwall seem very thin on the ground, with many being confused with 'helice' vars. of the Clouded Yellow (*C.croceus*), let alone the Pale Clouded Yellow (*C.hyale*)!

Despite the late (November) date, which 'goes with the trend' this particular year, I have no hesitation in submitting this record for 9th Nov 2006 (with support of the 45+ Clouded Yellows (*C.croceus*) on the same day). While Berger's Clouded Yellow is an outside possibility, it **looked** more like the male variety of the Pale Clouded Yellow (*C.hyale*) (Linnaeus) ab. *obsoleta*, Tutt, as described. However, I would settle for: Male Pale Clouded Yellow (*C.hyale*), 9th November 2006, Polkerris, near Par.

Roger Lane, 25, Warwick Drive, Buckler Village, Holmbush, St. Austell, Cornwall, PL25 3JJ.

Regarding the report of a partial 2nd generation Dark Green Fritillary mentioned on page 11 of Newsletter 33 (Winter 2006). Roger Lane has very kindly written the following in order that the report is full and factually correct. My apologies to Roger for a rather inaccurate rendering of his very important record. ~Ed.

'I did not send it to Lee, but took it straight from Penhale to his house, after capturing it in my hand, on the 4th October 2005. Most importantly it was in PRISTINE condition - before I caught it at least! Certainly it had emerged in those first few days of October between the 1st & 4th. Hence the 'partial 2nd-brood' certainty, no others have occurred in Britain, as far as I can find out. That is, the first 2nd brood Dark Green Fritillary recorded. It was indeed a dwarf specimen as Lee said.

I can be sure of this since I had just beaten my best 'last specimen' date for the 1st brood (with a totally worn, torn-winged specimen on 1st September 2005); therefore, on re-visiting the Penhale site, on 4th October 2005, I was amazed to see a Dark Green Fritillary together with **3rd-brood** Small Tortoiseshells. At a distance I thought it was the rare **3rd-brood** Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (numerous at the Looe Bar site several years ago, in October!) But by creeping up and taking this one by hand, I found it was a pristine Dark Green Fritillary - over 1 month later than the very latest 1st brood Dark Green Fritillary of 1st September 2005 - and represents I believe, as mentioned earlier, the only British record of a partial 2nd brood. Lee may have thought it 'worn' due to its travelling 25 miles in a grape bag with few air-slots!

Late Speckled Wood Report

Roger Bray reported a Speckled Wood in his St. Austell garden which he photographed during the first week of December 2006. This made it the second latest record for Cornwall. The first was on the 24th December 1981 at St. Clements, Truro. Roger had unfortunately not set the time and date on his digital camera but a neighbour, who also witnessed it, reminded him of the approximate date!



Speckled Wood, St. Austell. Early December 2006.

Photo © R. Bray

On the subject of Speckled Woods, many of you may be aware of the subspecies *insula* inhabiting the Isles of Scilly. Lee Slaughter kindly sent in a photograph of one he took on St. Mary's whilst on holiday there last year along with the following article. Ed.

A Geographically Isolated and Distinct Subspecies of the Speckled Wood Butterfly on the Isles of Scilly.

The subspecies *insula* is only to be found on several islands on the Scillys and nowhere else in the world. I was hoping to locate this noticeably different subspecies whilst on a family holiday to St. Mary's in May 2006. Instead of the normal pale



creamy yellow spots, this subspecies exhibits delicate light orange ones instead. One adult flew gracefully around me and the orange colour was quite distinct and noticeably different from the specimens observed over many years nearer to home in Cornwall. The adult in the photograph on the left was found in the vicinity of the two duck ponds near Higher Newford, towards the north end of St. Mary's during the

Speckled Wood- *Pararge aegeria*, subspecies *insula*, (Howarth 1971). St. Mary's, I o S, 21st May 2006. Photo © L. Slaughter.

early afternoon of the 21st May 2006 and was also seen closely by my wife and two young sons. Several other adults were seen in this lightly wooded area and were all freshly emerged.

One could presume that the geographical isolation (28 miles from the Cornish mainland) and the milder climate and longer hours of sunshine experienced on the Scilly Isles have assisted the butterflies evolution into *insula* which is someway between the English mainland subspecies, *tircis* and the European subspecies *aegeria*.

If time permits, I would like to study this subspecies further as I cannot trace any research having been undertaken on this delightful and certainly very attractive subspecies *insula* of the Speckled Wood butterfly.

L. Slaughter 10th January 2007.

Keeping things in the family, Lee's father Derek reported a male Brimstone flying along the edge of his field at Polscoe near Lostwithiel on the 4th February 2007. Map ref. SX117606, this being the earliest sighting ever made in any year by either of them. Also, Lee's brother Neil reported seeing a Red Admiral in his garden at Cotswold Close, Sticker around lunch-time on Sunday the 14th January 2007.

National Moth Night - 11th August 2007

Amongst one of a number of venues in Cornwall, National Moth Night is being held once again at Trelissick Gardens near Truro, and hosted by Head Gardener, Barry Champion. Meet in the car park, map ref. SW837396 at 8.45pm. Please bring a torch and hot drink. Target Species: Four-spotted Footman & Jersey Tiger. Ten Four-spotted Footmen were recorded here on the same date during the 2001 NMN. Details: Phil Boggis. Tel. 01726 66124. Organised by Cornwall Moth Group.

Deer Park (Lockett) Heath Fritillary Working Party - Saturday 20th January 2007



Phil Harris seen here getting grubby with a grubbing mattock

erpillar at this site) although at Greenscoombe, the larvae are apparently reverting to their more usual food-plant, Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*).



Volunteers having a well-earned rest and discussion whilst enjoying pasties and coffee at Deer Park. From left to right John Randall, Richard Vulliamy, Dave Conway (in front) Caroline Kelly, Barry Ofield, Steve Bassett, (facing Barry) Lee Slaughter, Phil Harris? (behind) and Paul Browning (far right).

Steve Bassett (far left) with Paul Browning lopping off gorse and raking up brambles ready for burning.



Butterfly and Moth Field Meetings 2007

Saturday 12th May – 2:00 pm – West Goss Moor, Nr. Indian Queens.

The course of this old railway line harbours one of only two surviving Grizzled Skipper colonies in Cornwall. Photographing this species is comparatively easy at this site.

Leader – Steve Bassett.

Meet at SW931599 in lay-by along the **OLD A30**.

For details and directions phone Steve Bassett on 01726 824161

Sunday 13th May – 12:00 noon – Valency Valley, Boscastle.

This valley was ravaged by the devastating flood that hit Boscastle in August 2004. Early indications show that just upstream, in the Valency valley, both the Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered butterfly have benefited from the more open habitat caused by the flood waters. We would hope to see both species today during a guided walk by Phil Harris. Other spring species should also be seen. Leader – Phil Harris.

Meet at the car park in Boscastle at o/s map ref. SX100913.

For details and directions phone Phil Harris on 07845 984426.

Saturday 19th May – 2:00 pm – Gwithian Green and Gwithian Dunes, Hayle.

A pleasant walk to see the late spring butterflies, especially Wall Brown, Brown Argus, Orange Tip and Speckled Wood.

Leader – Phil Harris.

Meet at SW586414 near the Church.

For details phone Phil Harris on 07845 984426.

Saturday 2nd June – 2:00 pm – Carbis Moor, Nr. Tregonhay Farm, Roche. (Joint trip with an invitation to Devon Butterfly Conservation Branch).

Phil Boggis will lead us around this new Nature Reserve acquired by Natural England (formerly English Nature). CBC will be advising on species management and monitoring. We would hope to see the Marsh Fritillary and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary as well as the Yellow-legged Clearwing moth (to pheromone lure) as well as other moth species seen flying by day. Much clearance work and conservation measures have been put in place during the last 18 months which will have benefited the habitat at this new reserve.

Leader – Phil Boggis.

Meet at SX999603 (near the metal gate to the reserve on the right hand side of the road travelling from the Roche direction).

For details and directions phone Phil Boggis on 01726 66124.

Saturday 9th June – 2:00 pm – Breney Common Nr. Lanlivery.

Our annual visit to probably Cornwall's largest Marsh Fritillary colony. Good numbers of this species will be seen and photography is easy with this butterfly.

Leader – Lee Slaughter.

Meet at SX053610, Breney Common car park.

For details and directions phone Lee Slaughter on 01726 817505.

Sunday 10th June – 10:00 am – Quoditch Reserve Nr. Halwill Junction and Dunsdon DWT reserve near Tamar Lakes.

Meet at 10:30 am in the public car park behind the public conveniences in Halwill Junction (SX445999), which is just off the A3079 Okehampton to Holsworthy road. We will then proceed to the reserve (SX408978) in as few vehicles as possible as parking is restricted at the site. Wellies recommended.

Target species: Wood White, Marsh and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries.

After lunch meet at 2:30 pm in the car park at Dunsdon DWT reserve (SS301084).

Target species: Marsh Fritillary and Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth.

For details phone John Randall on 01752 309857 or 07753 432061.

Kindly arranged by Devon Branch Butterfly Conservation.

Saturday 16th June – 1:00 pm – Deer Park Wood then Greenscoombe Woods, Lucket.

One of Britain's most threatened species, the Heath Fritillary butterfly still exists in Cornwall at Deer Park Wood in its managed habitat but is now again to be found at its original main Cornish colony at Greenscoombe Woods, Lucket after it became extinct there after 2002. After a large re-introduction programme of captive reared adults last summer, and after much habitat restoration carried out by the Duchy foresters a couple of years ago, this butterfly should hopefully now establish itself in the open areas now available to it after many years shaded by conifers and other trees. We are fortunate that local expert on this species, Richard Vulliamy will lead us around both sites with a special detailed account of the re-introduction at Greenscoombe which was closely monitored by him and his daughter during summer 2006. Due to limited parking at both localities, it is suggested that parking takes place at Lucket village car park at **O/S map ref. SX389737**.

Leader – Richard Vulliamy.

For details and directions phone Richard on 01579 370411.

Sunday 17th June – 11:00 am – Lydford Old Railway Reserve, West Devon.

Meet at the Waterfall car park (SX500832) which is a further mile south-west of the main Lydford Gorge entrance. Bring lunch.

Target species: Heath Fritillary.

For details phone Jim Braven on 01822 852278.

Kindly arranged by Devon Branch Butterfly Conservation.

Saturday 23rd June at 1:00 pm – Perran Sands and Penhale Sands, Nr. Perran-porth.

A midsummer walk over Britain's highest sand dune complex to see the large numbers of freshly emerged Silver-studded Blues. We would also hope to see Large Skipper and Dark Green Fritillary butterflies and Scarlet Tiger moths. Please bring a drink, sun protection and good walking boots.

Meet at SW774553 in lay-by on edge of road opposite the turning to Rose.

Leaders – Phil Boggis and Lee Slaughter.

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

Sunday 1st July – 11:00 am – Dunsford DWT Reserve.

Meet near the bend (SX783893) on the Dunsford to Drewsteignton Road.

Bring lunch.

Target species: High Brown and Dark Green Fritillaries.

For details phone Pete Hurst on 01626 854182.

Kindly arranged by Devon Branch Butterfly Conservation.

Saturday 7th July – 11:00 am – Porthwarra and Gwennap Head, South of Land's End.

A stunning walk along the most south-westerly coastline of England which, given good weather, should yield excellent numbers of Graylings, Meadow Browns, Silver-studded Blues, Dark Green Fritillaries and possibly migratory Clouded Yellows, Painted Ladies, Red Admirals and Humming-bird Hawk-moths. Please bring lunch, drink, sun-cream and good walking boots.

Leader- Phil Harris.

Meet at SW361217 in Porthgwarra Beach car-park.

For details and directions phone Phil Harris on 07845 984426.

Saturday 14th July – 2.00 pm – Rock Dunes, Nr. Polzeath.

A new locality for our field-trips. We will explore these isolated dunes and hope to see good numbers of Marbled Whites where this is their most westerly colony in south-west England. Silver-studded Blues and 2nd brood Brown Argus may also be on the wing!

Leader – Steve Bassett.

Meet at SW929759 in car park.

For details and directions phone Steve Bassett on 01726 824161.

Sunday 15th July – 11:00 am – Upton Towans, Nr. Hayle.

A walk through the extensive coastal dunes by Gwithian at Upton Towans. We will see good numbers of Silver-studded Blues, Dark Green Fritillaries, Large Skippers, Small Skippers and Meadow Browns. Walking boots and a sun-hat would be useful.

Leader – Sally Foster.

Meet at SW579398 at entrance by gate.

For details phone Sally Foster on 01736 753259.

Saturday 1st September – 11:00 am – Preston Down, Paignton and Orley Common Nr. Ipplepen.

Directions: Exit the A380 (the Torbay Ring Road) at the Preston Down Roundabout (the roundabout is named and Preston is signposted). Proceed left onto Preston Down Road and after 1.2 miles, the road bends sharply right then left. Immediately on your right there is a low stone wall with views of the sea. Park at the roadside here. Access to the Preston Down is through a gap in the stone wall. Map ref. SX890624

After lunch, meet at 2:00 pm in the Orley Common car park (SX827665) which is on the right just west of Ipplepen village when travelling towards Torbryan.

Target species: Brown Hairstreak.

Bring a packed lunch and binoculars.

For details phone Maurice Edmonds on 01803 524376.

Kindly arranged by Devon Branch Butterfly Conservation.



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

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