

# *The Butterfly Observer*

*Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Part 1 of Newsletter No.47*



*Marbled-white (as seen at The Barn House—see page 7 Ed.)  
Picture courtesy of BC website*



**Butterfly  
Conservation**

*Summer 2010*

## White-letter Hairstreak

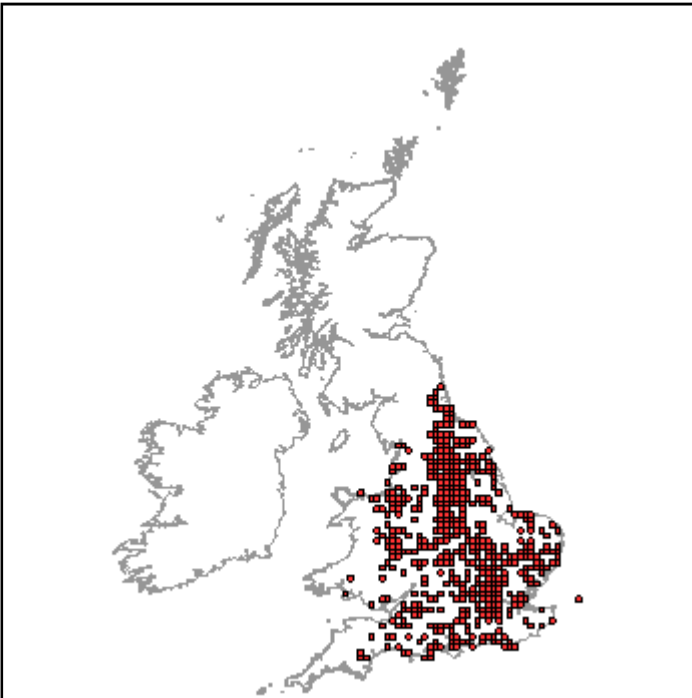
Here we have a report of one of the last sightings of the White Letter Hairstreak from a regular contributor to the Cornwall Butterfly Conservation yahoo group, from which site this article was taken. Ed.

I was 'doing my rounds', thinking and looking for woodland butterflies (and I had seen many Purple-Hairstreaks, but NEVER a White-letter Hairstreak). While passing a large clump of Hemp Agrimony, at a distance I was disappointed, since there were no Vanessids nectaring on the plants.



*White-letter Hairstreak—picture courtesy of BC website*

Then on the last flower head I noticed a small closed-winged butterfly 'wheeling' over the flower as it fed. Purple Hairstreak I thought. Walking right up to the plant however I could see that instead of a greyish underwing it had a distinctly brownish underwing. To my surprise it allowed me to pick it off the Agrimony in two fingers, allowing me to study it in minute detail. The 'W' on the underwings was by then quite apparent, as was the strong orange colouring at base of hindwing where several spots merged. Furthermore, this one although late in it's



*Distribution of the White-letter Hairstreaks*

season still had noticeably long wing tails, and I took it to be a female of the species.

The 'W' against the brown background 'gave it away' even before handling same. Surprisingly the WLH allowed me to return it to the plant and carried on nectaring as if nothing had happened! It continued with this 'wheeling' motion (like a SSBlue on Thyme or Biting Stonecrop). This was the end of our encounter really. The Valley

Ranger, Paul, did later find an elm tree some 300ms away which MAY have been the master tree, around which the activities of a WLH centre. Unfortunately, he told me the elm had fallen down a few years after (maybe within a year), and within the 25yrs since I have not had a suspicion of a WLH airstreak at Pontsmill. However, I do not think the Luxulyan Valley as a whole should be excluded.

**Roger Lane, St Austell.**

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## White-letter Hairstreaks Sought in Cornwall

A useful prize is being offered for the first verified sighting of a White-letter Hairstreak in Cornwall. It hasn't been recorded in Cornwall for many years. But we think there is a good chance it survives somewhere in the county and would like people to look out for it.

Its caterpillars feed on the flower buds of Elm trees, especially Dutch Elm. The butterfly flies in July and early August, but spends most of its time high up in the Elm trees and is rarely seen. Sometimes they come down to nectar, especially on Thistle and Bramble; they usually do this late in the afternoon between 4.00pm and 6.00pm.

The species is single brooded. The eggs are laid singly, usually around the terminal bud or where the new growth joins the previous year's growth. The dark brown eggs are well camouflaged as they overwinter on the twig. The larvae emerge in early spring, when elm begins to come into flower, and they feed on developing flower buds. As the larvae grow, they move to feed on leaf buds and then the new leaves.

Fully grown larvae are green with angled stripes and resemble unopened leaves. Wood ants have been seen attending the larvae. The dark-brown pupae are normally formed under elm leaves and sometimes against twigs, attached with a single silk girdle.

We sense that the sites in Devon and Cornwall have low populations and therefore it would be a case of being there at the right time and on the right day and just keep looking. Just because you don't see them the first time, don't dismiss a site.

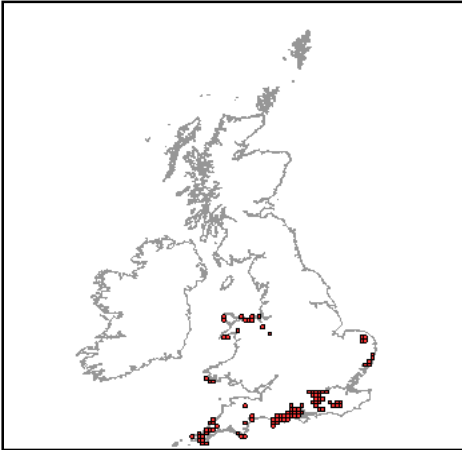
Scope, bins and patience are essential, if you want to see the perched individual. They can be confused with the purple hairstreak, but the minute you see them open their wings you know its purple simply because white-letter wings always remain shut not just because you see the purple! If you see two individuals clash high into the sky then again they should be white-letter .

**Please let Paul Brewer (07990-881052) or Keith Wilson: (01209-860298) know if you see any.**

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

I thought you might be interested to know that we have had a couple of verified Silver-studded at home. A fe-



*The Silver-studded blue is found in only a few areas of the country, so Maggie can, indeed, count herself lucky to have one in her garden. Ed.*

male in the house (which Dick assumed he must have brought in on his clothes after the dog walk) but today I caught a male nectaring on the Lychnis which we photographed (in case no one believed me!).

The Lychnis is very popular as I saw a Small Skipper doing the same yesterday and we have had a Dark-green visiting also. I have seen a few small blue butterflies in the garden over the last few weeks which looked suspiciously like Silver-studded but as I did not get near enough for confirmation, I thought they were probably Common Blues as we have never had SSB's in the garden before. They are so prolific

on the Towans this year and they are so dry do you think they are flying further than usual because they are desperate?

**Maggie Goodere, 3 Churchtown Road, Gwithian, Hayle. TR27 5BX**

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Dear Editor

Clouds virtually all day on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2010, but a beautiful evening when it's too late for them to fly! Had 10 minutes sun in an hour at Pontsmill, but catastrophe 'the council' have cut all the flowers down. Nevertheless, the following sightings were made:

Pontsmill N: (SX0756)

2 x Large Skippers  
1 x Small White;  
2 x Red Admirals;  
1 x Comma (*hutchinsoni*), new brood  
1 x Silver-washed fritillary;  
2 x Meadow Brown;  
4 x Ringlets

Holmbush at lunch time: SX0452:

10+ Ringlets

After lunch at Polkerris (SX0951), total cloud

1 x Green-vein White;  
2 x Red Admirals;  
20+ Meadow Browns;  
12+ Ringlets.

Trill Farm, Par East: (SX0852): 4pm, Cloud

10+ Meadow Browns;  
20+ Ringlets.

**R. Lane, 25 Warwick Drive, Bucklers Village, Holmbush, St. Austell.**

## Gardening For Butterflies

**S**ince the 1940s, 97% of wild-flower meadows have been destroyed, along with much downland, ancient woodland and peatbogs. Many butterfly species are in serious decline, as their countryside habitat has been lost. But anyone with a garden can make a difference.

### Flowers for butterflies

Butterflies are active animals and nectar provides the fuel needed to keep them airborne. Many good nectar plants are hardy, perennial and easy to grow, so make your garden a five-star restaurant for passing butterflies. Have flowers available right through the butterfly season, but particularly in spring and autumn. Early flowers are great for butterflies just emerging from hibernation, while in late summer and autumn some species need to build up their reserves in preparation for winter.

### Spring nectar

Aubretia, Bluebell, Clover, Cuckoo-flower, Daisy, Dandelion, Forget-me-not, Honesty, Pansy, Primrose, Sweet Rocket and Wallflower.

### Late summer / autumn nectar

Buddleia, French Marigold, Ice Plant (*Sedum spectabile*), Ivy, Knapweed, Lavender, Marjoram (*Origanum*), Michaelmas Daisy, Mint, Red Valerian, Scabious and Thyme.

### Food for thought

Providing nectar for adult butterflies is a great way to help, but it's equally important to provide food for caterpillars. Although many caterpillars are fussy eaters, you can help boost dwindling populations by providing food sources in your garden.

### Plants for caterpillars

**Stinging Nettles:** Comma, Red Admiral and moths such as Scarlet Tiger, Spectacle, Small Magpie and Snout

**Holly and Ivy:** Holly Blue

**Buckthorn & Alder Buckthorn:** Brimstone

**Cuckooflower and Garlic Mustard:** Orange-tip and Green-veined White

**Hop:** Comma and moths such as But-toned Snout, Angle Shades and Dark Spectacle

**Common Bird's-foot-trefoil:** Common Blue

### Environmentally friendly gardening

Peat bogs are home to many special animals and plants, including the Large Heath butterfly, which is declining across Europe. This scarce habitat is being destroyed to provide peat for garden compost - so please don't buy it! Good alternatives are available from garden centres. Also, cut down on your use of herbicides and pesticides. They kill butterflies, moths and many other pollinating insects, as well as ladybirds, ground beetles and spiders - the natural enemies of your garden pests.

### Helping wildlife

Making your garden a butterfly and moth paradise will benefit lots of other wildlife too. Bumblebees and hoverflies feed on nectar, whilst native plants, wild areas and organic gardening will encourage a huge variety of insects, birds, mammals and reptiles. Many of these creatures prey upon garden pests such as aphids and slugs. Birds and hedgehogs will quickly learn that your garden is a good source of food for their young.

*Continued on back page*

## Diary Pages

**Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010—Save our Butterflies, 11am Trelusback Farm, Penhalvean, Redruth.** See newsletter No.46 for details.

**Saturday, 7th August—Kynance Cove, nr. The Lizard, 11am.** See Newsletter No.45 for details.

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2010, 11am Gwennap Head and Porthgwarra.** See Newsletter No.45 for details.

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2010, 10am Gwithian Green, & then onto Gwithian Towans, nr. Hayle.** See Newsletter No.45 for details.

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010 – 7:30pm – Bat & Moth Night, Tehidy Country Park (South Drive). Organised by Cornwall Council Environment & Heritage.** See Newsletter No.451 for further details.

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## Cornwall Butterfly Conservations Field Trip Reports

### **Bunny's Hill Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

I counted 22 people at the Cornwall Butterfly Conservation's trip to Bunny's Hill to see Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

It is always hard to decide how many butterflies were actually seen but of the six fritillaries only two were positively identified as Pearl-bordered. I think the general opinion was that the others were also Pearl-bordered. They all seem to be in good condition and with the weather improving it may be a good time to visit. Five of the butterflies were seen in SX1167 and one pristine male in SX1267.

Cutting back of gorse and bramble by BTCV volunteers has created bare areas for violets amongst dead bracken and hence good basking sites for the larva. One of the burnt areas was also looking good for next year with plenty of violets and new growth of bracken. As helpful as the burning

is, I hope the arsonist will let the site recover for a couple of years.

Other species: (we did our best!) One Small or Green-veined White; Two Speckled Yellow (SX1167 and SX1267); One Brown Silver-line (SX1167); A common micro on gorse but I can't remember its name!

Well worth a visit to this site with 29 recorded butterfly species as well as Cornish Bladderseed.

**John Worth, Cornwall Butterfly Recorder**

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### **Tuckingmill, nr St Breward Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2010**

We had a 'boiling' afternoon at and saw 30+ Pearl-bordered Fritillaries of which ALL BUT 1 were perfectly fresh! 7+ Orange Tips, 6+ Green-vein Whites, 4 Small coppers, 1 Holly Blue, 8+ Small Whites, and my son Robert Slaughter (aged 6) found a female

earwig under a stone protecting and rounding up her brood of 20+ baby earwigs!! I've never seen that before! You learn something every time at one of our field trips!!!

Thanks to Phil Harris for leading us in such scorching hot conditions (well 25 degrees 77 farenheight in shade and very sweaty and humid!).

Everyone had had enough after 3 hours and called it a day due to the heat. The site is being managed well and looks very good for the long-term security of this species in Cornwall thankfully.

**Lee Slaughter, Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Field Trip Organiser**

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## **Carkeet 5<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

Twenty-one members attended, thanks to all those people!

We saw 70+ Marsh Fritillaries altogether!!! 20+ Small Pearls, 1 Small Heath, 3 Small Copper, 25+ Green-vein Whites. 19° C temperature with a breeze + hazy sunshine.

Thanks everyone, especially Paul Brewer for leading us at short notice.

**Lee Slaughter, Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Field Trip Organiser**

*Please note that there were probably another 8 people who were late getting to Carkeet because of traffic problems on the A30 most of whom decided to look at the easy area to walk (beside the road in to the farm. Paul Brewer.)*

## **Greenscombe 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

Seventeen members attended and we had a brilliant sunny afternoon.

We saw 50+ Heath Fritillaries (nearly all were pristine!), 1 x Large Skipper, 10+ Speckled Woods, 3 x Male Brimstones, 2 x male Meadow Browns, 1 x Small Copper, 12+ Common Blues, 2 x Large Whites and 15+ Green-veined Whites.

Many thanks to Richard Vulliamy of Luckett who escorted us around all the best parts to see the best of the Heath Fritillaries.

**Lee Slaughter, Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Field Trip Organiser**

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## **The Barn House, Penhalt 27<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

Members, Tim and Sandy Dingle kindly opened their garden, which Tim manages for wildlife, in aid of Cornwall Butterfly Conservation funds.

Around 30 visitors made the trip to see the garden, which is close to the North Cornish coastline, with magnificent views. It is cleverly planted with sheltering hedges, and much of interest to the gardener.

There is a wildlife walk through flower-rich fields to a wooded valley, often full of butterflies. And certainly we were not disappointed in this respect with sightings of Marbled-Whites and Silver-washed fritillaries.

**Gillian Thompson, Joint Editor**

**First Sightings—2010**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Reporter</b>
9-Mar-10	<b>Brimstone</b>	Herod Wood, Pillaton	John Nicholls
21-May-10	<b>Brown Argus</b>	Upton Towans	Keith Wilson
17-May-10	<b>Clouded Yellow</b>	Kenidjack	Bernard Hocking
5-Mar-10	<b>Comma</b>	Falmouth - top of the beach	Steve Ogden
5-Mar-10	<b>Comma</b>	Seaton seawall, Downderry	John Nicholls
5-May-10	<b>Common Blue</b>	Duckpool	Steve Ogden
17-Jun-10	<b>Dark Green Fritillary</b>	Marsland	Gary Pilkington
21-May-10	<b>Dingy Skipper</b>	Goss Moor	Keith Wilson and Paul Browning
02-Jul-10	<b>Gatekeeper</b>	Dodman (SX004401)	Paul Brewer
19-Apr-10	<b>Green Hairstreak</b>	The Blouth (SW927380)	Walter Eyre (via Ian Bennallick)
9-Apr-10	<b>Green-veined White</b>	Rosewarne - Duchy College	per Phil Harris
23-Apr-10	<b>Grizzled Skipper</b>	Goss Moor (SW936598)	Paul Brewer
30-May-10	<b>Heath Fritillary</b>	Greenscoombe Wood	Richard Vulliamy
10-Apr-10	<b>Holly Blue</b>	Coast path east of Polruan	Andrew Carey
10-Apr-10	<b>Holly Blue</b>	Marsland	Steve Ogden
18-May-10	<b>Large Skipper</b>	Kenidjack	Laurie Oakes
8-Apr-10	<b>Large White</b>	Marsland	Steve Ogden
30-Jun-10	<b>Marbled White</b>	Marsland	Steve Ogden
22-May-10	<b>Marsh Fritillary</b>	Breney Common	Roger Lane
26-May-10	<b>Meadow Brown</b>	Church Hay (SX102770)	Sally and John Foster
8-Apr-10	<b>Orange-tip</b>	Ponts Mill (SX0756)	Roger Lane



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27-Apr-10	<b>Painted Lady</b>	near Wheal Coates (SW7050)	Ellie May (via Mark Whittaker)
17-Jan-10	<b>Peacock</b>	Castallack (SW4525)	Peter Rhodes
17-Apr-10	<b>Pearl-bordered Fritillary</b>	Murrayton	Paddy Saunders
26-Jun-10	<b>Purple Hair-streak</b>	Ponts Mill	Roger Lane
11-Jan-10	<b>Red Admiral</b>	Duchy College heated greenhouse	Phil Harris
13-Jan-10	<b>Red Admiral</b>	Penzance Bus Station (SW4730)	Geoff Littler
20-Jun-10	<b>Ringlet</b>	Sheviock	Leon Truscott
2-Jun-10	<b>Silver-studded Blue</b>	Penhale Sands	Roger Lane and Lee Slaughter
26-Jun-10	<b>Silver-washed Fritillary</b>	Ponts Mill	Roger Lane
23-Apr-10	<b>Small Copper</b>	500 m south of Pendeen Watch	Bernard Hocking
17-May-10	<b>Small Heath</b>	Treskilling Downs	Roger Lane
1-May-10	<b>Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary</b>	Marsland	Steve Ogden
11-Jun-10	<b>Small Skipper</b>	Penhale Sands	Dave Thomas
13-Jan-10	<b>Small Tortoiseshell</b>	Polgigga (SW3723)	anon (via Sennen Cove website)
7-Apr-10	<b>Small White</b>	St. Blazey (SX0655)	Roger Lane
15-Mar-10	<b>Speckled Wood</b>	Penzance	Frances (via Sennen Cove website)
19-Apr-10	<b>Wall</b>	Manare Point (SW933389)	Ian Bennallick
	<b>Awaiting Grayling</b>		

Data provided by John Worth, Cornwall Butterfly Conservation's Recorder.

A quick look at last year's records would appear to indicate that recorded first sightings, this year, are earlier than 2009. For example the first sighting in 2009 for:

- Small-pearl Bordered Fritillary 20<sup>th</sup> April at Minadew
- Marsh Fritillary 30<sup>th</sup> May 2009 at Breney

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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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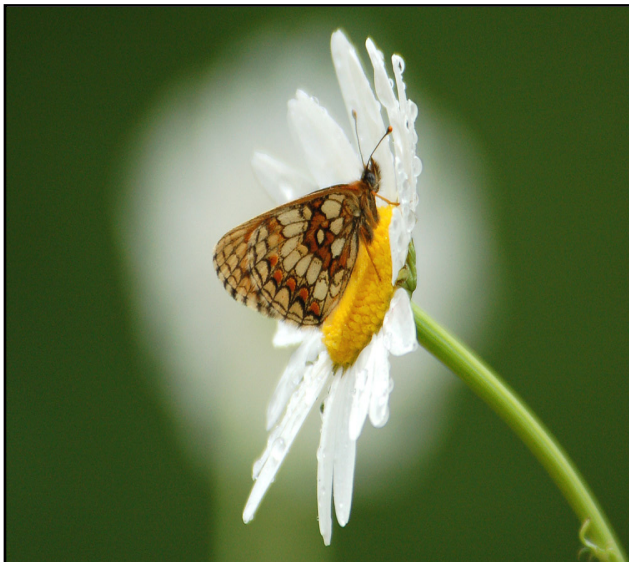
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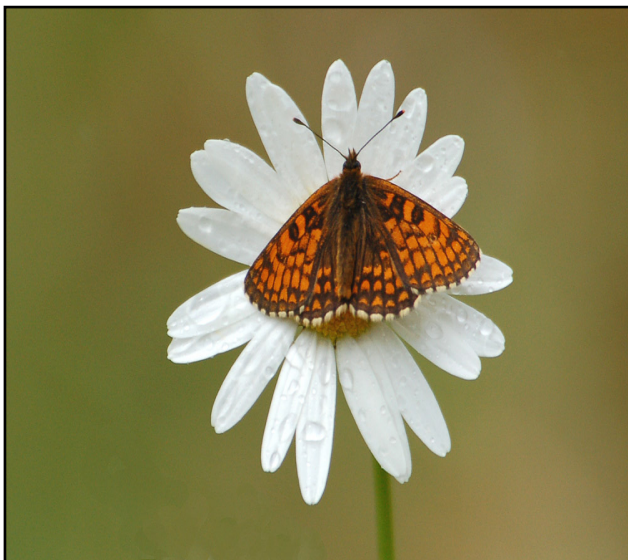
## Lydford Heath Fritillaries

In the hope of meeting some Devon Butterfly Conservation Members to promote the search in West Devon/East Cornwall for White-letter Hairstreaks, on 29<sup>th</sup> May I left Grampound about 9.30 am in sunny weather and travelled up the A30 to Devon branching off after Launceston onto the old A30 and later onto a minor road and arrived at the National Trust Lydford Waterfall site at GR ref: SX500 832 in time for a coffee before the 11am walk start. Whilst in the café a couple of enthusiasts came in and it was established that they were down from the Midlands on holiday. By 11am the weather had deteriorated so much that the 5 keen souls plus Jim Braven the Organiser and Warden of the site had decided to put on full wet weather gear!



*Photographs courtesy of John Carter.  
[www.john-carter-images.com](http://www.john-carter-images.com)*

We had a history of the site explained in detail by Jim and it was a fascinating what a keen observer of wildlife was able to do over a number of years to rescue a marvellous bit of the wild world that many have not seen. He explained that the butterfly had been “saved” at Lockett in Cornwall and bred up in captivity and then released at Lydford onto the old railway track which eventually was purchased. Now this year there has been counted in flight over 100 butterflies on one day. We were lucky to see just 7 on a bad day and the sun briefly came out for the holiday makers to take the 2 photos shown.



The Site for the Heath Fritil-

lary is about 15/20 minutes walk from the car park through trees with a bird hide. It is level walking as you would expect from a railway track. The actual site is a steep embankment some 200 yards long and 30 feet deep facing SW. It is cut by hand every year with a volunteer force of about 10 persons. Gillian & I visited the site on 26<sup>th</sup> June when the weather was very warm and sunny. & were butterflies still flying at 4pm and we counted a possible 8.

Adjacent to the Heath Fritillary site is a Forestry area where Pearl Bordered

and Small Pearl Bordered can be seen. Jim explained the transect system that they have in place. We did not see any flying because of the weather.

Despite the weather a very informative 3 hours especially when you consider that the Heath Fritillaries now at Luckett are descended from the Lydford site—in other words they have come back home again.

**Paul Brewer**  
**July 2010**

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## Gardening For Butterflies

### The wider picture

The rapid intensification of farming and forestry has led to widespread destruction of flower-rich meadows, hedgerows, ancient woods and heathland - all of which are vital habitats for butterflies and moths. Butterfly Conservation is the UK charity taking action to conserve butterflies, moths and their habitats.

### Did you know that...

The Large White and Small White are commonly referred to as 'cabbage whites' because their caterpillars sometimes eat cabbages. Both species also eat wild plants and Nasturtium, so grow these as a diversion.

If you do have to control 'cabbage white' caterpillars in your vegetable patch, don't resort to chemicals—it is far more environmentally friendly to simply remove them physically!



*Red Admiral on Buddleia—  
Picture courtesy of BC website*

### Common garden butterflies

Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Orange-tip, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood and Meadow Brown.

*This article was adapted from  
"Gardening for Butterflies" a Butterfly  
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