The Butterfly Observer

Cornwall Butterfly Conservation Newsletter No. 43



Nestling amongst sallow twigs, an Orange-tip seeks to camouflage itself. West Goss Moor, 9th May 2009. Photo © P. H. Boggis.

Butterfly Conservation

Spring 2009

Editorial

Much has been planned for this season as illustrated in these pages. The good weather during April enabled me to observe a couple of interesting moths featured on page 5.

Early conservation work is detailed on page 4 whilst Paul Browning, on page 9, fills us in on some more details of the conservation work at Goss Moor for the Grizzled Skipper. (I have added an update to this on page 17).

Seeking to interest us in the micro-moths - always a difficult thing to do, John Gregory proves more than a match for the task with his leaf-mining article on page 12.

Roger Lane keeps us up-to-date on the latest migration topic on page 15 whilst an update of the new transect scheme can be found on page 16.
A report on the field trip to Goss Moor is found on page 18.

I have retained the centre-piece for the benefit of those visiting us this summer. It will be removed from the next issue.

I would once again like to draw your attention to Tim and Sandy Dingle's 'Garden Open for Butterflies' on the 5th July (see opposite).

~ Ed.

Chairman's Report – Spring 2009.

Yo there, the story so far this year is that winter is over for good as the temperature slowly rises but then goes cold again, that's a typical Cornish spring.

Holly Blues are hard to find (I've had none for instance), but I know Roger Lane has had far more around St. Austell than we've had in west Cornwall.

The committee had a meeting about a month ago and the new one kilometre squares were demonstrated by Jim Barker. This type of recording looks interesting and a lot easier than walking transects every week.

I've had a meeting with my local council about the destruction of Dingy Skipper sites with regard to brownfield moths and butterflies, luckily the credit crunch might slow this down for a bit longer until we can get organised enough to fight our case. I'm also trying to get our local MP to come on a field trip as she says she's interested to learn more.

Paddy Saunders has already had a fairly good year up at the Monkey Sanctuary with Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. In the Bodmin area, Pearl-bordered Fritillaries are now about to come out so next week (commencing 11th May) is crucial for the butterfly to get some warm weather ready for Lee Slaughter's field trip at Bunny's Hill, where only 4 were seen last year, and Sally Foster's trip over at De Lank.

Last week 7 of us turned up at Deer Park to pull Rosebay Willow-herb from across the site. It was most enjoyable, and all we need to do now is wait with baited breath for any Heath Fritillaries seen flying.

Last week I gave a 20 minute presentation at Roadford Lake to those interested in wildlife. Lisa Tame, the Conservation Manager, is hoping to come to

our meeting at Breney Common on the 30th of May. Lisa is keen for anybody to help at reservoir sites across Devon and Cornwall, to build up our knowledge of all the wildlife on these sites so they can be better managed, consequently recording things is still important. All that wild grass - many thousands of acres - must add up to a lot of moths and butterflies.

Best regards,

Phil Harris, Chairman, May 2009.

Garden Open for Butterflies

THE BARN HOUSE HIGHER PENHALT, POUNDSTOCK

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

Sunday 5th 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

Please note deadlines for contributions are as follows:

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

Conservation Day at Deer Park for the Heath Fritillary, Luckett - 7th February 2009.

It was a rather cold wintry day, and as I approached Kit Hill, about a mile from Deer Park, I was greeted with a blinding snow storm! My car slid over the top of the hill and although I was taking it easy down the other side, I still skidded as I approached the far cross-roads that led to Luckett village and I wondered whether I was ever going to stop. "This is going to be an interesting day", I thought, as I pulled-in opposite the Deer Park site, but was greeted with hardly any lying snow at the bottom of this woodland complex.



Carrying scrub to the bottom of the site for disposal are John Randall and Marilyn Edyvean.

Others soon arrived, and after a few minutes we had a full complement of 11 people including myself. We marched off, some over the gate, others up the embankment, to reach the site proper. Cornwall



Pictured here gathering up tools and posing for one last photo call are from left to right: Paddy Saunders, Maggie Goodere, John Randall, Phil Harris, Steve Bassett, Paul Browning, Richard Vulliamy and Dick Goodere.

Butterfly Conservation had earmarked funds for the provision of good quality loppers which we carried to the site and they came in very useful indeed. We were required to cut a path about 18 feet wide from top to bottom and to the left of the

main breeding ground.

After last year's rather cursory and disappointing field trip to this site, we were anxious to clear some ground so that this year the site will not be inundated with Bracken and Rosebay Willow-herb. Many of us believe it is doubtful whether the butterfly has survived here after two poor summers in a row. This is disappointing indeed after so much clearance work and sowing of plantain seed.



Blue markers, indicating past larval sites and left here after survey work done by Caroline Kelly, were uncovered during the scrub clearance.

Careful consideration will have to be given as to whether this site remains fit for future re-introduction or not, even though Common Cow-wheat, the butterfly's main food-plant, has been seen growing on the site near the newly created rides. Traditionally, Deer Park has been host to Ribwort Plantain as the principle food-plant for the Heath Fritillary.

Many thanks to all those who took part to make this an enjoyable day despite the cold, inclement weather. ~ Phil Boggis, April 2009.

In the Tops of the Trees.

By Phil Boggis - CBC Moth Officer.

For several years now there have been more numerous reports of the Orange Underwing, especially from the east of the region. (See article in *The Butterfly Observer,* no.37, p.10).

This day-flying moth inhabits birch woods and is fond of flying friskily, high in the tops of birch trees in bright sunshine. Not surprisingly, the larval food-plant is Silver Birch and sometimes Rowan. During the afternoon, this pretty orange-coloured moth comes down to bask on the ground where it is often disturbed. Occasionally it is found nectaring on Sallow blossom. The moth is single-brooded flying in March and April. The larvae first feed on the catkins of Birch in April and afterwards are found in spun birch leaves by day, and feeding at night. They pupate in soft bark. over....



Orange Underwing ♀ Cabilla Wood, Bodmin, 21st March 2009, Photo © P. Saunders.

I received a report from Leon Truscott that Paddy Saunders had witnessed an orange-coloured moth which he had photographed and sent to Leon for identification whilst he was walking in Cabilla Wood, Bodmin (see photo on the previous page). Spurred on by this, I arranged to meet up with Leon a week or so later after a spell of cold, wet weather, hoping to still see the moth at an extensive birch wood lying adjacent to the river Lynher in east Cornwall.



At first Leon and I saw nothing as we approached a ride on the edge of the wood where there were extensive stands of Silver Birch, but after meeting up with Doris Turner and Ted Griffiths, we soon 'got our eye in' and saw at least 12 flying in the tops, and around the edges of the birch trees. These three pictures show how difficult it was to get a decent shot of these quick flying moths as they flitted amongst the tree tops at least 25 yards away. The photo left, which is a 'blown-up' version of the one at the top of the page, indicates how difficult it was without a 600 mm. zoom lens costing several thousands of pounds; a lens way beyond my budget! Note how the camera captures this one flying upside down.



What was of equal interest to me however, was the discovery, in the same wood, of a small moth also in the habit of flying in the tops of trees, this time mature sallows, and often stopping to visit the flowers. The photographs on the next page were taken when Leon and I noticed



a pair in cop right in front of our eyes. The moth is called *Adela cuprella* (it doesn't have an English name). The antenna of the male is striking in the fact that it is at least two and a half times the length of the forewing but in the female only one and a quarter times the length of the forewing. They are silvery white with black scales on each segment. The female moth has a ferruginous head whereas the male is black, so you can tell which is the male and which is the female in these two photographs! As can be seen, the forewings are bronzy golden and depending on the way the light catches them, the wings show a purplish hue towards the apex. The eggs are laid on the catkins of Sallow and upon hatching the larva drops to the ground where it feeds amongst the leaf litter. It constructs a portable case from leaf fragments and pupates within this larval case. The moth is single brooded and is said to be very local in mainland Britain but probably overlooked. (Indeed Ted and Doris can be forgiven for thinking that they were some kind of fly). Apparently, in some years, the moth occurs in abundance but is very scarce or absent in successive years. This must be a good year for them as they were seen also at Cabilla Wood on the 2nd of April as well as several other localities.





Finally, on the next page, I have included the Orange Underwing records from Leon Truscott, our VC2 County Recorder. I am indebted to Leon for informing me of the whereabouts of this moth without which this article could not have been written.

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Orange Underwing Records, 2009

Thu 19th March	Cadson Bury	1	Leon Truscott & John Nicholls
Fri 20th March	Herod Wood	6	Ted Griffiths
Sat 21st March	Herod Wood	15	L. Truscott, J. Nicholls, Dave & Mandy Allan.
Sat 21st March	Cabilla Wood	1	Paddy Saunders
Sun 22nd March	Herod Wood	125 approx.	Ted Griffiths
Sun 22nd March	Cabilla Wood	2	J. Nicholls
Sun 22nd March	Middle Drift (SX1364)	1	J. Nicholls
Wed 1st April	Herod Wood	12	P. H. Boggis & L..Truscott

Points to Ponder.

I think it's true to say that we can often be lax over our own personal safety. "It won't happen to me" is often the thought in the back of our minds and 'elf & safety' is a despised phrase in some quarters. "However did we get on when we were children growing-up", I have often said - let loose to explore, or so-called 'play', in some hazardous industrial site, or inventing some dangerous mischief to let loose on our friends - the more dangerous the better.

When it comes to our adult lives, we should of course, act more responsibly. On field trips, organisers particularly, have a statutory duty to look after the safety and welfare of those taking part. It is not enough to issue a generic health and safety assessment, but a specific one for each site visited. With this in mind, there are important responsibilities laid upon us to ensure our own safety and that of others. Safety guidelines from Butterfly Headquarters have no doubt been received by all branches and acted upon accordingly.

I found an interesting article in The Comma, West Midland's Branch Newsletter, which was reproduced from our immediate neighbours in Devon, and the points below are a useful guide:

- Wear appropriate footwear for the conditions expected.
- Wear appropriate clothing for the conditions expected. Protect yourself against cold, heat,sun,rain, wind and thorns.
- Consider what precautions you should take to prevent being bitten or stung by insects, plants, snakes or animals.
- Children must be adequately supervised by an adult.
- Dogs must be kept on leads. Ask leaders for permission before bringing dogs.
- Listen carefully to instructions given by the leader before starting.
- Beware of branches swinging back after a person in front has passed.
- Beware of carefully dug rabbit holes, dug to twist your ankle!
- Inform the leader if you intend to leave early.
- Try and keep up with the party.
- Carry a drink - you may be away from your car for several hours.
- Observe the country code at all times.
- Site-specific hazards will be outlined by the leader at the start.

~ Ed.

Work for the Grizzled Skipper.

The two work days on Goss Moor for the Grizzled Skipper went ahead as planned. Eight people came along on Tuesday February 10th to clear some of the vegetation, mainly bramble and willow that after years of neglect had slowly encroached into the butterfly's habitat. Further clearance took place on Saturday February 21st, when our numbers were reduced to five. We only have two known colonies of this butterfly in Cornwall so it is particularly important that we try to make sure it is not lost from this site.



Scrub clearance along the lower track. Photo © Paul Browning.

Despite the small number of volunteers a considerable amount of work was done on the two days and the site is now looking much better for the butterflies. Pasties from the nearby Kingsley village made a refreshing lunchtime break, and both days were enjoyed by all who came along. The work done will not only benefit the Grizzled Skipper but will encourage the growth of Bird's-foot Trefoil, the food-plant of the caterpillars of two other butterflies that breed here: the Dingy Skipper (a nationally declining species) and the Common Blue.



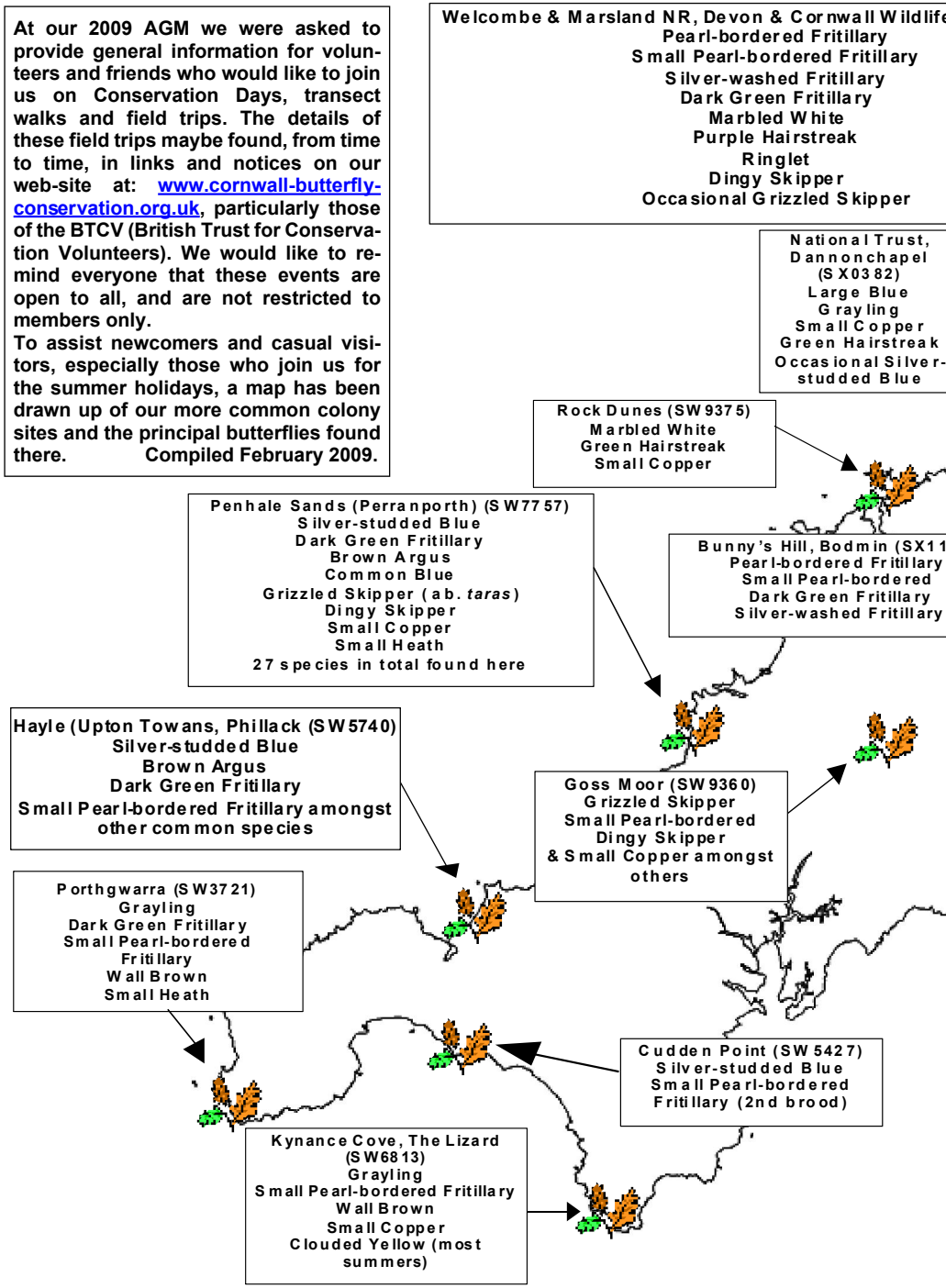
Fred Holpin, Jim Curnow and Paul Brewer after clearing in the northwest corner. Photo © Paul Browning.

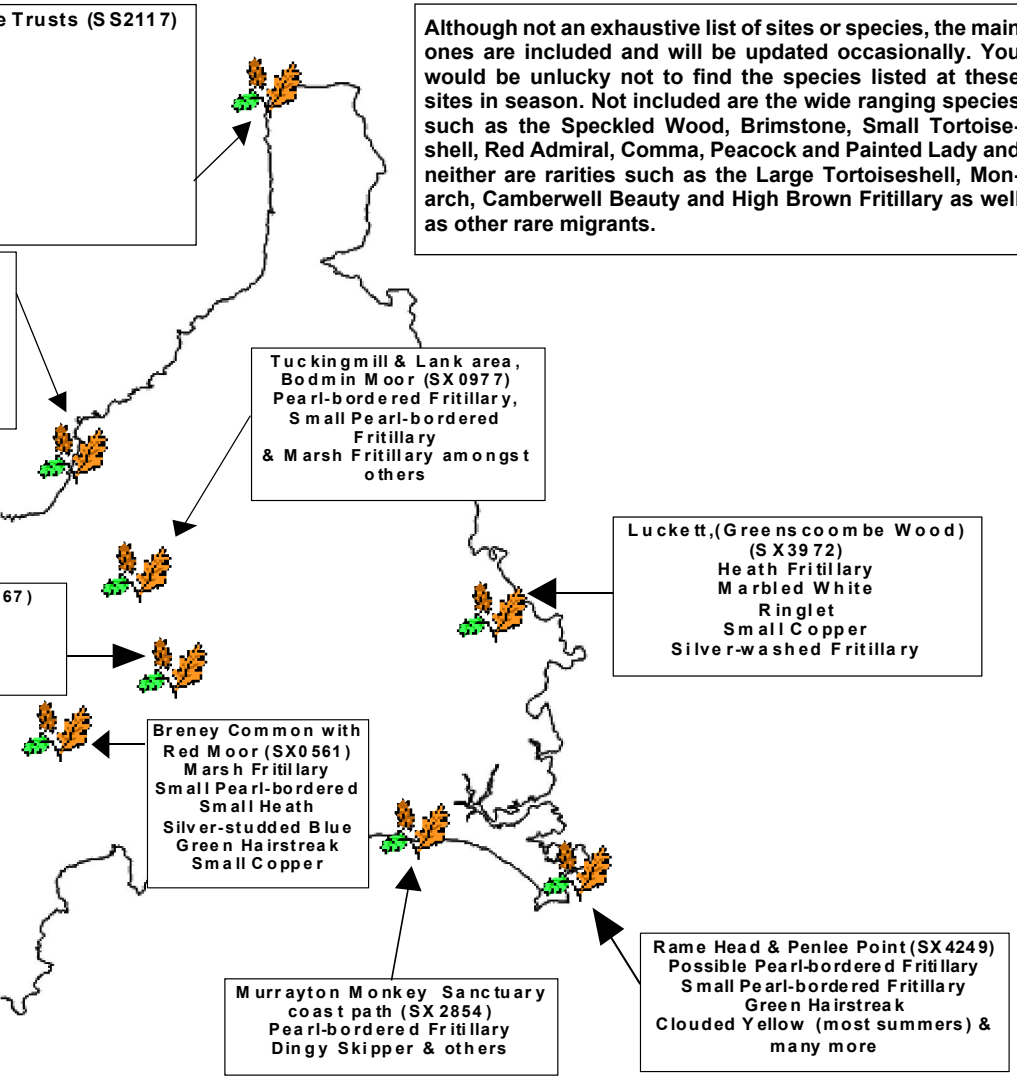
Cornwall Butterfly Conservation would like to thank Network Rail, the main site owners, for giving permission for this work to go ahead, and Martin Davey of Natural England for obtaining this permission. We also wish to thank Natural England for the use of their tools on both days.

We understand that an interest is being taken by Network Rail in the plight of the butterflies on their land and we hope that future consultations between Network Rail, Cornwall Butterfly Conservation and Natural England will help to secure and increase the populations of the Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, as well as those of other butterflies found on the site. ~ Paul Browning, March 2009.

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, 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.





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 or 20 St. Clare Flats, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 2PR.

My predecessor, John Worth, encouraged us to take an interest in some of the smaller (micro-moths) - see article in issue 27, Winter 2004, p. 4. Continuing on this theme, John Gregory has written the following article which I hope you will find of interest and whet your appetite for more study into this fascinating topic this summer. ~ Ed.

Recording Leaf-mining Lepidoptera in Cornwall.

In recent years some butterfly specialists in Cornwall have been extending their interest to include larger moths, the so-called "macros". It is good to see that a few lepidopterists are now expanding their interest still further, to include the "micros". But one of the obstacles standing in the way of studying the smaller moths has in the past been the difficulty in obtaining reliable identification guides, and this can still be an on-going problem, especially for anyone who is new to lepidopterology and feels unable to justify paying high prices for identification books.



***Phyllonorycter trifasciella*, a pair in cop., underside leaf-miner of Honeysuckle. Photo © J. L. Gregory.**

Unfortunately many of the smaller common species are rarely, if ever, attracted to light, and those few which do turn up in mercury vapour light-traps are often ignored, unidentified, and therefore unreported to the appropriate County Recorder. Inevitably many potentially exciting new site-records are therefore lost for ever.

Most of the smallest of all Lepidoptera are leaf-miners in their larval stages, (but just a few of them are not), and many of them, although very common, are day-flying and difficult to find in the adult stage, even on the brightest sunny day. So the best way to record these tiny moths for posterity is to search for the larval feeding-places, including both occupied and vacated leaf-mines. The study of leaf-mines, minology, is a truly enormous subject, as there are leaf-mining species in several large Orders of insects, mainly Diptera (True Flies), Coleoptera (Beetles), Hymenoptera (Sawflies), and of course Lepidoptera. It is important to be able to ascertain which mine-causers are



***Stigmella aurella*, a fairly typical vacated gallery mine on Bramble. The little slit in the leaf cuticle on the upperside of the mine can just be seen in this photograph. This is one of the commonest of all leaf-mining lepidoptera. Photo © J. L. Gregory.**

lepidopterous and which are not, and that is usually the easy bit. After a few careful observations in the field it can soon become second-nature to be able to overlook most of the non-lepidopterous mines and to concentrate only on those which are caused by lepidopterous larvae. It is also important to remember that when a vacated lepidopterous mine is found and the mine-causer can be reliably identified from the characteristics of the mine, it is still a perfectly valid site-record for the recent presence of that species in that precise location. A vacated mine should never be disregarded just because the former tenant is no longer present.



***Stigmella anomalella*, a typical mine on Rose. The almost fully grown larva can be clearly seen through the leaf cuticle. Photo © J. L. Gregory.**

A few basic facts are worth mentioning here. The larvae of lepidopterous leaf-miners are almost invariably solitary, with only a single larva to each mine. Some species are miners only in the early stages, adopting a different form of feeding strategy when partly grown. Some species mine only on the underside of a leaf and never on the upper-side, while for other species the opposite is true. Some species pupate in the mine, while others abandon their mines when larval growth is complete, and some of the former group spin little cocoons for pupation within the mine, while others pupate in their mines without a cocoon. Some species over-winter as larvae in their mines, others as pupae. The mines of most species occur only on a single species of food-plant, and a few are so fussy that they not only require the right food-plant but also are never, or only rarely, found in the "wrong" part of a leaf, such as leaf-tip, leaf-edge, leaf-base, close to the midrib, or between two parallel veins. Then there is the wide range of mine-forms, which range from large blotch-



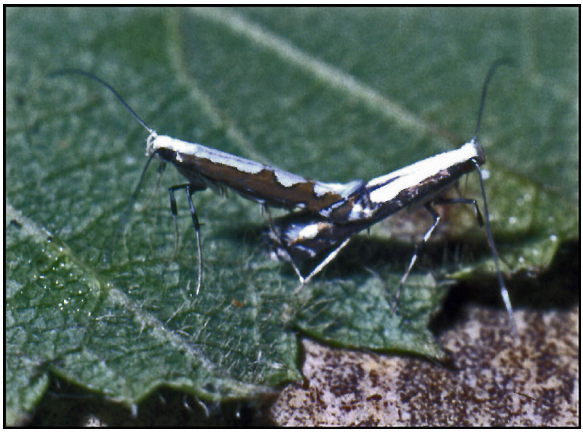
***Stigmella tityrella*, a typical hairpin bend mine between two veins on Beech. Photo © J. L. Gregory.**



Pictured on the left is *Dialectica scalariella*, a recent addition to the British list, and well worth looking for. The almost mature mine can cause considerable distortion of a leaf of various Echium sp. Photo © J. L. Gregory.

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types, small blotches, long galleries, short galleries, hairpin bend galleries, galleries which cross leaf-veins, galleries which never cross a vein, mines which begin with one form and then change to another when the tenant is partly grown, and in some species the later part of the mine absorbs and partly obliterates the earlier part. Some species spin silk inside the mine, and the silk then contracts as it dries, thus causing the leaf to become distorted, but this gives the larva more living-space. Another important consideration is the way in which the frass is distributed within the mine, and for fresh mines the time of year, especially for univoltine species, is a very important diagnostic consideration. Though a few species will readily begin a new mine in a fresh leaf when the old mine becomes uninhabitable for one reason or another, most species will die if their privacy is disturbed by such things as deliberate or accidental breaking of the leaf-cuticle. All of these factors, and more, are fairly constant for most species and therefore they are important aids to precise identification.



Another photograph of this species, showing a pair of the beautiful moths in cop. Photo © J. L. Gregory.

Many species are quite easy to rear in captivity, from occupied mines to the moth stage, and this is probably the best way to learn about them. When rearing miners in captivity, it is best not to be too discouraged by any failures, as some mines can become aborted due to disease, and it is surprising how often an apparently healthy-looking mine in due course proves to contain a parasitised larva. The various species of very tiny parasitoid wasp, which are adapted to leaf-mining hosts, are some of nature's natural controls.



***Cameraria ohridella*, makes leaf-mines on Horse Chestnut (Conker trees), sometimes several mines in the same leaf. This is another recent addition to the British list, and is worth looking for. Photo © J. L. Gregory.**

An often overlooked fact is that leaf-mines of many species can usually be preserved for future reference by pressing them in the same way that botanists treat their herbarium plant specimens, so that a collection of properly pressed mines with data labels, ideally showing date, locality, and any other relevant information, can be very useful verifiable site-records. For many species the completed but vacated mine is like the individual, unique life-story of the tiny caterpillar which made the

mine, its own personal larval autobiography from the moment the neo-natal larva hatched out of its eggshell to the moment it abandoned its mine after completing growth and ceasing to feed. With a well-prepared, well-preserved herbarium leaf-mine, this life-story can often be read with the aid of nothing more elaborate than a hand-lens.

Lepidopterous leaf-miners are distributed through several families, and the vast majority of them, after a little experience, are fairly easy to identify down to species level. However some mines can present a few problems for accurate identification, especially when two or more species make a similar-looking mine on the same food-plant. It should also be mentioned here that the moths of some of these tiny species are very beautifully coloured and patterned, as can be seen with a hand-lens, though others are have rather dull, drab colouring. The wing-spans of the moths of most leaf-mining Lepidoptera range from about 3 millimetres to 15 millimetres according to species.



***Callisto denticulella*, this is one of the species which mines Apple leaves in its early stages. This species then completes its growth in a folded leaf-edge which is secured with silk. Photo © J. L. Gregory.**

Minology is not a subject which can be mastered in a short write-up such as this, but if any reader wishes to become involved with this fascinating subject, help or advice is available by phoning me on 01726,813265 or email john.gregory@mypostoffice.co.uk I am far from expert though, and I may not always be able to provide complete answers to every query.

~ John L. Gregory, April 2009.

Migration News.

Hardly news perhaps, much of this was on various websites, at least we appear to be having a migration year, not easily seen in Cornwall due to the abysmal rain and cold, this year. Nothing rare, just the usual three:

The Red Admiral. Though doubtfully the very first I happened across, I saw three immaculate Red Admirals 'hill-topping' on Helman Tor on 9th April 2009 - always a good site for hill-topping immigrants (i.e. Red Admirals, Painted Ladies, or both). Other Red Admirals have been reported, some from hilltop sites, and in other southern counties throughout the rest of April, but it remained very scarce through that month. At this time the 'winter' brood is close to emerging, and indeed a report from Surrey (via Dave Nash) shows the first to be seen emerging (and reported), was also on 9th April! In previous 'good' years, immigrants can arrive in mid-March.

The Painted Lady. Although the first to be recorded in Great Britain was 1st April 2009 (Somerset), very few more arrived before mid-April, whereas there have been about 4 or 5 reported in most coastal counties up to East Anglia at least. Cornwall Devon, Dorset and Hants have had perhaps twice this number. Now the SE and over....

east coast of England seem to be getting more, but not so inland counties. There is apparently a far greater number of Painted Ladies on their way north from Morocco and the Med. Interestingly, in late March/early April some researchers (?) visited Morocco, which had had an exceptional rainfall, and they witnessed 'hundreds of thousands' of Painted Ladies emerging and heading N. across the Mediterranean! This was partially confirmed by reports from Mallorca of 'tens or 100's everywhere we went'! This was on 11th and 12th April 2009. A further Internet report speaks of 'a massive' migration flying north across the Hault and Gard departments of southern France on 17th to the 19th April, across a broad front (report via Mark Tunmore, Atropos).

An interesting 'aside' was a report from 'The Monument' on Farley Mount in Hampshire, when on 21st April 2009 an evening sighting of 4 Painted Ladies together (around 6pm), which were 'spiraling around the monument'! These were of course 'hill-topping' (since having lived in Hampshire I know the monument is on virtually the highest ground in miles!). Typical immigrant behaviour, but apparently not known to the observer there! Back to the West Country, as the weather improves into May, we can look forward to many more Painted Ladies at least! On the 3rd May 2009 there were 3+ at Helman Tor, mid-Cornwall, while others have reached N. Ireland, (and Norfolk).

The Clouded Yellow. Although there are no Cornish records yet (that I know of), and only two for Great Britain, one of them was very close, seen on Prawle Point on 20th April 2009 by Vic and Sylvia Tucker, presumably an immigrant since a Painted Lady and a LOCUST were also seen! (The other British record was the earliest, on 14th April 2009, in Dorset, hence the possibility of an emergent specimen – they have successfully over-wintered as larvae for several years in Dorset and Cornwall!

R. Lane. 25 Warwick Drive, Holmbush, St. Austell, PL25 3JJ.

Don't be a Square, Walk One.

We have been allocated twenty by one kilometre squares taken at random from the OS maps and we need a volunteer for each one, could you be that volunteer? The only requirement is that you walk across the square on a nice day in July and repeat this in August, counting the butterflies as you go. The ideal walk is north to south followed by south to north at least a couple of hundred metres away from your north to south walk. This may have to be amended slightly depending on the geography.

The table opposite shows the various squares still available (yes we do have some volunteers already) with the OS reference**,** nearest town or village and the nearest road.

If you want to look at a square then you can go to the following website:

http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/getamap/

then press the 'Get-a-map' big pink blob, type in the OS reference and the square will appear.

I can also email a map of the square to you or I can post you a picture of it, so you do not even need a computer. My details are on the back of the magazine.

You can also enrol via survey@butterfly-conservation.org

The most complicated part of the walk is to have a look at the landscape, see how much is private land, and then negotiate how to cross it. We provide letters of introduction to landowners explaining the scheme and its importance for biodiversity.

If we can fill up the 20 squares we have been allocated then we can get more next year and the more squares we get the more data we will have to guide our work as a branch of Butterfly Conservation. Please help us in that task.

Grid	OS map	Town	Road
SS2311	190	Kilkhampton	A39
SW9867	200	Wadebridge	A39
SX0871	200	Bodmin	A30
SX1382	200	Camelford	A39
SX1673	201	Bolventor	A30
SX2151	201	Polperro	A387
SX2683	201	Launceston	A395
SX2760	201	Liskeard	B3252
SX3073	201	Pensilva	B3254
SX3158	201	Trerulefoot	A38
SX3486	201	Launceston	A388
SX4068	201	Callington	A388
SX4155	201	Torpoint	A374
SX4552	201	Millbrook	B3247
SW4426	203	Newlyn	B3115
SW7725	204	Manaccan	B3292

~ Jim Barker, April 2009.

The Grizzled Skipper and West Goss Moor's Multi Use Trail.

By Phil Boggis (CBC's Moth Officer).

This part of Cornwall has been in the news several times lately. The wildlife across this heathland complex in central Cornwall has taken 'a bashing' due to fires and, in the West Goss Moor area, along a small portion of the old railway track, the Grizzled Skipper has to compete with trials bike riding. Strictly speaking the land is owned by Network Rail and all who go there are trespassing but - and it is a big but, trials biking has been going on there for so long now that the locals have taken for granted their right to use it as such.

Natural England's Senior Reserve Manager for Goss Moor, Martin Davey commented that provided there is not an invasion of motorcyclists over a short period, the area would definitely benefit from the disturbance. So, all in all, a happy compromise has tentatively been reached at the moment.

Martin broached the subject of disturbance along open stretches of flat gravel when we met on CBC's field meeting at Goss Moor on the 9th May this year. He was explaining to our members how important it was to get the surface material

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of the new trail just right - not anything would do. Martin was quick to observe our approval of the increase in the distribution of the Grizzled Skipper's food-plant, Wild Strawberry, along the newly laid track - thanks to the track material being just right. CBC members agreed with Martin that hopefully the trail with its constant use, and hence disturbance, would help the wild strawberry grow close to, and along the edges of the trail without too much intensive management. This bides well for the butterflies' future and it is hoped that after several poor seasons, this year will see the butterfly spreading ever further along the trail - helped in no small measure by work already done by Paul Browning and volunteers earlier this year. CBC would like to thank Martin and his team for all they have done during the last few years especially with the negotiations with Network Rail and the on-going cooperation with them. Also the hard work in getting the trail up and running. More details of the multi use trail can be found at:
http://www.tickity-boo.co.uk/community/article.php?menuID=5&artid=085

Report on the field Meeting at West Goss Moor for the Grizzled Skipper on the 9th May 2009.



Grizzled Skipper, West Goss Moor, 9th May 2009.
Photo © P. H. Boggis

The weather promised fair and that is exactly how it turned out as we met along the lay-by of the old A30. The ubiquitous sound of trials bikes greeted our ears as we wound our way down from the main road to the old rail-way track which is the haunt, one of only two in Cornwall, of the Grizzled Skipper. The light use of trials bik-ing possibly benefits the butterfly by disturbing the ground and helping the food-plant, but this is said with caution as it should not be taken as a go-ahead to steam-roller exces-sively through the entire area! As with so many things in life, not too much, nor too little, but in moderation! Having 'got that off my chest' so to speak, I'll move on.

We knew that with the initial cloudy conditions, the Grizzled Skipper would be resting on its food-plant or on a stalk of grass and this proved to be the case.



Taking time out to nectar on Common Dog Violet is an Orange-tip, one of the first butterflies that was seen.
Photo © P. H. Boggis

Photographs of the first one seen were duly taken whereupon it upped and flew onto Marilyn Edyvean's jumper where the photo on page 18 was taken.

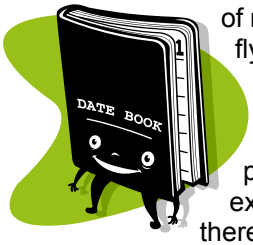
Other butterflies and moths seen included the **Green-veined White** and the **Burnet Companion**.

~ Phil Boggis, May 2009.



Seen on the right nectaring on Bugle is the Dingy Skipper. This butterfly is fast becoming scarce due to the disappearance of 'Brownfield' sites around the county. Photo: Goss Moor, 9th May 2009 © P. H. Boggis.

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.

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
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Cornwall Butterfly Conservation's Web Manager
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But don't know where to start?
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The opinions expressed in the articles of this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Cornwall Branch, or Butterfly Conservation.

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