

# Devon Branch

[www.devon-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.devon-butterflies.org.uk)



Aberrant Small Tortoiseshell photographed in a garden in Talaton, East Devon (*Pam Weston*)

## Newsletter

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# Butterfly Conservation DevonBranch



**BUTTERFLY  
CONSERVATION**

## Newsletter

The Newsletter of Butterfly  
Conservation Devon Branch  
published three times a year.

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Contributions for the newsletter are al-  
ways welcome. Please send them to the  
Editor (address at back of newsletter).  
Accompanying images are especially  
welcome.

The Editor reserves the right to correct  
errors in, adjust, or shorten articles if  
necessary, for the sake of accuracy,  
presentation and space available. Offer-  
ings may occasionally be held over for a  
later newsletter if space is short.

The views expressed by contributors  
are not necessarily those of the Editor or  
of Butterfly Conservation either locally  
or nationally.

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### Editorial

My diary has quotations for each week and the first for the year reads: "I am I plus my surroundings and if I do not preserve the latter I do not preserve myself" (Jose Ortega y Gasset, Spanish writer and philosopher). An appropriate quotation for any conservationist.

I found autumn exceptionally quiet butterfly wise which was surprising considering that it stayed mild late. Where were the crowds of late butterflies on the Ivy flowers especially on sunny coasts? In the first week of October down on

the coast near Slapton in warm sunny weather, countless “terraces “ of flowering Ivy on the cliffs were bare of butterflies. By compensation, numbers of Clouded Yellow butterflies were still flying around the flowers on the beach. Eventually I did spot one species of butterfly on some low-down Ivy, unusually, Small Copper, a first for me on that plant, and several in number.

Devon BC membership has doubled in the last 10 years and Amanda, our Membership Secretary, reports it now stands around 750 which is quite amazing. In the autumn we will reach the milestone of Devon BC branch being 30 years old.

For anyone still needing paper forms for recording Devon butterflies they can be obtained from Amanda Hunter: [membership@devon-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:membership@devon-butterflies.org.uk)

### **Obituary: Phil Cook**

Phil passed away on 31st Aug 2015 in Torbay Hospital aged 81 after a short illness. He had a successful career as a chemistry teacher and he was also active as a Liberal and Liberal Democrat from the 1960's. Taking early retirement in 1989, he was able to spend more time with his interests in politics and wildlife. He served on Devon County Council South Division for 16 years and was appointed Honorary Alderman in 2013 as a mark of long service with the County Council. A passionate environmentalist, he was secretary of the Devonshire Association Entomology Section and also the Association's beetle recorder. He began the Kingstonswell Natural History Society in the early 1990's and helped to revive Kingstonswell Conservation Society. He was involved with conservation work at Kerswell Down, Miltor Mator and the Church Meadow. As a member of Devon BC branch he attended a number of winter work parties around the county over the years. In the 1980's he developed an interest in wildlife photography. In 1997 he exhibited some of his photographs at Teignbridge Council's Forde House offices to highlight his concern about wildlife losses, including Grizzled Skipper, which still has a foothold in his locality. In his youth he was a successful tennis player being Stafford County junior champion and also played at junior level at Wimbledon. A keen cyclist, he would cycle around Devon on business and to photograph butterflies and other wildlife and only bought his first car in the mid 1990's. Phil leaves his wife Sheila. They had recently celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary. Donations were invited at his funeral and £351 was collected on behalf of Devon BC.



Phil at a Whilborough Common work day in 2009 (*Bill Deakins*)

## Devon BC Members' Day & AGM October 31st 2015 in Crediton

**Chairman's Report – Barry Henwood** Phil Cook, a long standing member of the branch and founder of the Kingskerswell Natural History Society died at the end of August. Phil organized and took part in practical conservation tasks around Kingskerswell on important limestone grassland sites. Donations of £350 at Phil's funeral went to Butterfly Conservation, Devon Branch, and his wife Sheila attended the Members' Day.

Bob Heckford, was congratulated on receiving the H.H. Bloomer Award by the prestigious Linnaean Society. It is awarded to an amateur naturalist who has made an important contribution to biological knowledge and is not just for British citizens. Miriam Rothschild was amongst previous recipients. Bob has added 16 species to the British list: *Ectoedemia heckfordi*, *Infurcitinea captans*, *Phyllonorycter staintoniella*, *Tebenna micalis*, *Coleophora prunifoliae*, *Metalampra italic*, *Bryotropha dryadella*, *Syncopacma albifrontella*, *S. suecicella*, *Batrachedra parvulipunctella*, *Stathmopoda diplaspis*, *Anatrachyntis badia*, *A. simplex*, *Adoxophyes privatana*, *Celypha rurestrana* and *Bactra lacteana*.

*Ectoedemia heckfordi*, he found new to science. He has also had *Bryotropha heckfordi* from Spain named after him and a fly *Phytomyza heckfordi* which he reared new to Science. He wrote part of volume 4 of Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland and was a joint editor of the Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles published in 2013. He has published over 230 notes and papers in entomological journals.

He is a Scientific Associate of the British Museum, Natural History and was the only Lepidopterist invited to a bioblitz event at Prince Charles's Highgrove Estate last year.

Jenny Evans has won one of Butterfly Conservation's Outstanding Volunteer Awards which she received at the national AGM on 14 November in Surrey. Jenny runs our website and is Transect Coordinator. She gives talks and conservation advice and runs field events. What most of you probably don't know is that she has also been serving on the Cornwall Branch committee and running their website too. It is likely to be unique for someone to be serving on two branch committees at the same time. Congratulations to Jenny.

**Membership - Amanda Hunter** Over the past two years our branch growth has been consistent at about 13%. Total branch memberships (single, joint or family) is currently 750. We now hold email addresses for 56% of you and most members for whom we have an email address receive our monthly email in which we remind members about upcoming branch events. This regular email contact with members enables notification of late changes to events and any urgent branch news. A significant number of our membership have now also agreed to receive our newsletter by email – thus helping us save money on printing and postage and allowing us to use even more of our funds for vital conservation work. However, please could I remind members to let us know when they change their email address. All new members automatically receive an email version unless they specifically request a paper copy. Some of our members who still wish to receive a posted paper newsletter now donate £6 per year to cover these costs for which we are very grateful.

**Newsletter - Amanda Hunter & Pete Hurst** In a further effort to save costs we have transferred our newsletter mailing operation to Head Office where the newsletter is printed by a Dorset printer. We get a slightly reduced postage cost per item as they use a franking machine. Volunteers at Head Office do the envelope stuffing. The first newsletter mailed

from Head Office was our June edition and there were a few teething problems, but the subsequent October mailing went much better. Overall on each edition we have saved almost £100 which we have been able to use for local conservation and we hope to continue using this Head Office mailing system in 2016. Many thanks to all the staff and volunteers and Butterfly Conservation offices in Dorset for their help with this.

**Field events - Paul Butter** 24 events were organised this year giving our members opportunities to see as wide a range of butterflies and moths as possible by covering the flight periods of as many species as possible over as much of the county as possible.

The first, at the end of April, was a Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Small Pearl-bordered workshop. Jenny Plackett ran this event with twenty participants with a view to recruit more recorders for our threatened Fritillaries which several went on to do.

In early May there was a meeting at Torrington Commons to see both Pearl and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries on a site where the Commoners have done management work to help these butterflies.

A joint meeting at Cerne Giant Hill with Dorset branch was very successful with a large turn-out from both counties. All the target species were seen including Duke of Burgundy and Marsh Fritillary.

59 species of May moths were encountered at Hazelwood Farm, Sampford Courtenay by fifteen members including three children.

The very rare Heath Fritillary was seen at Lydford Railway Reserve with two events held to reduce the impact of large numbers of people on this rather small and fragile site.

Jenny Plackett furthered the work on our fritillaries with a workshop on Marsh Fritillary which also looked at Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moths.



Heath Fritillaries  
(Pete Underhay)

In June, moths were targeted at Dunsdon NNR an event jointly held with Devon Moth Group (DMG) and Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT). There was good attendance and 54 species were recorded including some rarer ones. The following morning people coming to the butterfly walk also had the chance of seeing the moths caught the previous night before going on to see Marsh Fritillaries.

Jenny promoted the Fritillaries again with a workshop on Heath Fritillary at Allerford.

Later in June there was a walk at Aish Tor at which 35 people successfully encountered both High Brown and Dark Green Fritillary with expert advice on hand to help separate these rather similar looking species.

The Fritillary theme continued with an excellent meeting at Hunter's Inn, Heddon Valley in association with the National Trust where amazingly High Brown, Dark Green, Silver-washed, and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were seen together with Green Hairstreaks.

June ended with a trip to Bovey Heathfield Reserve to target the Silver-studded Blue which was seen by the 20 or so attendees.

A moth event on 3<sup>rd</sup> July at Bovey Heathfield had a perfect warm night for a change. Plenty of people turned up and several traps were put to use and the result was an incredible 150 species being recorded including some nationally notable species.

The Bovey Valley Woodland meeting attracted over 25 people to see 12 species including all target species apart from the elusive White-letter Hairstreak.

Ashclyst Forest was explored and White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary seen.

The moth night at the DWT reserve at Meeth was well attended with 90 species being recorded. This was followed the next day by a butterfly walk when after examining the night's moth catch 30 or so members explored the reserve and got excellent sightings of the Wood Whites that are the star attraction.

A trip to Braunton Burrows found no Small Blue but the flora as ever was very interesting.

Little Breach Reserve, was visited by as many neighbouring branch members as Devon branch members. The resident Graylings were seen and management explained.

The unique Undercliffs NNR near Seaton had over 40 attendees to see the geologically as well as entomologically interesting area of landslips occupied by Wood White.

Late August events were held at Orley Common which had 16 people attend with 17 species seen including the target Brown Argus. The Preston Down meeting for Brown Hairstreak, usually our latest emerging species in the UK was badly affected by rain but one Brown Hairstreak was seen by the brave few.

Thanks to the stalwart volunteers who ran these events and those who attended. Thanks also to other organisations involved with these events, DWT, NT, Dartmoor National Park Authority, Natural England, Mr Allhusen of Whitlands and our sister branches.

Note that early weather forecasts were nearly always wrong this season! Some members were deterred from events that turned out to have reasonable weather. Perhaps if an event



Silver-washed Fritillary  
(Pete Adey)



Brown Argus  
(Michael Brooking)

is not too far away maybe have a look out of the window an hour or so beforehand and chance it! Also events often have a conservation element where management regimes can be looked at in conjunction with recording and this is not weather dependant.

**Practical Conservation Tasks - Pete Hurst** In recent years Devon BC has had winter work days at the BC reserve Little Breach near Culmstock, BC reserve Old Railway at Lydford and Bovey Heathfield Teignbridge reserve near Bovey Tracey. At Lydford, but for the regular management organised by the branch, Heath Fritillary would have disappeared from Devon a long time ago. At Little Breach, a wide range of butterfly species have steadily increased in nos. year on year as the site has improved for them. At Bovey Heathfield, annual management has enabled the recently re-appeared Silver-studded Blue to maintain a small population there. Last year the branch had a couple of work days at Chudleigh Knighton Heath led by DWT. The Pearl-bordered Fritillary colonies there soon disappear without fresh coppicing and scrub clearing, and the work also benefits Dingy & Grizzled Skipper. Therefore, Devon BC volunteers are obviously helping to keep important populations of butterflies going in the county. If you know of any important sites in Devon that could benefit from the branch's volunteer work days, please get in touch with the committee for future consideration.

**Publicity - Mary Harold** We have had another good year for publicity with some successful days and projects that we have been involved with. If you would be willing to help at our publicity events please contact me:- [mary.harold@btinternet.com](mailto:mary.harold@btinternet.com) We do not attend many events so it is not an onerous task but new help is much appreciated!

In November 2014 Barry Henwood and Amanda Hunter attended a volunteer taster day at Yamer Wood.

In April 2015 Jenny Evans took a stand for Butterfly Conservation at a Spring Gardening and Wildlife Weekend at the RHS Garden, Rosemoor, near Great Torrington.

In May Pete Hurst attended a Biodiversity Day at Trendlebere Down & led a butterfly walk.

In June Roger & Pam Bristow took part in a Wildlife Day at The Knapp in Sidmouth.

For the third year running Butterfly Conservation linked up with the National Trust in July for a Butterfly themed weekend at the National Trust Property A La Ronde near Exmouth. Many people joined the butterfly walks around the meadow and took advice from some butterfly experts who were on hand. Youngsters had the opportunity to go on a bug hunt and to complete a nature quest. The results of a moth trap were on display. Visitors to the meadow were able to see good numbers of the Marbled White butterfly as well as many other butterflies and moths including a Scarlet Tiger moth.



A la Ronde event July 2015  
(Mary Harold)

The National Trust property, Overbecks at Salcombe ran a display about butterflies and moths earlier in the year and were keen to promote the work of Butterfly Conservation. They had BC leaflets and encouraged visitors to take part in the Big Butterfly Count.

We marked the Big Butterfly Count Event at Meeth Quarry Reserve in July by asking visitors to fill out one of our spotter sheets. A good number of visitors who were at the reserve in search of the Wood White butterfly took up the challenge!

During East Devon Heath Week near Woodbury Castle we had a stall on a very wet and windy day in July. Despite the challenging weather the day improved and in-trepid visitors arrived in good numbers to enjoy the event.

The Whitchurch & Sampford Spiney Sheepdog Trials, held near Tavistock invited us to their event in August. With a good range of moths for visitors to see we had a steady flow of interest and a very enjoyable day with spectacular views over Dartmoor.



East Devon Heath Week  
Devon BC stall (*Mary Harold*)

The Exeter Green Fair in Exeter centre in September was successful with much interest in our leaflets and id charts and promising feedback that new members were made!

Finally, in October, Devon Wildlife Trust invited us to their annual 'Wildlife Champions Conference' where 200 youngsters from a number of Exeter primary schools created wild flower meadows, made bird feeders and planted butterfly friendly plants which helped channel the energy and enthusiasm of these wildlife friendly youngsters!

We get to as many shows and events as possible, to make the general public aware of our organization, to create an interest and to educate them as to ways we can improve habitats for butterflies and moths. We are always pleased to learn of new venues for the future so if any members know of a suitable event please let us know!

Many thanks to volunteers who have helped at our publicity events this year who include, Roger & Pam Bristow, Pete Hurst, Jenny Evans, Liz & Roger Hamling, Paul & Susie Butter and Tony John. Everyone's help, enthusiasm and expertise is much appreciated and I do believe that it continues to be a worthwhile part of the work of Butterfly Conservation.

**Press Release** In March the Devon Branch of BC made it into the National Press - The Times, The Independent and the Sun - thanks to a great story concerning the Small Blue butterfly. Much interest from the media and great publicity for us!

**Waitrose** We have been successfully selected to be included in the Waitrose Community Matters Scheme in Torquay and Teignmouth this year where shoppers vote for charities with their tokens. We have received £336 from Torquay and £361 from Teignmouth, which will be used to help conserve the Pearl-Bordered Fritillary at Haldon Hill.

**Website** The Branch has its own website run by Jenny Evans. It provides a wealth of news, photos and information. It is the quickest way in which news can be disseminated to members. All members are welcome to send material to Jenny for consideration of posting on the website.

**Butterflies - Roger Bristow** Unlike last year, there were only 41 sightings of 6 species seen in Devon up till the end of March – all the usual hibernators + 2 Clouded Yellows on 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of March (presumably overwintered as larvae). In April, things improved and 14 other species were seen: Speckled Wood (4<sup>th</sup> April), Orange Tip (5<sup>th</sup>), Green-veined White (6<sup>th</sup>), Small White (6<sup>th</sup>), Small Copper (6<sup>th</sup>), Holly Blue (6<sup>th</sup>), Wall (8<sup>th</sup>), Large White (10<sup>th</sup>), Wood White (15<sup>th</sup>), Pearl-bordered Fritillary (16<sup>th</sup>), Green Hairstreak (16<sup>th</sup>), Painted Lady (18<sup>th</sup>), Dingy Skipper (21<sup>st</sup>) and Grizzled Skipper (23<sup>rd</sup>). Last year, by the end of April, there were 212 records in the database; this year there were 208 and it augured well for a good year and this is reflected in the number of records received so far.

**A few highlights:** Jenny Plackett reports that the High Brown Fritillary (HBF) is notoriously difficult to monitor due to its close similarity with the Dark Green Fritillary (DGF). Both are found on steep, south facing bracken slopes and fly at the same time of year, in June/July (when the bracken can be over 6 feet tall, adding to the difficulties encountered in monitoring). Many survey results are therefore returned as, for example, 10 HBF, 20 DGF and 50 unidentified large fritillaries. In some cases very few can be definitely identified, especially in hot and sunny weather when the butterfly rarely rests. This year for example we received a record of 171 large fritillaries flying at Aish Tor, but none were positively identified. Because of these difficulties, the butterfly is almost certainly under-recorded, giving hope that it is actually faring better than we might fear.

In 2015 HBF monitoring was carried out at 28 sites which have had records in any of the years since 2002 (when regular annual recording using timed count methodology began). Positive records were obtained from 23 sites, although many of these were confirmed sightings of single individuals or very low numbers. There are two large populations within Devon, at Heddon Valley in Exmoor (centred around Trentishoe Combe) and the Dart Valley on Dartmoor (centred around Aish Tor). One HBF was recorded this year in the Teign Valley at Dunsford Nature Reserve (DWT), but the population here is now very marginal and no definite sightings were confirmed in the historic colony at Castle Drogo. The Walkham Valley population appears small but stable, following scrub control and targeted grazing management. One new site was recorded in the Heddon Valley on Exmoor this year, again following several years of management work to restore suitable breeding habitat. However, the butterfly was not recorded at two sites where it was seen for the first time in 2014, again following significant management effort. This is typical behaviour of a metapopulation, with new sites being colonised whilst others are temporarily unoccupied in a given year. The important thing is to ensure management takes place to maintain all the potential habitat in suitable condition, such that the butterfly can expand into new sites during years of good weather, as was the case last year.

Wood Whites, both first and second broods were seen on the East Devon Cliffs, they

were also seen in good numbers at the new DWT reserve at Meeth, at Quoditch and a singleton in Cookworthy Forest. No Chalk-hill Blue was seen on the east Devon cliffs, but as compensation, there was a sighting of a first brood Adonis Blue. A White-letter Hairstreak was seen at its usual haunt in Bovey Valley Woodlands, as well as a female at a new locality north of Tiverton. Exotics include Swallowtail at Colaton Raleigh in June & Monarch, at Lymptone in August.



Monarch, Lymptone, 27th August 2015 (*Pete Newman*)

**Lydford Reserve** Jim Braven reports very good news on the status of Heath Fritillary at Lydford this year. We have had what is believed to be the best year ever, with counts of 138 (largest ever recorded), 93 and 87. These were all higher than those usually made. The flight period was from 21st May to July 2<sup>nd</sup> and total count for the 7 weeks was 387.

The two days for members were enjoyed by all. Members can go to the Reserve by showing a membership card at the NT entrance. Working days were well attended.

The Forestry Commission habitat still has acceptable populations of Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and is looked after by FC staff.

**Silver-studded Blues (SSB's) in Devon 2015** Lesley Kerry reports that numbers on the East Devon Commons were down on last year, but this is thought to be due to the weather and not the suitability of the habitat. Although there were good records from some colonies, overall sightings were down: 347 compared to 675 in 2014. The good news is that small numbers were recorded for the second year on Aylesbeare Common. Management work is ongoing which should benefit the species.

A total of 398 males and 146 females were counted at West Soar (SX70367037) giving a grand total for the Bolt Head area of 910 m and 363 f (up considerably on the 634 seen in 2014 which itself was a record high)! Michael Brooking reports that SSBs were later this year with a shorter season after a cold and windy May, but he found great numbers when they did emerge.

Detailed records and maps of the location of all colonies can be made available for anyone wishing to see them if they contact Lesley (details on contacts list page 19).

**Recording** An on-going commitment by the Branch is recording. So please, if you have made any observations this year, send them to Roger Bristow as soon as possible, preferably electronically. The template which can be downloaded from the website is very

easy to fill in, but there are some guidance notes if needed.

**Small Blue - Amanda Hunter** In Torbay, Small Blue has been recorded at Lummaton Quarry, Berry Head and Long Quarry (Walls Hill) this year. The main colony at Lummaton has done well, with better numbers than last year and enjoyed a strong second brood. Whether this was due to weather, a good Kidney Vetch season or the translocation of the rescued Small Blue larvae from the Lummaton Industrial Estate in 2014 is unclear. Another batch of the Small Blue larvae translocated in 2014 went to Berry Head where there has historically been a small colony. Slightly higher numbers of Small Blue were recorded there than in previous years, most of them were seen in an inaccessible area, but there were a couple of sightings on public paths and it is hoped more will be recorded there in future years.

**WCBS** The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey records the changing abundance of widespread species in the general countryside. 2 visits are made to a 1 km square between the beginning of July & the end of Aug. to count butterflies along two 1 km survey lines running through the square. 21 squares out of 27 were surveyed in 2015. However, 10 more squares were added at short notice, but for one of these I did find a surveyor (Lucy Morton), together with 2 new recruits (April Windle and Anita Kemp) who took over the squares that David Smith was not able to do this year.

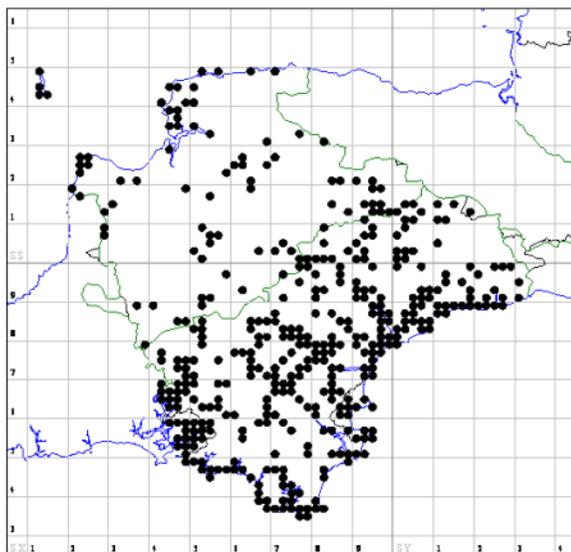
**Moths – Barry Henwood** Moth recording continues to go very well. Devon Moth Group has over 120 members. The vast majority of 2015 records have not yet been submitted as moth recording continues right up until 31 December. In many ways it is easier, more comprehensive and efficient to report on the previous year. However, I did report on some 2014 records last year, so I shall only mention 1 record in this report and that was made after the 2014 AGM. Next year I'll report on some 2015 highlights. . A summary of records received in 2014 is shown in the table below.

	Pre 2014 records	2014 records	Total submitted during 2014
accepted at species level	18096	50726	68822
accepted at supraspecific level	289	1225	1514
Not accepted	35	982	1017
butterflies	81	113	194
<b>total</b>	<b>18501</b>	<b>53046</b>	<b>71547</b>

## 2014 Devon moth records (2km squares)

Devon Moth Group has a huge amount of expertise within its membership. It holds indoor and field meetings. It produces regular newsletters and a comprehensive annual report which contains much more detailed information than it is possible to give here. If you are interested in finding out far more about moths please consider joining. Details are on the Devon Moth Group website.

On 29 October 2014 *Ctenoplia accentifera*, Accent Gem was trapped at Exmouth. This was the second British record of this African species, with the first record in Kent in 1969.



**Volunteering** We are in the process of compiling a register of volunteers. David Hinde has been adding up volunteer time. Our best estimate at the moment is that within the branch, so far this year, there have been 695 volunteer days worked. This is truly impressive. We need a more organised approach in matching tasks to volunteers and we need more volunteers.

**Thank you** Thank you to everyone who has helped the branch: committee members, those who have helped with work parties, publicity events, field events, butterfly monitoring and those with specific non-committee roles. Also thank you to Crediton WI for providing the catering for our AGM & Members' Day.



Members' Day lunch 2015 (Pete Hurst)

**Butterfly Conservation - Devon Branch**  
**Income and Expenditure account**  
**1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015**  
**Treasurer - Ray Jones**

	2014/15	2013/14
<b>Balance as at 1st April</b>	<b>2889.31</b>	<b>4868.06</b>
<b><u>Income - year to 31st March</u></b>		
Subscriptions	3546.00	3147.00
Grants: - Little Breach Reserve	163.47	730.12
Donations	1165.56	2609.29
Donations - Corporate	170.00	0.00
Sales Income (gross)	200.00	326.60
AGM receipts	352.00	416.00
Refund of bank charges	20.31	0.00
Gift Aid from donations	0.00	458.75
Refund of Devon Wildlife donation	0.00	300.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>5617.34</b>	<b>7987.76</b>
<b><u>Expenditure - year to 31st March</u></b>		
Donations to Two Moors Fritillary project	2000.00	4000.00
Donation to National Moth Recording Scheme	500.00	500.00
Insurance	49.20	57.19
Reserve maintenance - Lydford	780.00	679.98
Reserve maintenance - Little Breach	138.00	0.00
Reserve maintenance - Haldon	250.00	0.00
Newsletter expenses	2193.91	1726.94
AGM expenses	491.00	621.00
Meeting room hire	120.00	60.00
Purchase of computer	349.00	0.00
Office Expenses	49.00	15.92
Mapmate licence	6.30	6.30
Bank charges	20.31	0.00
Stock purchases	0.00	156.00
Monitoring, surveying and travel expenses	0.00	1803.05
North Devon Show fees	0.00	13.00
Purchase of display boards	0.00	317.94
Contribution to the printing of Butterfly	0.00	9.19
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>6946.72</b>	<b>9966.51</b>
<b><u>SUMMARY</u></b>		
Excess income over expenditure	<b>-1329.38</b>	<b>-1978.75</b>
<b>Balance as at 31st March</b>	<b>1559.93</b>	<b>2889.31</b>
<b><u>Future committed expenditure as at 31st March</u></b>		
Annual contribution to National Moth Recording Scheme	500.00	500.00
Annual contribution to Two Moors Project	500.00	500.00
Little Breach reserve	479.36	453.89
Lydford reserve	86.55	166.55
<b>Total committed expenditure</b>	<b>1565.91</b>	<b>1620.44</b>

### **Members' Day talk: The Secret Lives of Butterflies – Richard Fox**

Richard warned us that he would be mentioning sex and violence in the garden in his talk! He first referred to Large White butterfly eggs parasitised by minute *Trichogramma* wasps. The wasps are chemically drawn to the anti-aphrodisiacal scent given off by mated female butterflies. This chemical smell (acquired from the male during mating) helps to deter other amorous male butterflies. The *Trichogramma* wasps also hitch rides on the bodies and legs of the female butterflies so that they are taken directly to egg-laying sites. Another parasitic wasp species, *Cotesia glomerata* parasitises Large White larvae. The wasps are chemically attracted to plants being attacked by the larvae – the plants literally calling for help from the wasps. Richard also referred to hyperparasitoid wasps – smaller species which lay eggs inside the *Cotesia* larvae, again drawn in chemically by what is going on.

Most female butterflies mate once only, but Green-veined White females typically mate twice. Male Green-veineds pass a spermatophore – a protein-rich package – to the female during mating. The weight of the spermatophore is a high proportion of the donating male's weight (up to 20%). The female benefits from the nutritional value of the spermatophore, and with a second mating can lay 60% more eggs and live 5 or 6 days longer than usual.

Peacock butterflies can frighten chickens and Blue Tits and scare mice away by displaying their “eyes” and by wing rubbing – useful at hibernation sites.

Richard finally told us the story of how Painted Ladies kept us in the dark about their return migration behaviour until very recently – ground radar detected them on return journeys high in the sky out of human sight. He outlined how they are continually brooded and simply move to where they can find food. This means flying from Northern Africa very early in the year and breeding in southern Europe, then Northern Europe and finally returning to Northern Africa – a round trip (in stages) of circa 9,000 miles – significantly further than the distance travelled by American Monarchs!

### **Members' Day talk: Investigating Identity Theft – John Bebbington**

John spoke about natural selection in invertebrates, how they avoid predation and how they have evolved and adapted. He illustrated how already well-camouflaged invertebrates often choose just the right resting posture or site to maximise their chances of evading detection by predators. Purple Thorn moths boldly rest visibly in the open resembling dead leaves as does the Lappet moth, which even has a realistic leaf-stalk “snout” to add to the deception. Oak Beauty and Purple Thorn moth caterpillars were shown as good twig mimics. Others mimic lichenised tree bark e.g. Mottled Beauty moth and Merveille du Jour. Brussels Lace larva is also remarkable camouflaged amongst the lichens on which it feeds. Some moths resemble bird droppings, e.g. Chinese Charac-

ter, Clouded Border. In Batesian Mimicry, harmless invertebrates benefit from resemblance to harmful or distasteful species. Some Hoverflies are excellent bee and wasp mimics. Clearwing moths are wasp-like but harmless. Flash colouration which can frighten potential predators is shown by Cream-spot Tiger and Eyed Hawk, two moths that can readily reveal the bright “eyes” on their hindwings. Strong colouration can warn predators to avoid potentially poisonous or distasteful species, but sometimes harmless species display similar colours for their own protection. Cinnabar moths and their larvae are distasteful. Spurge Hawk larva’s colours warns of its toxicity. Peacock butterflies make a hissing sound with their wing rubbing, frightening predators in the dark. Groups of Buff Tip larvae and also sawfly larvae twitch in unison when disturbed which can be alarming to potential predators.

### **Members’ Day talk: Life on the Verge – David Hinde**

David works for Highways England and explained that in Devon the agency monitors the M5, A38 and A30. This year they have had 3 main projects running: an invertebrate survey on some stretches of road, creating pollination-rich grassland and a project for the Marsh Fritillary on Goss Moor (A30 in Cornwall). The invertebrate survey contracted to Buglife included recording 109 lepidoptera species. Southern Oak Bush-cricket also found – first record for South West. David revealed that the older parts of the trunk roads were more biodiverse, especially the sunny side of the A38 between Exeter and Buckfastleigh. Narrow-headed ant found there at Chudleigh Knighton. Topsoil has been washed off along the same stretch and this has helped increase the biodiversity. Flower-rich grassland has been extended on A30 between Whiddon Down and Okehampton using hay sourced from a nearby area. At Goss Moor, David conceded that Devils-bit Scabious seed for Marsh Fritillary habitat had largely failed but he said a second attempt using plant plugs which will be planted out in 2017 hopes to be more successful.



*Caligo prometheus*

### **Members’ Day talk: Butterflies in Banana Crates - Roger Bristow**

The list of exotic animals accidentally imported to the UK is quite long – it includes butterflies, moths, spiders, frogs, snakes, geckos, birds etc., but I am just going to talk about one group of the butterflies – the brassolini which are confined to Central and South America. For the most part they are large (FW length up to 9cm), spectacular butterflies with distinctive large eyes spots on the hindwing underside – the ‘Owl’ butterflies. An unusual feature of this group of butterflies is that they are nocturnal. Most can easily be baited with rotten fruit. Because they are large and attractive, they are well represented in most tropical butterfly collections.

Larvae of many brassolini feed on banana leaves (and other plants). They are large and some species gregarious and can become pests on the foodplants. Most adventive occurrences can be traced back to being imported with bananas – probably as pupae. However, the brassolini are easy to rear and are a common component of butterfly houses. There is always the possibility that some modern records could be escapees from nearby butterfly houses.

I know of 26 occurrences worldwide (13 in the UK) comprising 8 taxa of 2 genera (*Caligo* and *Opsiphanes*). Most of the early records are not accompanied by a photograph; furthermore, the current whereabouts of these specimens, if they still exist, are commonly unknown. This is unfortunate as some brassolini are difficult to identify and so the early identifications have to be taken at face value. If the country of origin was correctly identified, this would help with the identification process, BUT for several, the supposed source is totally implausible as brassolini do not occur there (Jamaica, Windward Isles).

The only Devon occurrence of a brassoline is a specimen of *Caligo prometheus* (page 15) that turned up at Mattiscombe near Start Point in October 2015. Brassolini are not known to be long-distance migrants and so I think that we can safely assume that this specimen did not get there unassisted.

## Waitrose Supports Woodland Pearls

Waitrose shoppers in Torquay & Teignmouth have raised money to help secure the future of the rare Pearl-bordered Fritillary found at Haldon Forest near Exeter. Amanda Hunter, Secretary for Devon Branch of BC was handed a £336 cheque from the Torquay's Waitrose store and a £361 cheque from Teignmouth's Waitrose store, both donations raised instore through the Waitrose Community



Devon BC's Amanda Hunter, third from left, receives a cheque at the Teignmouth store

Matters Scheme where customers select a good cause by placing a green token in the collection box. The money will be used to continue conservation work for the Pearl-bordered. Since the 1950's numbers of Pearl-bordered have declined to such a point that it is now recognised as one of the country's most endangered butterflies. Devon BC Chair Barry Henwood commented: "We work closely with the Forestry Commission and this money will help to improve conditions on Haldon for the Pearl-bordered and other butterflies. Thank you very much to the Waitrose customers who supported us".

## The Worries of a Wildlife Watcher John Butter

In 1980 I moved into a small caravan at Hakeford Farm between Barnstaple and Bratton Fleming. Adjoining the property is 9 acres of Ancient Woodland which belonged to the League against Cruel Sports. I enquired if I could manage it for them very much with Silver-washed Fritillaries in mind. They agreed and using a cross cut saw my wife and I made linked clearings and a pathway-almost a ride. The clearings face south and on the edge of the first clearing stands an oak which catches the late afternoon sunshine and I hoped that female Silver Washed would find it suitable for egg laying. Well they did and still do with the larvae feeding on the ample violets. Alongside the south facing ride is a patch of bramble and in days gone by I would see 7 or 8 fritillaries nectaring. This brings me to my first worry, for with climate change the brambles have virtually finished flowering before the butterflies have emerged. Fortunately the place of the brambles has been taken over by the Buddleias in our garden. But this brings me to another worry. Pesky tits lurk in the bush and hope to bag an unwary butterfly. So if I see such activity I rush out shouting and waving a stick about in the bush. This is the tits revenge for my not feeding them in the winter a policy based on Darwin's "Survival of Fittest". There are swarms of them and as each apple ripens it is punctured by a little beak.

Within 4 to 5 yards of our log cabin door (we have come up in the world since the caravan days) we made a small pond so when my partner said that she had just seen a lizard I condescendingly said no, it must be a newt. But it was a lizard and I set about creating a suitable habitat with stones and logs. The colony has grown and this year 3 females have produced at least 20 youngsters not much larger than matchsticks. They don't seem to have grown much and I am worried that they may not survive the winter.

In the wood and garden we had an amazing density of grass snakes. On any day I could go out and look under 2 refugia (bits of corrugated iron) and see 3-4 large snakes up to 4 feet in length. Then one day we saw a hedgehog, the first for over 10 years - and we were delighted. However, the following spring there were no grass snakes just 2 huge hedgehogs. I am more than worried that those hedgehogs have done for our grass snakes.

Of course every year I worry if the swallows arrive late. Will they make it? And then there are the Lesser Horseshoe bats. Last year there were over 60 in the barn but when I looked earlier this year there were only 6. What had happened? I worried but somehow numbers are up to 40.

Since I have been here, from the surrounding fields Dark Green Fritillaries have disappeared as have Dingy Skipper and Marbled whites due to over-grazing. And that is my biggest worry that our surviving wildlife is confined to smaller pockets of suitable habitat in a lifeless desert of intensive farmland.

## BC National Outstanding Volunteer Award 2015...

...has been received by Devon BC's Jenny Evans. Since joining our Branch Committee in 2012 as Webmaster, she has modernised our website, making it a very valuable resource for engaging quickly and effectively with members, the local community and the general public. Despite living in an area with poor broadband (commonly working late in the evening to get the best internet connection) Jenny's regular updating of the website keeps all of Devon focused on our butterflies and the opportunities we offer to get involved in our work.



Jenny receiving her Award from Jim Asher at the National AGM (*Nigel Bourn*)

All the Devon committee are very active and Jenny fully contributes her share by leading summer events, providing first aid cover for conservation work and giving habitat management advice. In 2014 she took over (at short notice) the role of Transect Co-ordinator, just as the season was starting! She carried a huge workload that year keeping transects going and 'buddying' several new volunteer transect recorders! In 2015 she has expanded on this with new transects and has supported yet more new volunteers into becoming regular and reliable recorders (not to mention doing a range of transects herself!)

Jenny is probably unique amongst volunteers in that she has been serving on two branch committees – in Cornwall BC she has also been organising and leading events as well as running their branch website too.

## East Devon Undercliffs and coastal area news

**Phil Parr** reports that cliff slippage will have had an impact on Wood Whites on the Undercliffs. For example, at Ware Cliffs on the Devon/Dorset border much of the breeding area has dramatically sunk beachwards and only a small part remains. No Small or Chalkhill Blues were seen in 2015 and only a few Dingy Skippers seen e.g. at Humble Glades and Goat Island. Phil believes butterfly populations affected by slippage may take a few years to recover. He saw very few Small Coppers in 2015 but says Holly Blue, Comma and Silver-washed Fritillary have shown well. Other good news is that Adonis Blue survives in the Branscombe area. Numbers of Clouded Yellow have been seen along with a few

Hummingbird Hawk moths.

Phil reports on the good work done by Axe Vale and District Conservation Society who hold regular work parties on the Undercliffs reserve. Involvement with AVDCS gives opportunities to see interesting parts of the reserve normally having no public access. Their website: <https://avdcs.wordpress.com/current-events/>



Crowsnest slip (*Tom Sudewrland*)

Under the deep snow  
And beneath daggers of ice  
New life is waiting.

Late February  
A calm day with warming sun  
The first butterfly.

Out of long darkness  
A comma with widespread wings  
Soaking up the sun.

Prefers hedge garlic  
Warmed by rays of evening sun  
Roosting orange tip.

On such a dull day  
Even a single small white  
Brightens the landscape.

From a coal blackness  
To this large eyed radiance  
Peacock's open wings.

Along the leaf spine  
Brimstone caterpillar rests  
Green on green unseen.

Green hairstreaks emerge  
With a scent of yellow gorse  
Heavy on the breeze.

Common blues in grass  
A mundane name for these bright  
Reflections of sky.

### **The Butterfly Year in Haiku**

Richard Stewart

Drifting and gliding  
The white petal flutters down  
Becomes a wood white.

Two peacocks spiral  
Up and up into blue sky  
Drifting with white clouds.

A bright swallowtail  
Wings luminous in the sun  
Be still and thankful.

In the bramble glade  
Large whites glide like admirals  
Through shafts of sunlight.

Flying to the feast  
Vanessids land on the first  
Sunlit buddleia.

On grey paving slabs  
Wide wings of small tortoiseshells  
basking in the sun.

Two feeding commas  
On fermenting blackberries  
Out of the wind's edge.

From a pine's darkness  
One red admiral seeks sun  
And the last nectar.

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