

BUTTERFLIES

Report Subject:

The feeding habits of butterflies on the Island of Lundy in July 1976.

Requested by the Lundy Field Society.

Report submitted by Timothy and Paula Walmsley (age 11 and 9).

Conclusions

- (i) The most popular feeding ground for butterflies surveyed were bramble, particularly for the Meadow Brown variety.
- (ii) Thistle and heather has lesser but distinctive attraction for feeding.
- (iii) Ringlets are more gregarious in their habits than other butterfly types, particularly the Meadow Brown which shows a distinct preference for bramble alone.

Recommendations

- (i) The butterfly types identified should be surveyed in an area which has a wider choice of 'feeding grounds' in close proximity.
- (ii) An analysis of the 'food values' of different types of feeding ground should be made.

Discussions

The survey of butterflies feeding habits was carried out on an informal basis by casual observations during normal holiday activities throughout the island.

At an early stage it became apparent that several species of butterflies were predominant and that feeding grounds could be categorized into 8 broad headings.

On this basis the findings of the survey are set out below, the terminology reflects the researchers' ignorance of butterflies, but this was corrected later (see background).

Analysis

Table I.

Butterfly type—Orange Spot with tortoise shell wing

	<i>Bramble</i>	<i>Wild Thyme</i>	<i>Thistle</i>	<i>Nettles</i>	<i>Bracken</i>
No. of sightings	5	—	8	—	
			<i>Heather</i>	<i>Moss</i>	
No. of sightings			3	—	4

Table II

Butterfly type—Black

	<i>Bramble</i>	<i>Wild Thyme</i>	<i>Thistle</i>	<i>Nettles</i>	<i>Heather</i>
No. of sightings	43	—	1	—	—
			<i>Bracken</i>	<i>Moss</i>	<i>Others</i>
No. of sightings			—	—	10

Table III

Butterfly type—Orange Spot

	<i>Bramble</i>	<i>Wild Thyme</i>	<i>Thistle</i>	<i>Nettles</i>	<i>Heather</i>
No. of sightings	95	—	32	—	8
			<i>Bracken</i>	<i>Moss</i>	<i>Others</i>
No. of sightings			4	5	20

Table IV

Butterfly type—Various

	<i>Bramble</i>	<i>Wild Thyme</i>	<i>Thistles</i>	<i>Nettles</i>	<i>Heather</i>
No. of sightings	4	—	—	2	—
No. of sightings			<i>Bracken</i>	<i>Moss</i>	<i>Others</i>
			—	—	1*

The weighting of the samples might be significant because of four important factors viz.:

- (i) The weather during the time of the survey was exceptionally dry.
- (ii) The observers lived in Little St. Johns and, therefore, saw butterflies more frequently in that vicinity which has a significant preponderance of bramble vegetation.
- (iii) For reasons not understood the majority of butterflies were seen in the Southern half of the Island.
- (iv) The observers were not experienced enough to know when butterflies were actually feeding till later on during the survey.

Background

By reference to books it is now thought that butterflies known to the observers as:

- Orange Spot — were ringlets (*Aphantopus Hyperantus*)
- Black — were Meadow Brown (*Maniola Jurtina*)
- Orange Spot with tortoise shell — were Painted Lady (*Vanessa Cardui*)

The first two coming from the Satyridae family and the other from the Nymphalidae family which also covered most other butterflies eventually recognized.

The observers would like to thank the Lundy Field Society for their assistance in getting our interest in this subject. It is hoped that others will find that simple observation studies such as this are well within their capabilities even though their detailed knowledge on the subject may be limited at the start.

*A 'cabbage white' was found on the cabbage patch near Millcombe House.