

CISFBR 2008 SPRING MEETING & AGM Saturday 8th March at 10am Camelford (Cleas) Hall, Camelford

The Spring Meeting and AGM will be held on Saturday 8th March 2008 at a new venue in the Camelford Hall (formerly Cleas Hall), Camelford (SX 104834). The theme for the meeting will be 'A **Multidisciplinary Approach to Recording Wildlife in the Landscape**' – using the history of a landscape to explain its present wildlife'.

We have two confirmed speakers on these subjects -

'**Historic Landscape Characterisation** – the historic landscape of the north Cornish coast – the habitats and species present' **Peter Herring**

'**The Atlantic Coast and Valleys Project** – the restoration of wildlife to the north Cornish coast, including the Large Blue butterfly' **Adrian Spalding**

We expect to confirm a third speaker for the meeting.

We start at 10am for tea/coffee, with the AGM at 1.30pm, and expect to conclude at 3pm.

For further information contact Ian Bennallick on 01726 890384 or by e-mail to ianbennallick@btinternet.com

By the 30th. August 2006 she was exhausted, the weather was bad, and when she was unable to summon enough strength to climb back into the nest, and was obviously going to die, I reluctantly decided to take her to have her identified.

Lots of minute parasitic wasps had been around the entrance of the nest during the Summer, thanks go to S.A. Corbet for identifying these as *Pteromalus venustus* (listed as *P. apum* (Retzius in Degeer) in Fitton et al. (1978)).

During the Autumn I constructed a fine mesh cage and placed the flowerpot in it, intending to mark the females as they emerged in the following Summer.

Unfortunately the Summer of 2007 was as you all know, almost non-existent. Two males emerged on two separate days at the beginning of June and were released from the cage. Being used to handling Honeybees it was most noticeable that when being released that they took off without a backward glance, off into the distance, not orienting themselves as to where they had to return to. Obviously, they had no need to return.

These two males were all that emerged, the weather had been too bad from then on.

Thanks to David Baldock for identifying *M. willughbiella*, and many thanks to all who helped steer me in the right direction.

Bernard Hocking

Megachile willughbiella at Rospennel Farm 2006/7



Image of male, taken after emergence at beginning June 2007.

On the 19th. July 2006 I first noticed a Leaf-cutter bee entering a small drainage hole in the side of a large flowerpot with a piece of leaf. From then on I spent many hours noting its journeys to and fro collecting pollen, nectar and pieces of leaf.

It usually did not start work until around noon, by which time the sun had reached the flowerpot, and finished by late afternoon, but worked extremely hard and continuously during the afternoon. If it was late starting because of the weather it worked on a little later.

Large Helford Sea-hares

On Tuesday 16th October 2007 Tony Sutton was diving on the eelgrass bed at 5.7m depth in the Helford VMCA when he came across some exceptionally large greenish brown sea-hares (35cm) which attracted his attention. When he returned a few days later with his camera he was able to take some excellent pictures which indicated the species *Aplysia depilans*. Confirmation of this identification was established by Dr Paul Gainey when one of the animals was taken briefly from the water.



Aplysia depilans

The commonest species of sea-hare in our shallow water is *Aplysia punctata* which can reach some 20cm extended length but is more usually below 10cm. They are typically

found on the sea-bed grazing on algae, often amongst eelgrass where they leave their yellowish pink egg strings during the autumn-spring breeding season.

More impressive are the other, much less common, species *Aplysia depilans* and *Aplysia fasciata* the former is known to reach 30cm and the latter can be even larger at around 40cm. Both are associated with the warmer seas of the Channel Islands, Atlantic France and the Mediterranean as well as Madeira and West Africa where *A. fasciata* in particular can be observed swimming more freely than our *A. punctata*. Two large parapodial lobes and the broad "slug-like" body pulsate rhythmically carrying the animal through the water with a flapping motion.

Tony was fortunate to find some animals with egg masses. Could this be linked to the significantly warmer sea temperatures of recent years? In 1976, the Opisthobranch expert, T E Thompson, remarked that it is not known whether *Aplysia depilans* ever breeds in British waters.

Recent reports of large sea hares from other sites include Poole Harbour – one weighing 1.5kg *Aplysia fasciata* is understood to be swimming happily at the National Marine Aquarium; Mevagissey – this could have been either of the larger species; Beesands, Tor Cross and Nos Mayo, Plymouth where *A.fasciata* was suspected.

How can you tell the difference between the two larger species by the shore - not easily and dissection seems inappropriate. Try looking, especially underwater, at the two large parapodial lobes mentioned above which are free all the way to the end of the body in *Aplysia fasciata* but in *Aplysia depilans* they are joined rather high posteriorly. The oral tentacles at the front are more frilled in *A. fasciata*. Try to take photos that show these characteristics! These are not easy to see if you find something looking like a large lump of gelatinous liver on the shore but could be seen if a freshly stranded animal was placed in a bucket of sea water.

All sightings of these larger species would be of great interest and Dr Paul Gainey (01326 372840) would try to visit any find within range or as far as practicable.

Dr Pamela E Tompsett

2008 MEETINGS

Contacts -

(BCG): *Botanical Cornwall Group*: Ian Bennallick (01726 890384)
(HMC) *Helford Marine Consⁿ*: Pamela Tompsett (01209 842316)

JANUARY

Sat. 19th Cornwall Butterfly Conservation AGM

AGM with a talk by Tim Dingle on 'Gardening for Butterflies'. Wild flower plants will be on sale at cost price.

Venue: CWT Headquarters Allet. 2.30pm

Sat. 19th (HMC) Mud, mud, glorious mud!

The hidden world of our Helford creeks revealed by the well known marine broadcaster, Dr Tegwyn Harris, with some amazing stories - not to be missed.

Cost: £2. Members and all children free. *Time*: 7.30 p.m.
Venue: Gweek Village Hall, beside the National Seal Sanctuary OS Ref. SW 709 266. *Contact*: David 01326 341181 or Pamela 01209 842316

FEBRUARY

Saturday 2nd (BCG) Yearly Indoor Meeting

The yearly indoor meeting will be a review of botanical happenings of 2007, a chance to view slides and photos, sell

books, win prizes in a raffle, organise trips for 2008 and have a good chat!

Time: 10am - 4pm *Venue*: Cornwall Wildlife Trust HQ, Allet, near Truro SW794485.

Sat. 16th (HMC) The Helford Woodlands 20 years on!

Dr Oliver Rackham OBE, returned to Cornwall in September 2007 to repeat his earlier wide-ranging and fascinating study of the woods adjacent to the Helford River. This renowned author and botanist has kindly agreed to share his findings and photographs with us.

Cost: £2. Members and all children free. *Time*: 7.30 p.m.
Venue: Gweek Village Hall, beside the National Seal Sanctuary OS Ref. SW 709 266. *Contact*: Pamela 01209 842316 or Jenna 01326 572995

MARCH

Saturday 8th CISFBR AGM & Spring Meeting

The theme for the meeting will be 'A Multidisciplinary Approach to Recording Wildlife in the Landscape' – using the history of a landscape to explain its present wildlife'.

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The AGM will be at 1.30pm, and we hope to conclude at 3pm.

Time: 10am *Venue*: Camelford Hall (formerly Clease Hall), Camelford (SX 104834)

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Sat. 15th (HMC) Cornwall's shellfisheries & AGM

Lobsters, crabs and other crustaceans are an important part of the local fishing effort. We have a rare opportunity to share the expertise of David Muirhead, Chairman of the Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee and also of the Helford Marine Conservation Group and local fisherman. The meeting will include the AGM.

Cost: £2. Members and all children free. *Time*: 7.30 p.m.
Venue: Gweek Village Hall, beside the National Seal Sanctuary OS Ref. SW 709 266. *Contact*: David 01326 341181 or Margaret 01326 221632

APRIL

Fri. 4th (HMC) Seashore Safari

Join Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Marine Officer in a sea search at the edge of the Helford River as the tide falls and find crabs, sea-anemones, seasquirts and other mysterious creatures. Wear non-slip rock-scrambling shoes that you are prepared to get wet! Helford Passage on north side of river.

Free. *Time*: 10.30-12.30 *Meet*: In front of the Ferryboat Inn, Helford Passage OS Ref: SW 764 269. *Contact*: Joana Doyle 01872 240 777 ext. 207 or 07812009381 (*Photo competition opportunity!*)

Sun. 20th (HMC) Dawn Chorus beside the Helford River

Bring your binoculars for a bird "watching and listening" walk to hear the early morning spring song with local birdwatcher Martin Rule at Goongillings Farm. Bring your own snacks, hot drinks available. Weather proof clothing and robust footwear advised.

Free. *Time*: 6.00 a.m. *Meet*: Goongillings Farm, 1km S of Constantine, nr Trengilly Wartha Inn. (OS Ref. SW 734 283). *Contact*: Martin 01326 561952 or Charles 01326 340 630

Advance Notice
SUMMER FIELD MEETING
Saturday 21st June 2008
The Atlantic Coast and Valleys Project

Following on from the theme of our spring meeting, we will be visiting the coast of North Cornwall, where Derek Lord (NT Warden) and Adrian Spalding will lead walks to see the Large Blue Butterfly introduction site (and the butterfly itself if the weather is kind) and also to the newly created heath site near Royston, Trebarwith.

Venue: Poldark Inn, near Delabole (SX 030839) Meet at 10am for tea/coffees and a talk about this Lottery funded habitat restoration project.

Information on the project is available on the NCDC website -
<http://www.ncdc.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=10906>

RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS

Essential Guide to Birds of the Isles of Scilly by Bob Flood, Nigel Hudson & Brian Thomas. Price £38 + £6.50 p&p. (*Order from Nigel Hudson, Post Office Flat, Hugh Street, St Mary's Isles of Scilly, TR21 0LL*)

This a monumental book, 528 pages of text with black and white vignettes & graphs throughout, and 152 pages of colour plates. The style is similar to the well known Isles of Scilly Bird Report & Natural History Review - The three authors are all members of the IoS Bird Group. A very attractive publication and absolutely packed with information. Besides the systematic list there are chapters on the history of birdwatching in Scilly, habitats and conservation. The black and white illustrations are by many bird artists, as are the photographs.

Collins New Naturalist – The Isles of Scilly by Rosemary Parslow. This is a beautiful, authoritative look at what makes the flora and fauna of these islands so unique.

- No. 103 in the prestigious *New Naturalist* series, which has set the standard for Natural History books for over 60 years
- Examines the islands' geography, geology and climate, and the people of the islands
- Brings to life the major kinds of habitats found in Scilly – the heathlands, coast, cultivated fields and wetlands – through full-colour imagery

Hardback £45 Softback £25

ERICA FOR WINDOWS UPDATE

The millionth Cornish flowering plant and fern record has recently been computerised marking a major milestone in the keeping of plant records in Cornwall. The millionth record proved to be a lowly Hemp Agrimony plant that was recorded by Ken Preston-Mafham in East Cornwall, and computerised by Ian Bennallick.

The Cornish vascular plant records are stored in the Erica for Windows database. This database has been designed specifically to record biological records of all species that are known to have lived in Cornwall and offshore, and so

stores far more than just plants. Currently it holds 1,661,314 biological records concerning 23,600 taxa, and it is the large amount of information about a wide spectrum of groups of plants and animals throughout Cornwall, that makes this database particularly useful as an environmental resource. The roots of the database are entwined with the Cornish Biological Record Unit, which began in 1972, and it is thanks to the foresight of Frank and Stella Turk, who saw the need to record all groups, to fully understand Cornwall's biodiversity, that Erica for Windows has been designed to encompass all and sundry.

2007 has proven to be a record year and the database has grown at a rate in excess of 2000 records a week, with 99,000 vascular plant records added plus a further 20,000 records from other groups. This has been achieved through the efforts of a relatively few dedicated volunteers working from home. At present there are just over 30 people using the database, each with a copy of the entire dataset, to which they can add and so contribute to this ever expanding and ever more useful resource concerning Cornwall's biodiversity.

Any CISFBR member wishing to obtain a copy of Erica for Windows and wishing to contribute to the collective effort to maintain an up-to-date record of Cornwall's wildlife can obtain it from:

Colin French, 12 Seton Gardens, Weeth Road, Camborne. TR14 7JS.

It costs £20 for 12 months, and for that you get the entire database with thousands of photographs. It needs a Windows XP or Vista PC computer and at least 1 gigabyte of free disc space.

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR RECORDERS

MAPPING

OS Get-a-map: online maps to 1:25,000, easily searched and showing grid refs

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

Old Maps: Victorian very large scale (approx 20" to the mile on screen) OS Maps to see how the land looked 120 years ago. Searchable by place name or grid ref.

www.old-maps.co.uk

Magic: Interactive OS Mapping which can be zoomed to very large scale, showing a wide range of environmental schemes and designations.

www.magic.gov.uk/

British History Online - the County Series of Ordnance Survey maps for Great Britain. Begun in 1840, this is the first comprehensive historic mapping of England, Scotland and Wales. Search by place name or post code.

www.british-history.ac.uk/map.aspx

SPECIES' DISTRIBUTION MAPS

Botanical Society of the British Isles website – Atlas Updating Project, online distribution maps of all vascular plants in Great Britain and Ireland

www.bsbimaps.org.uk/atlas

NBN Gateway – Interactive species maps covering all orders. Records for many (not yet all) national recording schemes are included to give distribution maps not available elsewhere. You can select an individual dot on the map to get more detail of the record. Depending on the order, this may include the full grid reference.

www.searchnbn.net

Cornovia: An Index to the Historical Place Names of Cornwall - useful for researching old records with old place names.

<http://cornovia.org.uk/ihpnc/index.html>

Bryophytes: Information about bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) on an excellent website.

<http://www.britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk/>

CISFBR Officers for 2007/08

Chair: Dr Colin French, 12 Seton Gardens, Weeth Road, Camborne, TR14 7JS. Tel: 01209 613942

Vice Chair: Rosemary Parslow, 17 St Michael's Road, Ponsanooth, Truro, TR3 7ED. Tel: 01872 865013

Membership Secretary & Treasurer: Matt Stribley, 8 St Georges Road, Truro, TR1 3JE. Tel: 01872 272900

Minutes Secretary: Ian Bennallick, Lower Polmorla, St Wenn, Bodmin, PL30 5PE. Tel: 01726 890384
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Newsletter Editor: Malcolm Lee, Gullrock, Port Gaverne, Port Isaac, PL29 3SQ. Tel: 01208 880106
e-mail: gullrock@ukonline.co.uk

Committee: All the above plus Tony Atkinson, Jacqui Davey, Tim Dingle (*corresponding member*), Chris Haes, Bernard Hocking, David Holyoak, Loveday Jenkin, Catriona Neil, Joan Opie, Treve Opie, Dr Chris Page, Adrian Spalding, and Dr Pamela Tompssett

The Wasp Spider reaches the Isles of Scilly



Wasp Spider - St Mary's, Isles of Scilly 7th October 2007

On 7 October 2007 I was recording plants along a temporary access track on Penninis, St Mary's. Hanging in a web in tall vegetation was a large and colourfully striped spider that I recognised as a Wasp Spider *Argiope bruennichi*. A telephone call to Stella Turk confirmed the species had not been recorded from Scilly, the closest record being from Penzance.

Next day Ren Hathway & I returned to the site. The spider had moved and built a new web (I had accidentally dislodged part of the web when plant hunting the previous day). She was now much closer to the track and very visible, especially in the sunshine. Ren & I searched the adjoining field and found another female. Although we looked we could see no sign of the egg sac that the females produce but presume if there were two females present there may be others and that they may be breeding. The

spiders had made large orb webs, but there were only remains of the zig-zag stabilimentum that this species makes. One spider had caught a field grasshopper *Chorthippus brunneus* and wrapped it in silk.

So far we have not heard of anyone else having found wasp spiders in the Isles of Scilly. So this is believed to a new record for the islands. We would like to hear if any spiders are found in Scilly next year.

It is interesting to speculate how the spider has reached Scilly. Did spiderlings float across from Cornwall and make landfall on St Mary's? Or was a stowaway spider carried on RMV Scillonian from Penzance to St Mary's, possibly even directly to the farm?

Rosemary Parslow

Editors Note: Two females of this attractive spider, together with a single egg sac being guarded by one of the females, were also recorded by me on 5th September, just north of Cargreen on the Tamar. Paul Gainey advised me that a few days earlier, on 3rd September, he had re-visited the first Cornish location for this species (*Sett Bridge, Lamorran in 1961, but not published until 1965 – Stella Turk pers. comm.*), and found 30+ spiders. The Cornish Red Data Book (*Spalding 1997 p136*), reports that subsequent searches at this location had always drawn a blank. Perhaps all three finds represent a separate 2007 influx. Did anyone else come across this species in Cornwall in 2007?



Wasp Spider egg sac - Cargreen 5th September 2007

Articles For Future Newsletters

If you have news, articles or photos of interest to CISFBR members, please send them to the newsletter editor –

Malcolm Lee
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e-mail: gullrock@ukonline.co.uk

Sending articles by e-mail as a WORD document is easiest, but any other format, or a typed or hand written article will always be very acceptable.