

CISFBR

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY FEDERATION OF BIOLOGICAL RECORDERS

Interesting Find 1



Paddy Saunders found this specimen of the Western Conifer Seed Bug *Leptoglossus occidentalis*, at Murrays town on 16th November 2009, the first Cornish record. A North American pest species, it causes severe damage to the seed cones of various conifers. The first European record was in Italy in 1999, and it spread rapidly into other parts by 2007, when the first UK record was made. Adults can be up to 20mm long, and its key features are the swollen hind tibia and the white inverted V markings on the forewing.

CISFBR AGM 2010

The AGM started at around 1.30pm, with 15 members of CISFBR present. After apologies, the minutes of the 2009 AGM were circulated and read and were accepted. There were no matters arising. The Chairman and Treasurer gave their reports for the year (see below). At election of the committee the officers were all prepared to stand again and the committee was voted in en bloc. The officers for 2010 are - Chairman Rosemary Parslow, Vice-Chairman Colin French, Secretary Ian Bennallick, Treasurer and membership secretary Matt Stribley Newsletter Editor Malcolm Lee. Election of the rest of the Committee was en bloc. No new members were voted on and no existing members stood down. The committee includes - Tony Atkinson, Chris Haes, Bernard Hocking, Loveday Jenkin, Gary Lewis, Catriona Neil, Treve Opie, Sue Scott, Adrian Spalding, Pamela Tompsett. Corresponding Committee Members - Jacqui Davey, Tim Dingle, Chris Page. The AGM ended at 1.45pm

Chairman's report - Colin French

2009 was a successful year for CISFBR with the launch of the Red Data Book for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly at the Hall for Cornwall the main highlight. Most of the Council members, and quite a few other CISFBR members, were heavily involved in this project and it is thanks to the tremendous efforts of the authors and editorial board that this, the most comprehensive of all Red Data Books, has been published. The next CISFBR publication will be the long awaited *Ferns and Fern Allies of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly* by Rosaline Murphy, Dr. Chris Page & Rosemary Parslow, which is due out later this year.

Thanks must be given to the other members of Council - meetings are well attended, discussions lively and much business conducted - with particular reference to those that

represent CISFBR on other committees, like the Advisory Board of ERCCIS, Malcolm Lee for the well received newsletter, and finally Ian Bennallick for all he does in knitting together the various strands of CISFBR into a coherent whole. My three year term as Chairman is now complete and I pass that mantle onto Rosemary Parslow.

Treasurer's Report - Matt Stribley

Accounts for year 01/01/2009 to 31/12/2009

Income

Subscriptions	£285.00
Interest	£1.06
Publications	£77.09
Donations (tea & coffee, etc)	£13.90
Compensation from RBS	£10.00
Total Income	£387.05

Expenditure

Newsletter production and distribution	£109.50
Meeting Publicity	£0.00
Meeting Room hire	£40.00
Expenses	£66.70
Publications (inc. distribution costs)	£0.00
Total expenditure	£216.20

Income minus Expenditure £170.85

Brought Forward from 2008 £1,870.91

Total in Account £2,041.76

Notes: 1. Compensation of £10 received from the RBS for their mishandling of membership cheques. This matter is now resolved. 2. The very low bank interest rate resulted in only £1.06 interest for the year.

Membership Report - Matt Stribley

In 2009 we attracted 1 new member. The membership stands at 4 honorary, 52 paid members, 6 partners (of paid members), 29 unpaid (of these 13 paid in 2008 and all within the last 3 years). Those not renewing for more than 3 consecutive years are removed from the membership list.

The membership subscription stands at £5, with members' partners at the same address free (but some choose to pay).

CISFBR Spring Meeting

The 2010 CISFBR Spring meeting commenced at 10am (on a lovely sunny day) at the Goods Shed, Wadebridge. The theme this year was the question - **what is a wildlife habitat?**

Our first illustrated talk '**Birds and their habitats in Cornwall**' was from Claire Mucklow from the RSPB. Claire demonstrated the relationship between getting conditions right in both semi-natural and arable habitats for maintaining viable populations of some of our rarest and threatened birds. The first example was the Cornish Chough which has recently re-colonised Cornwall after many years of absence, with small numbers nesting on the rugged cliffs on the Lizard Peninsula and West Penwith. Choughs characteristically forage on the ground, probing short grassland with their long and curved red bills for subterranean grubs and other invertebrates. Some of Cornwall's last remaining unbroken and species-rich turf is found along the coast and is perfect for Choughs. With advanced techniques of mapping vegetation and then the

cross-referencing with site visits to assess the condition of those sites, suitable foraging areas have been mapped by the RSPB in collaboration with other country and conservation based organisations. Surprisingly, despite the amount of semi-natural habitat around the coast, Claire explained that there is still only very few areas where the coastal grassland is in the best condition to provide feeding areas for Chough. The well-managed coastal Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Nature Reserves on the Lizard Peninsula were highlighted as providing the bulk of suitable areas for Chough, with similar sites on the coast of West Penwith, albeit in a much thinner area around the coast. The North Coast of Cornwall shows very few suitable foraging areas where the habitat is good enough to support Chough, despite plenty of nesting habitat present. However, continuing support from government funded Countryside Stewardship schemes to local farmers to graze coastal grassland (which may have scrubbed over with gorse and blackthorn in recent decades) and continuing support from the RSPB should hopefully enable Chough to recolonise the north coast of Cornwall in the future. Claire showed how the success of the breeding choughs in West Cornwall is adding more birds to the local population and that in a few years time according to past the population studies, numbers of choughs are likely to increase markedly if there is enough suitable habitat for these wonderful birds and that the habitat is suitably managed for them. Following the talk on the choughs, there was a heated discussion with the audience regarding the well publicised disputes on West Penwith. A small and vociferous local lobbying group called 'Save Penwith Moors' have objected to plans by the National Trust to stockproof and graze coastal grassland and the inland heathland and rough grassland areas, which over many years has become scrubbed over by gorse, blackthorn and bramble. Unfortunately without clearing and grazing, these areas will not become suitable for chough to feed on. Claire mentioned that it is important to inform and educate the objectors, so that all sides can reach a happy compromise, and the RSPB was striving to establish firm local links with users of these coastal areas to ensure that choughs can continue to thrive.

Claire also talked about the efforts to maintain viable breeding areas for Corn Bunting in Cornwall. This species has a stronghold in the areas between Newquay to Port Isaac, where arable farming is one of the main land uses. Corn Bunting as well as other birds of the farmed landscape, including Goldfinch, Linnet and Yellowhammer, are seed eaters and the associated weed seeds in arable fields in these areas, as well as spilled grain when harvesting crops, provides essential food sources. The RSPB has worked with local farms to get them into Countryside Stewardship schemes where farmers are paid to leave uncropped grass strips and/or unsprayed cultivated strips around their cropped fields to provide suitable nesting and/or foraging areas. Some experimentation has been undertaken with leaving sacrificial weedy or set-aside fields, using different crops such as chicory and barley, and monitoring numbers of breeding pairs to assess how successful these management regimes have been. There has been a lot of success, with numbers of breeding pairs of Corn Bunting increasing over the years, and Claire said that it could not be done without the enthusiastic co-operation from local farmers and landowners.

The second talk '**Using vascular plants to highlight important wildlife habitats**' was from Dr Colin French, chair of CISFBR, and also the recorder for West Cornwall for the BSBI. Colin first developed a computer database in the early 1990s so that the Cornwall Biological Records Unit (CBRU) could computerise natural history records and data from various sources. This database was called Electronic Recording In Cornwall Automated – or ERICA. Since then it has been updated to a Windows version and in early 2010 there was a celebration of the entering of the two millionth record, with three-quarters of these records being of vascular

plants. The whole of Cornwall was systematically surveyed for vascular plants up to 1999, resulting in the tetrad (2km x 2km) atlas of Cornwall. New records are continuously added to at least a 1km x 1km level or better, and the dataset of vascular plants is one of the most complete for any part of the British Isles. With the advance of technology the database in 2010 is quicker to process large amounts of data, has mapping facilities with all Sites of Special Scientific Interest shown to a 1km level, as well as broad habitats, and is flexible to incorporate other datasets to start querying the distributional records on the database. Recently a list of Axiophytes were drawn up for Cornwall in broad (but non-standardised) habitats. Axiophytes are 'worthy plants' - indicators of habitat that is considered important for conservation, such as ancient woodlands, clear water and species-rich meadows. Colin showed maps of where these axiophytes are found in Cornwall by various habitats, and this showed quite clearly that the areas where there were higher numbers of axiophytes per broad habitat were in the same areas where each habitat was known to occur from previous mapping. However it also highlighted isolated areas where this habitat may be present but had not been previously mapped. Colin then demonstrated the next level of interpretation which is still in the early stages. This was the incorporation of the species information found in the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) species tables. The NVC project involved sampling similar stands of vegetation nationwide recording what species were present, how frequently these were found and how much each of each species covered the ground in sample quadrats within those stands of similar vegetation. The summary species tables in NVC are ranked with those species that are always (or almost always) found, known as 'constant species', to those that are rarely found, and also by how much the species covered within the vegetation type – whether species were dominant cover to where they may be present as individual plants. Colin has extracted all the values from the NVC tables and by using the huge number of records on ERICA mapped where 'constant' species are found in Cornwall by each NVC community. This is a much more exacting method of identifying where certain NVC communities could be found. It identifies those 1km squares where the constant species are present and therefore where it is likely that a certain vegetation community may be found. Unfortunately NVC surveys tend to be on known conservation sites so this method could highlight areas to target future surveys.

Colin then explained that plant species carry information about the changes in environmental conditions in which they grow eg. tolerance to light, moisture, temperature etc. The use of plants as indicators of key environmental factors was formalised by Professor Ellenberg in central Europe and this has been adapted for British plants. These indicators are known as Ellenberg's Indicator Values, and Colin has downloaded these values and has attached them to each species. When mapped by each category it shows those areas of Cornwall where you are most likely to find species which share these environmental values. For example the greatest number of shade-tolerant plants when mapped at a 1km scale clearly showed the wooded river valleys, areas where we would expect these plants to be found. Colin explained that there is still a lot to interpret from the data but it is giving us a better understanding of the relationships between distribution of vascular plants and existing environmental conditions and location of habitat. It is hoped that this can be used to highlight new areas worthy of conservation or reassess existing sites.

The last talk of the morning '**changes in habitat**' was from Alison Vaughn of the Gaia Trust who gave us a brief introduction to the afternoon walk venue, just along the River Camel at Treraven. The Gaia Trust acquired Treraven Farm, on the outskirts of Wadebridge, in 1999 when it was still a working dairy farm, with grazing pasture and some arable

land. The 170 acre site includes 35 acres of ancient woodland and salt-water meadows, bordering the River Camel. A new Community Forest of native broadleaved trees was planted by the Trust, with supporting walks and paths. The remainder of the land is permanent pasture, run on organic lines and within a Countryside Stewardship Scheme Agreement to enhance biodiversity and sustainability. Alison explained that recent work by the Environment Agency and Natural England is restoring Treraven's original water meadows along the River Camel as part of the creation of a much larger salt marsh system, one of the largest habitat restoration projects in Cornwall. A series of pipes and a new creek system enables what was reclaimed agricultural land to once again become flooded with seawater at spring tides. It is hoped that this will improve the wildlife value of these meadows.

Alison was keen to discuss the habitats past and present at Treraven, and showed two aerial maps of the farm from before the Gaia Trust ownership and a recent one showing the difference in a few short years - how successful these changes are for wildlife and species is up for discussion on the walk around the site in the afternoon. More details can be seen at - <http://www.gaiatrust.org.uk/TreravenFarm.cfm?section=treraven>

At 2pm, over 20 people met in glorious sunny and warm weather at Guineaport, at the start of the Camel Trail, and led by Alison Vaughn and Ian Bennallick walked up along the trail to the recently flooded salt-water meadows. These are flooded at the highest tides and by use of sluices and tidal gates water is allowed to remain on the meadows. From previously hard-grazed fields only a few years before where floodwater was excluded, the vegetation in these fields are gradually changing, with species of brackish conditions such as Celery-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*) and False Fox-sedge (*Carex otrubae*) becoming more numerous in one area. The old natural drainage channels are beginning to appear and in times of the highest tides these meadows are totally submerged. In the winter of 2009/2010 they were home to many wintering birds. Those gathered thought that this had to be a change for the better – not only for beginning to restore the land to its previous natural state, but also to act at flood relief for the river in times of flood. Tony Atkinson pointed out fresh Otter spraint under a bridge, and Bernard Hocking was pleased to see some early butterflies – a welcome site after the cold early spring. We then walked up an old track through ancient woodland, passing ancient woodland indicators such as Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) and Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*). We then walked through the new tree-planted areas. We discussed the merits of new tree planting and the wildlife it brings in, using locally sourced stock and species and the restrictions that are tied to these areas when being funded by grants. There were many birds singing amongst the large saplings including Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler, so this area of new planting had appeared to be encouraging a few species.

At the end of the walk we thanked Alison for guiding us around Treraven and had a last discussion on the changing nature of habitat.

Ian Bennallick

Bee and wasp records in Cornwall

Despite the poor weather of 2009 I recorded a number of interesting new bees and wasps. Bees and wasps are an interesting group to record as there are large numbers of species in the UK (about 6500 species according to the BWARS members handbook). Although a large number of the Hymenoptera are parasitic wasps for which keys are very difficult or unavailable, this still leaves enough that even without going too far from your garden you can get a good species list in Cornwall.

I recorded one species new to Cornwall in my garden in 2008 *Gorytes laticinctus*. West Looe SX2553 6/8/08 (Determined

by M. Edwards). This is a Red data book black and yellow solitary wasp fitting in within the digger wasp group. It makes underground tunnel nests in one account stocked with auchenorhynchous bugs as food for the larvae. This I initially recorded as *Argogotytes fargeii* (another similar looking wasp) and I have included this in the Caradon Field Group report account for 2008 in error! (Caradon Wildlife 2008) The closest west record is probably Dorset, the other records are in southern or south eastern England

A solitary bee I recorded at Rock SW9276 12/09/09 *Hoplitis spinulosa* (also called *Osmia spinulosa*) has 2 previous records on ERICA from before 1907, and there are quite a number of records on the West Wales coast, so it probably has been overlooked. The species nests in snail shells such as *Cepea nemoralis* with cells of chewed plant material, these are provisioned with pollen from Asteraceae. The bee looks like a small bluey black leafcutter bee.

Bombus cryptarum is a bumblebee I recorded in Cornwall in 2009 and it represents a new bumblebee species for Cornwall (Minions 5/8/09 SX2671 Glynn valley works 11/8/09 SX1471). Whilst this isn't bad going for such a large species it should be said recognising the species is still very difficult and the species has only been acknowledged as a separate species recently. The species is grouped with the white tailed bumblebees (*B. lucorum* and *B. magnus*) and the buff tailed bee *B. terrestris*. The queens are only recognisable by an 'S' shaped black mark in the first yellow band near the head. This all makes it very difficult for beginners in bumblebees as all four occur in Cornwall. I collected a number on foreign soil (Dartmoor) for Mairi Knight (Plymouth University) for genetic analysis, which I hope will help clarify the status of the species in the west country. As to whether the species is expanding or declining it seems impossible to say. It is even difficult to say whether it is common or rare, although it seems to be present in uplands sites.

Paddy Saunders

CISFBR Officers for 2010/11

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Committee: All the above plus Tony Atkinson, Chris Haes, Bernard Hocking, Loveday Jenkin, Gary Lewis, Catriona Neil, Treve Opie, Sue Scott, Adrian Spalding, and Dr Pamela Tompsett. *Corresponding members:* Jacqui Davey, Tim Dingle & Dr Chris Page

Diary Dates

(BCG): *Botanical Cornwall Group:* Ian Bennallick 01726 890384

(CBC) *Cornwall Butterfly Conservation:* Phil Boggis 01726 66124.

(CIG) *Cornwall Invertebrate Group* Sue Scott 01872 240777 x 240 or sue.scott@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk

(HMC) *Helford Marine Conservation* Pamela Tompsett

AUGUST

Sunday 1st Widemouth Bay (BCG) Summer plant identification walk with Ian Bennallick. Meet 9.30am at free coastal car park, north of Widemouth Bay, SS199032.

1st week in August Penhale Camp (CIG) After 3 years of being rained off, the exact day will be decided when we know the likely weather. Contact Sue Scott if you want to be notified of the day.

Saturday 7th Millook, to Wanson Mouth (BCG) An area of dramatic cliffs which need updated records. Meet 9.30am at Higher Penhalt Farm, Poundstock, SS191000.

Saturday 7th Kynance Cove (CBC) Be prepared for a beautiful walk at this famous locality for Lepidoptera. Meet at SW688132 in main Kynance Cove Car Park at 11am.

Sunday 8th Gwennap Head and Porthgarra. (CBC) This locality should produce an abundance of butterflies. Meet at SW372218 in main Porthgarra car Park at 11am.

Saturday 14th Churchtown Farm, Saltash (BCG) 10am to 1pm. A morning walk around Churchtown Farm with the *Friends of Churchtown Farm*. Meet 9.30am at Wearde Road, SX421580 (on road to Community College).

Saturday 14th Prisk Cove, south of Rosemullion Head (HMC) A Rockpool Ramble. Meet 2pm at Mawnan Church SW 788272 at the end of Old Church Road or join us on the shore SW 795 277.

Sunday 15th Gwithian Green & Gwithian Towans (CBC) A high summer visit to this local nature reserve. Meet 11am at SW586412 close to the track entrance.

Sunday 15th Brown Willy (BCG) An attempt to look for Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis*. Meet 9.30am at car park Rough Tor, SX138818.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 4th BIOBLITZ CWT needs experts to help them in the field by recording what they see and, back at basecamp, helping them to confirm records brought in by other participants. Meet 2pm at Five Acres Nature Reserve. Contact Sue Scott if you can come.

Saturday 4th Goongillings Farm, nr Constantine (HMC) Bring your own picnic and join local experts as they explore the wildlife. Meet 2pm at Goongillings Farm SW 735 283

Monday 6th Goss Moor (CIG) Contact Sue Scott for details.

Wednesday 8th Zennor (BCG) A walk along the coast. Meet 9.30am in Zennor, SW454384.

Thursday 9th Tehidy Country Park (CBC) Bat & Moth Night. Booking is Essential: Please phone Cornwall Council on 0300 1234202 or email acrough@cornwall.gov.uk Meet 7:30pm at SW650433, South Drive Car Park, Tehidy Country Park.

OCTOBER

Saturday 2nd Luxulyan Valley (BCG) A morning woodland walk. Meet at Blackhill car park, SX058573 at 10.30am.

Saturday 16th Around the Helford (HMC) From archaeology and barn owls to ancient woodland and eco-tourism, Justin Whitehouse tells of the pleasures and problems of managing properties around the Helford. Cost: £2. Group members & children free. Meet 7.30pm at Gweek Village Hall SW 709266.

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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PL29 3SQ.**

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.

What do these caterpillars turn into?

They were both found munching into *Succisa pratensis*, Devil's Bit Scabious on Bodmin moor, the first on 12 September 2009, the second on 15 October 2009. Although very similar, they are two different species, the first being last recorded on the Cornish border in 1906, the second with some more recent records, being less rare. The adults are large dark metallic green Sawflies (*Symphyta*). Thanks to John Gerson for confirmation of the ID.



Abia candens (top) lacks the central row of black dots along the back, and has heart shaped black marks on its sides. The large dark spot on this specimen is not a normal part of the markings. *Abia sericea* (bottom) has the central row of dots on back and the black marks on its sides are just dashes rather than being heart shaped.

Apologies for poor photos, didn't realise their significance at the time.

Bernard Hocking

Interesting Find 2



Bernard Hocking found this attractive sawfly in his garden at Rospellan Farm, Crows-an-wra on 9th June 2010. It is the Honeysuckle Sawfly *Abia fasciata*, a close relative to the two uncommon caterpillar species Bernard found last year on Bodmin Moor. ERICA gives the last county record as 1981 at Mullion. Whilst few record sawflies, it is likely to be very localised. Were it widespread, such a striking species would surely have been noted by the few who look at this group, and it is likely to be snapped by casual naturalists with a digital camera to hand.