



## Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*

A distinctive black and white butterfly unlikely to be mistaken for any other species. Commonly found in south and south-western counties in the UK, usually in grassy meadows; and often seen feeding on purple flowers such as Knapweed, Scabious and Marjoram.

The female does not lay her eggs directly on the larval foodplant she merely scatters the white circular eggs as she flutters through the fescue grasses. After about three weeks the caterpillars hatch, eat their shell and then hibernate until the following spring.



Steve Goodwin

One of the caterpillar foodplants, the Red Fescue, can influence the intensity of the white patches on the adult butterfly, causing them to vary from creamy-white to almost yellow. The plant contains flavanoid chemicals (plant pigments for flower colouration) which are eaten by the caterpillar, the greater the concentration of these chemicals the more yellow the adult butterfly becomes. Marbled Whites like other butterflies that inhabit grassland are prone to attract parasites (see left) *Trombidium brevi* which attach to the thorax, head and abdomen. Small infestations apparently do no harm to the butterfly

## Robin's Pincushion

This is a chemically induced distortion of an unopened leaf axillary that is quite common on wild roses, also known as the 'Bedeguar Gall'. The female wasp *Diplolepis rosae* lays her eggs in spring and the plant reacts by producing a gall.

Its colour can vary from green to scarlet and eventually degenerates to a rusty brown colour. The larvae of the tiny gall wasp feed on the host plant throughout the summer and overwinter inside the gall to emerge in spring as adults ready to start laying their eggs and begin the cycle again. Few if any of the wasps are male and they reproduce asexually. One gall may contain several grubs, each in a separate chamber. In addition to the gall wasp there could be up to 14 different insect parasitoid species that live within the gall and others may be hyperparasites preying on the parasites!





## Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

According to Farne Island ringing recoveries it has been noted that one particular Arctic Tern, (which still breeds), was ringed as a chick on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1983, making it almost 31 years old. This bird completes an annual return migration of 19,986 miles - from the Farne Islands to the Antarctic. The tern has travelled roughly 620,000 miles during its lifetime; the equivalent of flying to the moon and back 1¼ times. No mean feat when you only weigh 110g and have a wing span of only 32-35cms.

Plant life (an organisation that speaks up for wild plants) is running a campaign fronted by Alan Titchmarsh to try to persuade councils NOT to mow verges until the wild flowers that grow there have set their seed.

These plants provide a massive free bank of nectar and seeds that could feed our pollinators and provide places for butterflies and other important insects to lay eggs, but so many are cut down before the seed has either set or even been produced so it all goes to waste. If allowed to grow it would go some way to repairing the damage that's been done through the loss of wildflower meadows. It would only take a few simple changes to make an enormous difference to our wild things.

The link below lets you find your local council, and provides an e-letter which you can fill your name, address etc in on and then just press send and the letter goes to your council asking them to consider changing their mowing policy. Alternatively, if you feel moved to you can write to your local council directly.

e-letter to your council: <http://www.plantlife.org.uk/roadvergecampaign/regional-councils>

Plant Life's blog: <http://loveplantlife.blogspot.co.uk/>

Gatekeeper  
*Pyronia tithonus*



Chicory  
*Cichorium intybus*

Swallowtail-tailed Moth  
*Ourapteryx sambucaria*



