

locate hidden females, presumably by scent, one wonders whether visual cues may also be important. If so, this might explain how such a case of mistaken identity could arise.— A.G. DUFF, 4 Amberley Close, Keinton Mandeville, Somerset TA11 6EU.

More abnormal courting behaviour in butterflies?

A.A. Allen's note (*Ent. Rec.* **102**: 198-9) on apparent courtship behaviour by a Small Tortoiseshell towards a Peacock prompts me to record that on 25th July 1990 I saw a small cloud of some twenty white butterflies fluttering around a hedge near Harvel in Kent. Reaching that point I saw a female Brimstone feeding on a thistle flower. When it flew it was immediately pursued by two Small Whites which I think were males. They fluttered in an excited manner just behind the Brimstone, but were not aggressive. The flight lasted for about half a minute. However, as soon as the Brimstone returned to the thistle the Small Whites lost interest, and although many others passed close to the feeding Brimstone they showed no interest in her whatsoever.— I.L. BRYDON, 128 The Drive, Bexley, Kent DA5 3BX.

Early sightings of Red Admirals (*Vanessa atalanta*)

The Heathcotes' observation of *Macroglossum stellatarum* on 23rd February 1990, and their note of the high temperatures prevailing around that time (*Ent. Rec.* **102**: 185), prompts me to record a Red Admiral sighting by our walking group on 18th February 1990, around noon, in a garden near Walberton on the West Sussex coastal plain. A neighbour, Mr Phil Tyler, also reported seeing a Red Admiral in Richmond Park on 25th February 1990.

This seems too early for migrant specimens and seems to confirm Colin Hart's view, after observing a Red Admiral at Buckland, Surrey, on 18th March 1990, that the winter was warm enough for this species to overwinter in the south of England (*Ent. Rec.* **102**: 193).

However, S.A. Knill-Jones suggested a migratory origin for his Red Admiral sightings on the Isle of Wight, at Newtown on 18th January (1), and at Luccombe on 22nd February (3) (*Ent. Rec.* **102**: 197).

There is also a reference to early sightings by Richard Harrington in the current issue of *Antenna* (*Antenna* **14**, 3: 113).— R.C. DENING, 20 Vincent Road, Selsey PO20 9DQ.

Further to the search for a safe pest-repellent

The other day I chanced upon an old clipping from the magazine *New Scientist* (undated, but probably going back eight to ten years) pointing out that a safe, *cheap* (my italics) and pleasantly fragrant substance, namely, cedarwood oil, has powerful insecticidal and pest-repellent properties; that it "inhibits moths and beetles [from] chewing clothes and carpets" (and, one may suppose, natural history specimens) — the above presumably



Denning, R C. 1990. "Early sightings of red admirals (*Vanessa atalanta*).*" The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 102, 297–297.

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