together with a Small Tortoiseshell, *Aglais urticae* (L.). It is stated that *A. urticae* appears on the first warm, sunny day *after* the end of February (the italics are mine), (Emmet, 1989 *The moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* Vol. 7, Pt.1). A warm front during the third week of April resulted in the highest recorded temperature on this day this century in the United Kingdom, 1959 and 1961 excepted, reaching 19°C (66°F) in some places with Cardiganshire 18°C (64°F), but it seems not to have been associated at this time with an influx of migrant insects into Britain. It was on 17th March that *A. urticae,* and 28th March, *V. atalanta,* were seen again — a lapse of thirty-four days.

The sighting of *V. atalanta,* a migrant not usually resident, suggests it had overwintered. However, it may not have survived the subsequent −1°C (30°F) frost and snow of 2nd March, and frost of 11th March, 3°C (37°F). At the end of April a migration into the United Kingdom possibly took place when *Plusia gamma* (L.) was seen on 22nd with *V. atalanta* on 24th and 30th in the company of a Hummingbird Hawkmoth, *Macroglossum stellatarum* (L.) feeding at red dwarf Azalea flowers in my garden at Cnwch Coch, while I was in the company of Adrian Amsden.

The earliest evidence so far recorded of migration of *V. atalanta* into West Wales was from 2nd March 1952, only a week later than the sighting now reported with over seventy observations on record (Miles 1952, *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* **88**: 181).— PHILIP M. MILES, Werndeg, Cnwch Coch, Aberystwyth, Dyfed, Wales.

Possible overwintering in Britain of *Autographa gamma* Linn. (Lep.: Noctuidae), the Silver Y.

On 15.ii.1990 a final instar larva of *A. gamma* was found on annual nettle (*Urtica urens*) near Stanford, Bedfordshire (TL 163 402). The larva was brought into the laboratory where it subsequently pupated. An adult male moth emerged three weeks later.

Single adults in perfect condition were caught in three Rothamsted Insect Survey light traps operating as part of an ecology project on the Rothamsted Farm, Hertfordshire (TL 120 137) on 3, 4 and 9.v.1990. No other known migratory species was caught at this time which, along with their condition, suggests that these individuals resulted from locally bred stock.

Heath and Emmet (*The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland,* **10**: 342-343. Harley, Colchester, 1983) state that, although there are a few proven cases of winter survival by moths, the early stages of *A. gamma* cannot develop at low temperatures and frost is fatal. However, the discovery of a fully-grown larva at this time of year, and the subsequent capture some 30 km distant of adult moths, provides strong evidence that this species was able to survive the very mild winter conditions of 1989/90. Further evidence of this species' ability to survive our winter climate is

documented by Cooper, B. (Overwintering of *Plusia gamma* larvae in Yorkshire. *Entomologist* (1946) **79**: 176) who states that single larvae were found on 28.ii and 1.ii.1946 on cabbage leaves which were covered with snow during a period of sharp air frosts and frozen ground. One of these was accidentally killed but the other developed normally in the laboratory and emerged as an adult on 8.v.1946.

This species is an occasional pest of vegetable crops and, as such, its response to possible climatic change, particularly with respect to overwintering survival, should be carefully monitored.— ADRIAN M. and DEBORAH K. RILEY, Dept. Entomology and Nematology, AFRC Inst. Arable Crops Res., Rothamsted Exp. Stn., Harpenden, Herts AL5 2JQ.

***Cossonus linearis* F. (Col.: Curculionidae) in Surrey and West Kent**

This weevil, added to our list in 1939 from Norfolk, has since then been found several times in East Anglia — mostly the Suffolk Breck — in decaying poplar trunks. In later years it has been met with occasionally in the south-east also: Deal, E. Kent, one by C. Johnson, and in E. Sussex by R.D. Dumbrell and P.J. Hodge. Two further Watsonian divisions can now be added. Prof J.A. Owen asks me to publish his capture of a specimen on a log of Lombardy poplar in Richmond Park, Surrey, 7.vi.83 — a locality which had earlier produced our other and more widespread (but still very local) species of the genus, *C. parallelepipedus* Hbst. Finally on the night of 11.vi.90 I was much surprised to take an example of *C. linearis* at my m.v. light here — my first encounter with the species. Not very far away in Maryon-Wilson Park, where some of the insects visiting the lamp must certainly originate, are various kinds of poplar including two or three prostrate trunks, barkless, hard, and deep in brambles and nettles. Somewhere there, perhaps, a breeding-site may exist.— A.A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.

A "white" Gatekeeper — *Pyronia tithonus* var *albida,* Russell (Lep.: Satyrinae) in Suffolk, August, 1990

The brown and white butterfly seemed, at first, a startling intruder. It fluttered by like an exotic Helicoinid. But this was Suffolk, on the heathland just south of Walberswick and the thrill for me was to see this Gatekeeper butterfly, *P. tithonus,* var *albida,* Russell — the variant in which the normal orange colour is completely replaced by white.

It was 6th August 1990. There had been a run of hot sunny days but that particular morning we had had rain and I was not expecting to see many butterflies about. However, the rain stopped, the sun came out and we set off for a walk. I left the path to examine a clump of bramble. *P. tithonus* was abundant; also about were *L. megera, L. phlaeas, P. napi* (and/or *P. rapae*) and a solitary *I. io*. Then the brown and white butterfly came into view. With the courtesy "inbred" in *P. tithonus,* it gave me plenty of time