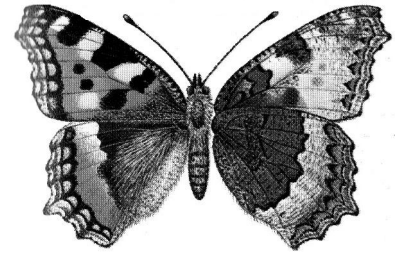


## Small Tortoiseshells and Wall Browns

I am writing this in early September – it is still warm and sunny, though the evenings are drawing in and the dews are heavy. There are still plenty of butterflies in the garden – most of the Red Admirals and Peacocks have disappeared but they have been replaced by another generation of Speckled Woods. And, I am glad to say, there are now quite a few Small Tortoiseshells.

They seem to have been in very short supply this year – earlier in August the Buddleia was a-flutter with good numbers of many species but no Small Tortoiseshells at all. A few have now appeared, but this contrasts with previous years when they have been abundant, sunning themselves on the gravel paths so that you have to be careful not to tread on them.



Ever since we have lived here I have rejoiced in the sight of so many Small Tortoiseshells. This is because their numbers have reduced dramatically in other parts of the UK – up to 80% - and in many places it is no longer a common garden butterfly. The reasons for the decline are not currently proven, but it is thought to be due to a combination of unfortunate summer weather and the arrival in the UK of a parasitoid fly in 1999 which seems to affect Small Tortoiseshells especially badly. It is possible that this parasitoid fly has now arrived in Pembrokeshire and we are seeing the effects. It will be interesting to see what happens next year.

One butterfly which has been truly abundant here this year is the Wall, or Wall Brown. Each year I expect to see this attractive little butterfly once or twice in the garden, and perhaps several times on the clifftops and coast path, but this year they have been positively common. We have had up to 6 in the garden for many weeks, there have been plenty in the hedgebanks and they have been almost abundant on the clifftops. This is wonderful to see – and again, it will be very interesting to see what happens next year.

