

## RED ADMIRAL

### *Vanessa atalanta*



Often seen at the marina.

An easily identified butterfly with its very bright markings.

**DESCRIPTION** – Brown/black wings with red bands and white spots near the tips of forewings. Undersides dark and mottled.

Wingspan 67-72 mm.

Commonest May-June and again in Aug-Sept.

Starting each spring and continuing through the summer there are northward migrations, which are variable in extent and timing, from North Africa and continental Europe. The immigrant females lay eggs and consequently there is an emergence of fresh butterflies, from about July onwards. They can continue flying into October or November.

**IDENTIFICATION** – Can be found in almost any habitat from gardens to sea-shores and from town centres to the top of mountains! Throughout Britain & Ireland. When resting on the ground or on a tree trunk, the undersides of the adults provide superb camouflage, making them almost invisible as they blend into the background.

Egg-laying females are very easy to spot. The powerful flight is replaced by a slow and deliberate flight as she flits from leaf to leaf of the foodplant, depositing an egg if the leaf is deemed suitable. Egg-laying is typically interspersed with periods of nectaring and resting.

Adults feed primarily on Bramble, Hemp Agrimony, Fleabane, Ivy, Privet, Teasels and Thistles. Also, partial to rotting fruit such as plums that have fallen from the tree.

**EGG** – The eggs are green and barrel shaped and laid singly in the leaves of the food plant.

**LARVA** – The larva lives within a tent formed by folding the edges of a leaf together, emerging only to feed. As the larva grows it will form a new tent. The larva of this species is one of the easiest to find in a nettle patch, since its location is given away by a series of tents that are highly-visible to the trained eye. The larva is usually found in the largest of these tents.



The larva has several colour forms, ranging from black, to greenish-brown to a very pale yellowish-green. This stage lasts between 3 and 4 weeks, depending on temperature.

**LARVAL FOODPLANT** – Nettle, Hop, Small Nettle and Pellitory-of-the wall.

**PUPA** - Several leaves are drawn together with silk to form a tent within which the larva pupates. It hangs head-down, attached to the roof of the tent by the cremaster. The head of the pupa is quite blunt - whereas those of closely-related species often have two prominent horns. This stage lasts between 2 and 3 weeks.

**OTHER FACTS** – A very few adults will hibernate and survive out winter.