

Thursby,
Carlisle,
Cumberland.

April 4th. 1930.

Dear Fisher,

I have just got back here from Newcastle, and found your letter waiting for me. I am very pleased that you find the observations on Melitaea aurinia of interest.

I should imagine the total increase to be at least a 1,000 fold. Any year since 1924 I suppose it would have been possible to capture several thousand specimens with out having any obvious effect on the numbers flying about. During the years of scarcity I do not think we ever saw more than two specimens in a season, working the locality quite carefully at the right time.

The second point can be answered definitely. It was the proportion of variation which increased. The insects flying about while the numbers were increasing rapidly were highly variable in size colour and marking. It is quite true to say that hardly any two were alike. Now there is scarcely any variation. One can catch dozens and find no detectable difference at all.

Really striking variations (i.e. forms with quite different patterns &c.) were not rare, say at a very rough guess 5%. In the last four years we have got one such form among many hundreds examined. Nearly all the more striking variations were deformed. Such deformed specimens were about for several seasons, but more commonly during the first two or three years of the increase than in 1923 & 1924.

It is difficult to say, but I think the numbers were increasing faster during the first two years.

Yours sincerely,

F. B. Ford
