

Irish Wood White / Réal's Wood White

from the Wood White by the distinctive greenish-yellow ground colour of the hindwing undersides. The flight of the Irish Wood White is much stronger than its British counterpart and resembles more that of the Small or Green-veined White. For this reason, care should be taken with distant flight identification. The Irish Wood White and Réal's Wood White are identical in appearance and cannot be separated without microscopic examination of the genitalia. However, although the distributions of the two species are presently only imperfectly known, it appears that Réal's Wood White does not occur in the Burren. Therefore any *Leptidea* specimens seen there can reasonably be assigned to the Irish Wood White.

Field tips

Searches of warm sheltered areas where there is protection from the wind should be successful throughout the Burren. The

males in particular are very active and the females are more so than those of the Wood White. Males on the wing before the females have emerged are extremely restless and difficult to photograph as they seem rarely to settle. Later in the flight period, both sexes can easily be approached as they feed from various flowers, although the wings are always held closed.

Regional prime sites.

Western Ireland. It is common and widespread throughout the Burren and may be expected in most of the lower sheltered areas. The R480 road, running south from **Ballyvaughan** (starting at M 225 065), and the minor roads to the west of **Boston** (e.g. R 350 975) cut through perfect habitat for this butterfly and it is these areas that are recommended for the first-time visitor.

Other regions. Absent.

Réal's Wood White

Leptidea reali Reissinger

General distribution and status

Resident. Réal's Wood White was described from specimens collected in the French Pyrenees as a new species to science as recently as 1988. It was originally given the name of *Leptidea lorkovicii* Réal but this was later changed to *L. reali* and the findings were published in 1993 (Lorkovic, 1993). Subsequent examination of specimens

from Ireland revealed the presence of Réal's Wood White there and its discovery as a new species for the British Isles was published in 2001 (Nelson *et al.*, 2001). These, and other recent studies, have failed to confirm the presence of the species elsewhere in the British Isles. It is now thought to be present throughout Ireland with the exception of the Burren limestone district

Réal's Wood White

of Clare and South-east Galway, as aforementioned. Here its place appears to be taken by the Irish Wood White. Where Réal's Wood White occurs it is usually common.

Flight period

Usually late May to early July in a single generation peaking during the second and third weeks of June. The males are on the wing several days before the females. In years when there is very warm weather during the spring the flight period may be slightly advanced and an occasional second emergence then takes place during late July and August.

Larval foodplants

Meadow Vetchling and possibly Common Bird's-foot Trefoil and Tufted Vetch as both of the latter are common at most sites where the butterfly is found.

Habitat requirements

The main habitat types favoured in Ireland appear to be mixed scrub/grassland mosaics (Fig. 5), roadside verges, broad woodland tracks and edges (e.g. Fig. 13), disused railway lines and coastal undercliffs (Fig. 14) such as those at Rosslare harbour in Wexford.

Identification characters, variation and similar species

Average wingspan 40mm. This species is identical in appearance to the Irish Wood White and can only be separated by dissection and examination of the genitalia. Specimens from mainland Europe are identical to the typical



Fig. 52 Réal's Wood White. Rosslare, Wexford

subspecies of the Wood White and, should Réal's Wood White be discovered in England, this is again likely to be the case. As with both subspecies of Wood White, the large dark rectangular spot on the forewings precludes confusion with other white butterflies. There is little recorded significant variation.

Field tips

The males are very active and conspicuous as they fly just above the herbage level during warm bright weather. Females tend to spend more time amongst vegetation that contains the foodplants but can be found with careful searching even in dull weather. In