



Butterfly Conservation Wales
Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Cymru

Butterfly News

The Newsletter of the South Wales Branch
of Butterfly Conservation



Autumn 2011



Butterflies and the Tir Gofal Scheme

Above: Forester moths, Merioneth; Above Right: Brown Hairstreak surveys on frosty days; Right: The hazards of winter surveys (Note: The tracks weren't made by George's vehicle!).



The Silver-studded Blue and the Restoration of Prees Heath Common

Heather seedlings on the Hangars Field in August 2009 (above), August 2010 (above right) and August 2011 (right).



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Front Cover Image

Silurian moth taken on the Hatterall Ridge, Black Mountains
by Dave Grundy

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Editorial by Andrea Rowe

Welcome to a slightly later than normal edition of our autumn newsletter. As always, our annual Members' Day programme was packed full to the brim with interesting and informative talks and it made the Committee think about how members unable to attend the event miss out. So this year we took the decision to delay this newsletter so we could include a write-up of the event and some of the talks. I hope you find this a useful change!

As well as our Members' Day articles, this issue also includes an interesting after-work recording project for Purple Hairstreaks in Cardiff and a look at moth recording and the Silurian in the Black Mountains. We also have a fantastically packed Events Calendar for the coming months – provided in the centre pages so you can pull out/print out and keep it easily to hand!

I do hope you will find this as interesting a read as I have found it to edit. Thank you all for your continued support of the Branch and Butterfly Conservation nationally. As always, please feel free to get in touch, whether you have news you'd like to share or if you have any comments. Your feedback is always welcome and very much appreciated.

Welcome to new Branch Members

The Branch Committee is delighted to welcome the following new members to the South Wales Branch. We very much hope you enjoy your membership and look forward to meeting you at our Branch events.

Ms K Thomas, Milford Haven; Ms MC Wood, Cardiff; Mr P & Mrs M Hodgson, Llandyssil; Mr DK Hampson, Cardiff; Mrs J James, Llantwit Major; Mrs SG Beston-Leaper & Mr B Davies, Caldicot; Mr C Chambers & Miss CL Rawlinson, Pontypridd; Mr MC & Mrs G Sharpe, Haverfordwest; Mr PK Grennard, Haverfordwest; Mr AJ Lawrence & Miss L Ceredig, Cardiff; Ms CE Griffiths, Aberystwyth; Mrs R and Mr A Webb, Whitland; Mr DMF Astin, Penarth; Mrs CA Mason, Sennybridge; Mr J Davies, Merthyr Tydfil; Mrs S Furber, Crickhowell; Mr MJ Pritchard, Haverfordwest; Mr GE Jeffery, Cowbridge; Mr HA Lansdown Swansea; Miss CM Barrow, Treharris; Ms W James Cardigan; Mrs J & Mr D Best, Kidwelly; Miss CA Davies, Ammanford; Dr JL Adams, Caldicot; Mr EW Hutchings, Usk; Mr J Hayes, Pembroke; Mr JM & Mrs C Brown, Llanelli; Ms N Rush, Carmarthen; Ms VM Tomlinson, Pembroke; Mr C Jones, Monmouth; Dr A Pollard, Caerphilly; Mr T & Mrs V Town and family, Presteigne; Mr RI Kenyon, Swansea; Mr Hill and family, Monmouth; Mr S Pastfield, Welshpool; Mr G Creyke, Abergavenny; Mr A & Mrs C Colegate and family, Monmouth; Mr D Jones, Llanelli; Mr LJ Moss, Cardiff; Miss H Godden & Mr K Sepahpour, Cardiff; Ms J Atkinson & Mr J Smith, Crymych; Mr R Mears, Llangadog

Conviviality, new faces and another milestone Members' Day and AGM at Kenfig

by Richard Smith

With several other distractions coming along late on the scene, we (your Committee) were all immensely pleased that we probably had our most successful day of recent years. The buzz was clear right from the off with the first item of the day - the refreshments! As is often the case, those of us involved in making the day happen suddenly realised that there was rather a lot of networking and chatting going on and a distinct air of anticipation.

New faces, to me at least, were dotted throughout the room. First of all were Branch Committee member and speaker Kathy Seddon's surprise package of Fernando (Barcelona), Johan (Norway), Karl Gustav (Sweden) and Keith (Exeter) - just some of her colleagues in the European butterfly recording schools project, which ran back in 1990s but which provided a valuable education experience for all. Looking back at the day's register, I reckon there were another 11 faces not familiar from previous Members' Days. We'll try to follow up with you all, but don't forget that you can contact us at any time (see page 16 for our contact details). It was also great to be approached at the end of the day with people's offers of help with surveys and other activities.

Thanks also go to Ben Williams who has kindly volunteered to take on the role of Branch Treasurer, with a couple of decades (dare I say) of experience behind him. This adds to Ben's many butterfly and wildlife activities taken on since his recent retirement from Keep Wales Tidy. After invitations were made both for new volunteers to join and then to re-elect existing committee members, the meeting voted in the existing committee, plus Ben as Treasurer and Norman Lowe as Chairman. The accounts were also presented to the meeting and now agreed by the auditor David Weber (who was also re-appointed), appear for your information on page 7.

So is this a milestone? Well we shouldn't spend too much time looking back, but it's now 24 years since the South Wales Branch started. I seem to recall that also 24 years ago (on the 18th of October) the same four rugby teams were in the World Cup final & bronze play-offs. Was the Branch the same? Well clearly not, as we'd just started out! Nor should we get too obsessed with numbers. In a way though there are probably quite a few records we should focus on now - record High Brown Fritillary numbers after a decade of work, record Brown Hairstreak egg counts too and several other species highlighted for their impressive sounding numbers this year e.g. Drab Looper, the Silurian confirmed in the Black Mountains and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries on Tir Gofal farms generally. It all comes down to people though -

we must have our highest ever branch membership. Let's hope these trends continue. There really is "a lot going on" and we would like to thank everyone for sharing this with us.

National and South Wales Branch Membership Updates

Dr Martin Warren, BC's Chief Executive, is delighted to report a substantial growth in BC membership over the last year. At the end of September, membership stood at 17,400, an increase of 15% over the year. This is a remarkable achievement against the testing economic background. Thanks to all who have helped promote our work and recruitment campaigns.

Sandra Muldoon (BC UK's Head of Administration) notes that 76% of new members now join online so all the publicity, events and promotion done by Branches really does make a difference.

So how are we doing in South Wales? Well, as of September 2011, household membership stood at 376 up from 333 the year before – this is an increase of 13% (this figure was up again to 382 at the end of October, making an increase of over 14.7%). The total household members recruited, from 01/10/10 to 30/09/11, was at 61 and new household members recruited as a percentage of the total was 16.2. If we look at the statistics from a slightly different angle we see that the Branch had 406 individual members in 2010 rising to 467 in 2011.

So what about other Branches? Well, obviously there are many factors that influence membership including overall population size, affluence and remoteness of populations, so it is difficult to make like-for-like comparisons with our own Branch. However here are a few interesting facts gleaned from the latest membership updates. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch is the largest Branch (and has been for some time) and storms ahead in its membership size - with 1321 individual members as of September 2011. The Sussex Branch recruited most new household members in the year up to September 2011 at 126 – this equated to 15% of its membership size ... a great job!

The growth in the South Wales Branch membership should be celebrated – thanks to all who have promoted the Branch. If we can achieve these results this year, who knows what we can achieve in the future!

Editor's Note: Don't forget that BC is currently promoting a special HALF-PRICE Christmas gift membership. Why not consider this alternative gift for friends and family and help expand the Branch even more! See page 11 for full details.

Butterfly Conservation South Wales Branch

Income and Expenditure Account for Year ended 31 March 2011

	<u>Year Ending 31/3/11</u>		<u>Year Ending 31/3/10</u>		<u>Net</u>
	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Net Income</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	
	£	£	£	£	£
Subscriptions					
(from BC HQ)	1857.00		1857.00	1818.00	1818.00
Donations received	93.52		93.52	595.64	595.64
Other income (Book)	108.00	127.90	-19.90	26.09	26.09
Bank Interest	2.76		2.76	12.96	12.96
Surveys (recoverable costs)					
Brown Hairstreak Carms	3280.00	3625.47	-345.47	2445.15	1576.47
Expected claims					868.68
					-868.68
Membership					
Newsletter & mailings		658.47	-658.47		369.99
Events		50.00	-50.00		-369.99
					5.00
					-5.00
Branch Insurance		38.99	-38.99		40.61
Branch Administration		59.47	-59.47		-40.61
					45.28
					-45.28
Reserves					
(Caeau Ffos Fach)		150.00	-150.00		200.00
Training		120.00	-120.00		-200.00
Tools and materials		0.00	0.00		420.00
					-420.00
					84.10
					-84.10
Conservation projects					
Brown Hairstreak (ex Carms CC)		0.00	0.00		240.00
Small Blue & Marsh Fritillary		0.00	0.00		-240.00
Violet-feeding Fritillaries		0.00	0.00		110.86
					-110.86
Silurian moth		900.00	-900.00	250.00	140.36
					-140.36
Sub-branch/Other Schemes					250.00
Support					
Brecknock & Radnor		0.00	0.00		96.00
Other Schemes (NMRS)		500.00	-500.00		-96.00
Publicity		0.00	0.00		96.00
Sundries	28.98		28.98	86.95	-90.00
					86.95
Grant:					
HLF awards for All					4700.00
					-4700.00
Surplus/deficit carried to reserves	5370.26	6320.30	-860.04	5234.79	8987.35
					-3752.56
Reserves					
Brought forward		3325.11			7078.00
Surplus/deficit for year		<u>-860.04</u>			<u>-3752.56</u>
Carried forward		<u>2465.07</u>			<u>3325.44</u>
Represented by:					
Cash at bank		5753.59			2701.37
Add: debtors		27.50			1934.96
Deduct creditors & accruals		<u>3316.02</u>			<u>1311.22</u>
		<u>2465.07</u>			<u>3325.11</u>

Accounts prepared by David Slade, Honorary Treasurer and Audited by David Weber, Honorary Auditor.

The Silver-studded Blue and the Restoration of Prees Heath Common

Incorporating a summary of the Members' Day presentation
by Stephen Lewis, Prees Heath Officer

Prees Heath lies two miles south of Whitchurch, North Shropshire. It is the last sanctuary in the Midlands for the threatened Silver-studded Blue butterfly. In 2006, Butterfly Conservation (BC) bought the western 145 acres (60 hectares) of Prees Heath Common. BC was committed to restoring the heathland to its former glory - a long term and challenging project, which not only meant clearing all the rubbish on the site and taking steps to prevent any further misuse, but crucially transforming the site into the wonderful open heath it had been 100 years previously. Funding of £571,000 from GrantScape (Landfill Tax Credit), £69,000 raised from appeals in 1995 and 2005 and £28,000 from Natural England enabled the purchase, as well as the employment of a Project Officer until March 2010 (extended part-time until March 2012) and the restoration of the heathland and grassland habitats.

Prees Heath is registered as Common Land under the Commons Act 2006 and Commoners Rights, such as the right to put out grazing animals, dig sand and gravel and remove brushwood, still apply. It is registered as Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, is notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest under Wildlife & Countryside Act 1985 and has a 'blanket' Tree Preservation Order.

The Heath has a long and varied history. Its foundations were laid down around 16,000 years ago when sand and gravel was deposited at the end of the last ice age. Bronze Age people chose the place for burial mounds and both the A49 and the A41 are former Roman roads. The Common was a muster point for King John's army in the 13th century for his invasion of Wales to fight Llewellyn and his rebels and also for Royalist troops under Prince Rupert in the Civil War. It has also been used for many years as a public space for people to enjoy the open air, and lying at a crossroads, has been a meeting-place for people for centuries. Gypsies with horse-drawn wagons used to be a regular feature of the Common, always leaving the site in good condition.

World War One saw the Common used as a trench warfare training camp for infantry soldiers. Huts that accommodated around 25,000 people covered much of the site. Many went from here to fight and die in the trenches on the frontlines. Amongst those stationed at the camp was the father of reggae singer Bob Marley, Captain Norval Sinclair Marley. The camp was also used as a huge army 'demob' centre at the end of the war. World War Two saw the

Common became the site for the tents of an internment camp for foreign nationals and then in 1942 a bomber training airfield (RAF Tilstock). Stirlings, Whitleys, Wellingtons and Halifaxes were all based here as well as Horsa gliders used in the D-day landings.



Image: One of the Common's past uses

After the war, the airfield was decommissioned, although the concrete runway remained in place until the 1970s when it was broken up to prevent illegal motor vehicle use. Much of the site was then ploughed and intensively farmed for potatoes (which resulted in the application of large quantities of chicken manure), however in the places where the concrete runway and perimeter road remained the heathland habitat was preserved for the Silver-studded Blue.

The long-term goals are to re-create heathland on the former arable areas of the Reserve, which total approximately 30 hectares (75 acres). Ditches and banks have been created alongside roads to prevent illegal vehicle access and local volunteers have helped to remove rubbish from the site. Soil analysis has been undertaken at three levels in six pits across the site to help decide what habitat management was necessary. Deep ploughing has been undertaken to remove concrete remnants and to invert the soil profile, burying the highly enriched topsoil and exposing the nutrient-poor sandy subsoil and elemental sulphur has also been applied to help restore acidity.

Due to the acid soil conditions, it has been decided to establish the heathland plants by spreading heather brash as a seed source. The Hangars Field and part of East of Runway Field have undergone these treatments and results appear encouraging (see images on front inside cover, page 2). All the brash that has been applied is of Common Heather or Ling, *Calluna vulgaris*, harvested from suitable donor sites such as Cannock Chase. Prees Heath, however, unlike the donor sites, also naturally supports abundant Bell Heather, *Erica cinerea*, and so 20,000 Bell Heather plug plants (grown from seed harvested on Prees Heath) have been planted by volunteers. In addition, a lot of Bell Heather seed hand-harvested on site by volunteers has

been broadcast. Whilst Common Heather is the main caterpillar food plant for the Silver-studded Blue, Bell Heather is the main nectar source for the adult butterflies. Seed of Wavy Hair-grass, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, which is a feature of the locality's natural vegetation, has also been harvested on site and broadcast on the restoration areas.

On all the restoration areas there will be an ongoing need to control invading weeds such as ragwort, and scrub whilst the heathland species become established, as well as a need to prevent the abundant rabbit population from eating all the seedlings. Other works undertaken to date include planting over 2,000 trees and shrubs along the perimeter of the reserve, removing unwanted trees on the remnant heathland areas and excavating a pond, all of which will enhance the wildlife interest of the site.

A Sanctuary for the Silver-studded Blue

The Silver-studded Blue is the flagship species of the site, providing an amazing wildlife sight when hundreds are in flight during the second half of June and throughout July (see image on back page). A count by volunteers at the site on June 29th this year recorded a total of 3,364 (although this was a snapshot on that particular day and the total number present throughout the entire flight period was much greater than this).

It is a fascinating species. Each adult butterfly lives for just a few days and rarely ventures very far from where it emerges, spending time mating and taking nectar from flowers. In the evenings and during cooler weather they gather in communal roosts in shrubs. After mating the females lay eggs singly on heather (sometimes bird's-foot trefoil or gorse) close to the ground. The eggs hatch the following spring and the caterpillars feed on the plant's new growth through April and May, producing sugary secretions that attract Black Ants (*Lasius niger*) who protect them from predators. The caterpillars will pupate in the ants' nests until late June/early July, emerging as a butterfly early in the morning. It then climbs a grass stem and, still protected by the ants, pumps up its wings before it is ready to fly (see image on back cover). As the Black Ant is crucial to the survival of the butterfly, the management on Prees Heath must also cater for the ants' needs.

The Silver-studded Blue is so-called because of the tiny silvery marks in the middle of the black spots near the edge of the undersides of the hind wings. The uppersides of the wings of the males are darker blue in colour than those of the Common Blue, which is also present on the reserve, and have a thick black band near the edges. The uppersides of the wings of the females are brown with small orange markings.

Prees Heath Common in the news

The end of October saw the Common make the news - a man found guilty of vandalising gates and an information sign at the site lost his appeal against conviction. Anthony Barnett was convicted of criminal damage at Shrewsbury Magistrates Court in May and was sentenced to a two-year conditional discharge and ordered to pay compensation and costs, as well as being banned from going onto the Prees Heath Common reserve in the future.

Stephen Lewis, Butterfly Conservation's warden at Prees Heath, explained: "The Court has upheld Mr Barnett's conviction for the damage he caused. "We are very grateful for all the support we have received from members of the public over this matter, and especially grateful to the hundreds of people who signed the petition to ensure that whoever was responsible for the damage was prosecuted".

For more information about Prees Heath visit the West Midlands Branch website at www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk/reserve-prees.html where you can find out more and where autumn and winter work parties are listed.

Editor's Note: This article has been compiled using information from Stephen, as well as from the BC Prees Heath Common Reserve leaflet and BC Prees Heath Common Reserve publication: 'A 2020 Vision of Heathland'.

Half Price Gift Membership – a great Christmas gift idea

Half price gift membership to Butterfly Conservation is NOW available – a perfect Christmas gift idea. It's great value, provides something that will last the year long Membership to Butterfly Conservation and makes the perfect present for any fan of butterflies.

The gift offer prices mean that a gift Single membership can be purchased for only £14, a Young Person/Student gift membership for £10 and a Family gift membership for £19! Members receive BC's exclusive magazine, Butterfly, three times a year, a set of collectable postcards, local newsletters, access to our butterfly nature reserves, invitations to walks, talks and other events in their area and more.

Membership packs can be sent direct to the recipient with a personalised message or delivered to you to pass on. To purchase gift membership at this special price, phone BC on 01929 406015. Orders must be placed by Friday 9th December to guarantee delivery before Christmas.

+ BLOGS +

Pembrokeshire Moth News: Branch Member's Blog

For all of you interested in keeping up-to-date with the moths of Pembrokeshire, then why not head to Mike Pritchard's new blogsite:

<http://pembrokeshiremoths.posterous.com>.

Mike is one of our Branch members who has been moth trapping for over 20 years now and currently uses, in his own words, a 'very beaten up' Robinson Trap. He gets the trap out most weekends and as he says on his blog, it is an interest that is always compelling – "you never know what is out there and with 800 macro moths and 1200 micros there is always much to learn!!"

Mike hopes that his site will provide an up to date picture of the moths of Pembrokeshire and encourages all active lepidopterists to contribute sightings and those who are less experienced to get involved and post pictures too. It's early days but fingers crossed your site blossoms Mike. Good luck!

Other Local Lepidoptera (and other wildlife) Blogs to bookmark

<http://moonmoths.blogspot.com> - one of Barry Stewart's blogs with lovely photos of moths and much more;

<http://montgomeryshiremoths.blogspot.com> - Montgomeryshire Moth Group's blog with up to date news, events and records;

<http://gmrg-vc41moths.blogspot.com> - somewhere for anyone interested in moth and butterfly recording in Glamorgan to post sightings, photographs and related activities.

<http://pembrokeshirewildlife.blogspot.com> - a blog for general wildlife sightings, discussion, comments, questions and observations (with some wonderful otter images).

<http://vc41dragonflies.blogspot.com> - dragonflies and damselflies in Glamorgan.

Editor's Note: Blogs are a great way of keeping up-to-date with what wildlife has been seen locally ... if you have a blog you'd like us to publicise, feel free to get in touch!

Butterfly News is going green

The Committee continues to try to reduce resources associated with traditional newsletter production and distribution, through distribution via email (as a full colour PDF document). More and more members are signing up to this initiative - thank you once again to all who have. If you would like to receive future newsletters by email only, please email the Editor (news@southwales-butterflies.org.uk) with your full name and BC Membership number. Your email contact details will be stored for these purposes only and will not be passed to any other parties. Please do remember to let us know if you change your email address though!

EVENTS	
October	
Weekdays, commencing week beginning Mon 17th Oct until early April	Weekday Brown Hairstreak (BH) egg surveys & habitat management in Carmes, Ceredigion & Pembs , chosen a few days in advance for weather. If interested <u>please register in advance with Richard Smith</u> (01446 793229 or rgsoverton@tiscali.co.uk). We will focus on previously un-surveyed sites & expanding on our community project around Llangeler:- north of Whitland, north of Carmarthen, Dryslwyn to Pantglas, Llanwrda to Llandoverly, Llanllwni to Llanybydder & Llangeler area (Cenarth to Llanfihangel ar Arth). We'll also carry out egg counts at sites across Carmes, plus a couple in Ceredigion. We have volunteer workdays at several sites in Carmes combining egg searches & coppicing of older blackthorn (see also winter weekends below).
Winter Sundays	Join us for our 11 th year of habitat management in the Alun Valley (Vale of Glamorgan) for the High Brown Fritillary. We also have hedge & blackthorn thicket restoration workdays for BH at Cwmduhen & other sites in Carmes & Teifi Valley & a couple of management days for Marsh Fritillary at our Caeau Ffos Fach reserve in Carmes. Tools provided, but bring suitable strong outdoor clothing (esp. gloves & footwear), a hot drink & food if staying beyond lunchtime. For details contact Richard Smith (see above)
November	
Sat 19th	BC National AGM & Members' Day, Cheltenham Racecourse. As always a full programme, culminating in a talk from One Show presenter & BC Vice President, Mike Dilger. Further information on www.butterfly-conservation.org
Sun 27th	Habitat management: Alun Valley. Meet at 10.00am at the entrance gate to rifle range on west side of the minor road ("Wick Road") between the shop near Ewenny/Corntown & Castle upon Alun (Grid reference SS913763). If the gate is open, please drive carefully in & park tidily in the car park. If gate is closed, we'll proceed from there to another site. Contact: Richard Smith (01446 793229) or rgsoverton@tiscali.co.uk.
December	
Sun 4th 12:00-14:00	Annual Brown Hairstreak egg count: West Williamston, Pembs. Meet in small reserve car park at SN033058 or, if full, park in village & walk back. Arrive 10.00 for 10.15am start on foreshore. This is a WTSWW reserve & event, for which help has, in recent years, been provided by BC members. For further information please contact: Nikki Anderson on 01646 686469.
2012	
January	
Sun 8th	Habitat management: Alun Valley. Details as per 27 th November. Meet at 10.00am .
Sun 15th	Habitat management: Caeau Ffos Fach. Light scrub, bramble

	removal & other light management work on our Marsh Fritillary reserve near Cross Hands. Bring warm clothes, strong footwear, gardening gloves, a warm drink & lunch if you wish to stay beyond lunchtime. We can supply some hand tools but bring your own if you prefer. Meet at 10.30am at far end of Co-op car park, just off A48 roundabout at Cross Hands. SN566131. Contact: Richard Smith (01446 793229) or Martin White (01792 477984).
Weds 18th	Habitat management: Caeau Ffos Fach. Details as per 15 th January. Meet at 10.30am .
Sun 22nd	Habitat management: Alun Valley. Details as per 27 th November. Meet at 10.00am .
Tues 24th	Habitat management: Ystradgynlais. Scrub clearance at a site in Ystradgynlais for Marsh Fritillary butterfly. Meet at 10.15am in Weaver's Road, at SN791098. 10.15am to 3pm. Bring warm clothes, strong footwear, gardening gloves, a warm drink & lunch if you wish to stay beyond lunchtime. We can supply some hand tools but bring your own if you prefer. <i>Joint event with Brecknock Wildlife Trust.</i> Contact: Ben Mullen or Phil Sutton BWT, 01874 625708 (office hours) or Richard Smith (01446 793229).
Tues 24th	Cardiff Naturalists' Society Evening Talk: Small Can be Beautiful – The Micro-moths of Glamorgan: Join our very own Dave Slade at 7.30pm to learn more about micros. The talk is free to members of the Naturalists' Society but guests are welcome. Location: Lecture Theatre, Room D.106 on 1st floor of the UWIC Llandaff Campus on Western Avenue, Cardiff, CF5 2YB. More information at www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/indoor.htm
Sat 28th	National Moth Recorders Meeting at the Birmingham & West Midlands Institute, Birmingham. Draft programme available at www.mothscount.org & includes talks on the automated validation of moths, how bats and moths 'out-wit' each other in their predator/prey relationship & on Welsh wonders by Dave Slade. £5 per person registration fee.
Sun 29th	Habitat management: Blackrock Quarry, Clydach. Work task at Blackrock Quarry, Clydach with Usk Conservation & Environment Group, clearing Cotoneaster from this important lepidoptera site with superb views. Tools provided, but bring lunch, drinks etc. Meet at 10.00am at the lay-by adjacent to the old lime kilns (SO215125). <i>[Head east along the A465 Heads of the Valleys road from the Brynmawr roundabout. After 1½ miles take the left turn for Clydach Village. Continue along Main Road through Clydach village and the lay-by is then on your right.]</i>
February	
Sun 5th	Habitat management: Alun Valley. Details as per 27 th November. Meet at 10.00am .
Sun 12th	Habitat management: Cwmdufen The owner of this marvellous site is allowing us to carry out management of blackthorn for Brown Hairstreaks. We'll cut a series of bays into the older blackthorn, using power tools & hand clearance. Volunteers to help to carry

	away (within the site!) the cut material would be really useful. Meet at 10.30am in the huge layby (cut off road, old A40) at SN353193, which is where the B4298 to Meidrim leaves the A40 just west of Carmarthen. We'll travel from there in convoy to Cwmduhfen Farm at SN346214. Bring warm clothes, strong footwear, gardening gloves, a warm drink & lunch if you wish to stay beyond lunchtime. We can supply some hand tools and leather gauntlets but bring your own if you prefer. Contact: Richard Smith (01446 793229).
Sun 26th	Habitat management: Alun Valley. Details as per 27 th November. Meet at 10.00am .
Weekday in Feb (date tbc)	Habitat management: Tonyrefail. Scrub clearance & good outdoor exercise on a Marsh Fritillary site. Contact: Richard Smith (01446 793229) for details of meeting venue & day selected.
March	
Sun 4th	Habitat management: Mynydd Ruthin. Meet at 10.00am at the roadside (Grid Ref SS974795, just before quarry entrance. Directions: from unclassified Pentre Meyrick to Pencoed road, turn onto common at minor cross roads at SS972796, then immediately right & park 200m along on left, past the parking area on the junction itself). Contact: Richard Smith (01446 793229) or rgsoverton@tiscali.co.uk
Sun 11th	Habitat management: Hendre Wood, near Monmouth. Habitat management for Drab Looper. Details tbc.

Key: BH – Brown Hairstreak NNR – National Nature Reserve
SW – South Wales WBW – Wales Biodiversity Week
Carms – Carmarthenshire Pembs – Pembrokeshire
WTSWW – Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales

**** Provisional events for spring 2012 ****

We are hoping to run a short series of 'Introduction to Butterflies' days across West Wales, including butterfly identification training. We also hope to re-run last year's cancelled Butterfly Transect Experience event at Kenfig NNR. Further details will be available in due course on the Branch website

Further details of the Branch Events listed above also appear on our Branch website, where updates and alterations may be posted throughout the year. Prior to attending any event please check details on our website or contact the relevant person for more information:

www.southwales-butterflies.org.uk

There are various other Lepidoptera-related events happening throughout the Branch area, run by different organisations. Useful places to find out more are your local Wildlife Trust website www.wildlifetrusts.org and your Local Records Centre website www.lrcwales.org.uk.

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Butterflies and the Tir Gofal Scheme

A summary of the Members' Day presentation

by George Tordoff, Monitoring Ecologist, Butterfly Conservation

Agri-environment schemes (AES) were introduced in the 1980s in response to environmental degradation caused by farm intensification. They aim to protect and restore landscapes and other environmental features, paying farmers to offset losses incurred (e.g. lower stock levels or through hedge-planting). There have been a number of different AES in Wales over the years: Tir Cymen (1992-1998), Tir Gofal (1999-present), Tir Cynnal (2005-present), Organic farming scheme (1999-present), and from 2012 onwards – Glastir.

Tir Gofal is a Wales Higher Level AES that the Welsh Government (WG) sees as a key mechanism to reverse biodiversity loss. It is a whole farm scheme that uses a system of annual payments and requires a 10-year commitment from the farmer. It has been extremely popular with over 3000 farms signed up (totaling over 330,000 hectares of land). But the question is ... is it working?

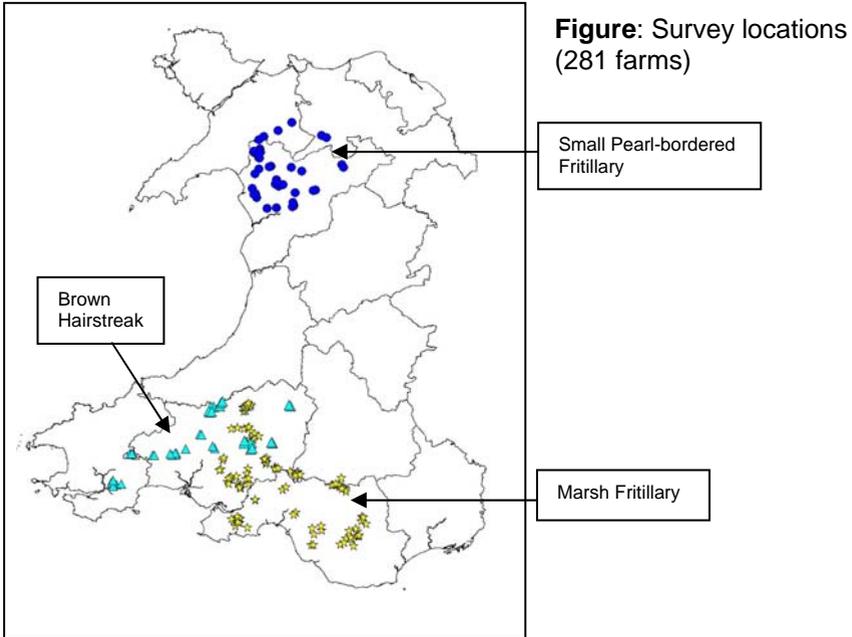
Butterfly Conservation (BC) Wales and four other conservation NGOs have been funded by the WG to monitor the TG scheme to see whether it is helping a range of farmland wildlife. A unique 'mutli-taxa' approach has been used, with monitoring focusing on birds (by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), bats (by the Bat Conservation Trust), terrestrial mammals (by the Wildlife Trusts), plants and grassland fungi (by Plantlife) and butterflies (by BC). The aim of the monitoring was to test the hypothesis: "Tir Gofal contributes to maintaining and enhancing species abundance". Pairs of TG and non-scheme farms (acting as controls) that were matched carefully based on landscape features were monitored.

Three butterfly species (but no moths!) were monitored using field surveys from the summer of 2009 to the autumn of 2011. These comprised summer butterfly counts for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (NW Wales), autumn web surveys for Marsh Fritillary (S Wales), winter egg searches for Brown Hairstreak (SW Wales) and habitat assessments for all species.

Unfortunately we are not able to release any detailed project results until the final report for the WG has been finished. However, we can safely say that the monitoring project has been a success, with 281 farm surveys completed. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary was present on 37 of the 40 farms surveyed in Snowdonia (often in good numbers) and Brown Hairstreak eggs were found on 32 of 40 farms in SW Wales. Unfortunately we only found Marsh Fritillary

webs on 17 out of 110 farms surveyed (just over 15%) but several of these were new sites and we have gathered useful habitat information. Over the three years we recorded:

- 3377 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries on timed counts
- 1223 Brown Hairstreak eggs (in 411 hours!), and
- 109 Marsh Fritillary webs.



The project also highlighted the extremes of the British climate, from wading through bogs in hot and humid June weather to trying to find Brown Hairstreak eggs on frozen twigs during the last two winters. Many days saw the blackthorn twigs covered in frost until lunchtime, leaving only a few hours of search time before nightfall (see image on front inside cover, page 2).

Another interesting aspect to the project has been the incidental records of other species, which have been found on the surveyed farms, many of which have no public access and so have received little or no survey effort in the past. One of the highlights among these was finding Forester moths at five new sites in Merioneth (see image on front inside cover, page 2).

Editor's Note: Unfortunately George was unable to attend on the day, so Russel Hobson stepped in to give the presentation.

Butterfly 'Sight': Education on butterflies in Europe

A summary of the Members' Day presentation by Kathy Seddon

In 1997 a group of European schools, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, formed a collaborative network project. This was funded through the Comenius scheme for three years with a research project for a further three years. Schools from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Catalonia and in Britain: Stella Maris and Our Lady's in Devon.

The partners in the project sought a use for ICT in an environmental activity relevant to all partner schools and decided to investigate climate change, using butterflies as indicators. Twelve species were monitored, some of which could be seen throughout the project area: *Gonepteryx rhamni* (Brimstone), *Anthocharis cardamines* (Orange Tip), *Aglais urticae* (Small Tortoiseshell), *Celastrina argiolus* (Holly Blue), *Pieris brassicae* (Large White), *Lycaena phlaeas* (Small Copper), *Pieris napi* (Green-veined White), *Aglais io* (Peacock), *Callophrys rubi* (Green hairstreak), *Nymphalis antiopa* (Camberwell Beauty), *Vanessa Atalanta* (Red Admiral) and *Cynthia cardui* (Painted lady). These butterflies 'tell a story' as some migrate and their seasonal locations and movement is related to climate, the last few migrating the greatest distances.

A regular monitoring walk was undertaken and pupils not only made careful observation and identification of the butterflies, but also used data logging to record climate details. ICT was used to e-mail results, to present data using a variety of software programmes, to enable pupils to undertake additional research using the internet, and to create a website to share results of the project.

As well as being used in science lessons, the cross-curricular value of the project became clear:

- ICT - using email and presentational programmes;
- Mathematics - data handling, statistical interpretation and presentation;
- Linguistics - Latin for butterfly names and English as a base language);
- Geography - Students learnt about other European countries.

Each year European funding made very valuable meetings possible. The meetings reaffirmed commitment in the virtual community and helped with project development.

The project has been used as a 'template' for other Internet environmental projects and highlighted the importance of collaboration. It won first prize in Europe 1999 and was very well received when presented at the Royal

Society in London at TEC 2000 conference – Teaching Environmental Change.

The follow-up research project explored a number of aspects including how collaboration affects our teaching practices, how virtual collaborative communities work to bring about learning and teacher motivation and collaboration.

So to conclude - what were the benefits and difficulties with such as project?

Benefits:

- Pupil involvement and learning was generally very good;
- Creation of real lasting friendships and a commitment to continue to be linked and learn;
- Interest from scientific community not only in the results, but also in the method of engaging students' interest in this important area;
- Widening of horizons from exposure to different environments and cultures;
- Professional development for partners including research and confidence in use of ICT. At the start we didn't even have e-mail!

Difficulties:

- Much forward planning was needed to synchronise school terms and activities.
- Contrast in latitude chosen meant uneven amounts of data collection - few butterflies in the north;
- Flexibility was essential to allow participation by pupils with a wide age range [10-19];
- Language problems for some younger participants though translations were made;
- Some funding problems for some partners.

Members always welcome to help Branch Committee

The Branch Committee is always on the look-out for members to assist with existing roles and to help us expand in new directions. There are many aspects of the Branch's work to get involved with, or you could put yourself forward to sit on the Branch Committee, which manages the budget for the Branch, makes decisions on site management and decides where the Branch should focus its energies, as well as organising the AGM and Members' Day.

If you would like more information on any aspect of the Branch's work, please contact any of the Committee Members (see page 16).

Moths in the Black Mountains

by Norman Lowe

We all know that some parts of the country are better recorded than others. It's much easier to look for butterflies and moths in and near your own garden than in those parts far from habitation. This results in blank areas on distribution maps that we are always meaning to try and fill. So when Dave Grundy floated the idea of an intensive moth survey high in the Black Mountains, this seemed an ideal way of getting records from this remote area.

When planning a survey, various issues have to be thought through, such as deciding on the sites, getting access permission and also, if necessary, getting the funding. Whilst Dave had agreed to do the work free of charge, it was of course important to contribute towards his travel and subsistence costs - with the help of the Brecknock Wildlife Trust we successfully applied for funding from the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

But what were we looking for? Amongst the micro-moths we were especially keen to look for *Eudonia murana*, a small grey moth that was at one time thought to be widespread, but is now known to have been confused with much commoner relatives. Identification is extremely difficult and consequently, very little is known about its distribution and biology. Of the macro-moths, we hoped to find upland specialists such as Haworth's Minor, Small Autumnal Moth, Grey Mountain Carpet, Scarce Silver Y and that confusing species, the Confused, and in fact we were successful in finding all of these but Haworth's Minor. However, the big hope, and considered something of a long shot, was the possibility of finding the Silurian (see front cover image).

For many years, since its discovery in 1972, the Silurian has been thought to be restricted to a small area of upland near to Abertillery. Single moths have occasionally been found on the edges of the Black Mountains but previous searches for likely breeding sites have been unsuccessful. The moth is thought to fly high in the mountains, well after midnight, so we decided on a sledgehammer approach taking a 4-wheel drive vehicle to a location that seemed promising at the top of the Hatterall Ridge and staying there all night!

At the outset, it had been decided that the Hatterall survey would take place on the night of 4 July. But in mid June a single Silurian was found much further down the mountain, just below the area that had previously identified. Consequently, excitement was running high when Dave and two companions made the long journey to the Hatterall Ridge site. Although the weather was cold, 10 moth traps were set up, four on the Welsh side of Offa's Dyke and

six on the English side. By one in the morning, Dave tells me, the rain was setting in and it seemed that no moths were flying, but shortly afterwards an examination of one of the Welsh traps revealed a single Silurian, and five minutes later a second flew in. The other traps were then visited and a further three Silurians were discovered in one trap on the Herefordshire side of the border. Still more were found at intervals and by 3.40am, when the last one was found, a total of 11 Silurian moths had been recorded, all males.

Now that the species has been found in numbers on the Hatterall Ridge, the next aim is to look for the larvae and obtain a better understanding of its biology and habitat requirements. So we are planning a search for the larvae in spring next year and any help would be welcomed.

Editor's Note: To get involved in this exciting project please contact Norman Lowe (see page 16 for details).

Butterfly name changes

by Richard Fox, Survey Manager, Butterfly Conservation.

We are lucky in the UK to have long-established and stable vernacular names for butterflies. As a result, our day to day interest in butterflies is not complicated by taxonomic rearrangements and changes in scientific nomenclature. Nevertheless, scientific names are important and there has been a recent, comprehensive revision of the taxonomy of European butterflies, carried out by the Butterfly Conservation Europe Taxonomy Group. This has been adopted by Butterfly Conservation.

Only six changes, all at genus level, affect species that breed regularly in the UK. Three species are placed into different genera (Purple Hairstreak becomes *Favonius quercus*, Large Blue *Phengaris arion* and Peacock *Aglais io*), while the other three revert to genera that will be familiar already (Silver-studded Blue moves back to *Plebejus argus*, while Brown Argus and Northern Brown Argus revert to the genus *Aricia*). An appeal has been lodged against the change of genus for Large Blue, but for now the new taxonomy is correct. The listing is available on the Fauna Europaea website www.faunaeur.org

In addition, although it does not yet form part of the new butterfly taxonomy listed on Fauna Europaea, all Irish butterflies formerly considered to be Réal's Wood White *Leptidea reali* have now been ascribed to a newly described species, the Cryptic Wood White *Leptidea juvernica*. Thus only Wood White and Cryptic Wood White now occur in the UK and Republic of Ireland (and elsewhere across Europe), with Réal's Wood White seemingly confined to southern Europe.

Migratory Marvels

by Andrea Rowe

It always amazes me that whilst we humans have to board boats, planes, trains or drive cars to migrate anywhere, the marvellous and apparently delicate insect species around us have the ability to migrate amazing distances.

This is exactly what happened during late September and into the start of October. While us humans basked in some late and very welcome sunshine and warmth (with temperatures as high as 29 degrees in southern Britain!) moths, butterflies and dragonflies hitched rides on the southerly airstreams. The moth immigration has been described as the best for more than five years. Although southern Britain saw many of these migrants, some ventured our way too!

A single Monarch butterfly was recorded in Dorset but there were numerous sightings of Clouded Yellows and mass Red Admiral migration was witnessed on the Suffolk and Essex coasts. On the dragonfly front, the highlight was another influx of the Vagrant Emperor *Anax ephippiger* (a larger influx was recorded in spring). Individuals were recorded in Cornwall and County Wexford, Ireland. Interestingly, the VC41 Dragonfly Blog notes that the species is now included on the VC41 List with two confirmed records from April and May (near Pencoed and at Cosmeston Lakes).

Large numbers of scarce but regular migrant moth species were recorded throughout the UK, including the Vestal recorded locally by members of the Glamorgan Moth Recording group (<http://gmrq-vc41moths.blogspot.com/>) and Mike Pritchard on his blog (<http://pembrokeshiremoths.posterous.com/>), Delicate, Ni Moth, White-point, Scarce Bordered Straw, Gem, Purple Marbled, Clifden Nonpareil, Death's Head Hawk-moth (including one found by day in Dorset) and Crimson Speckled. Other interesting records were of the stunning Oleander Hawk-moth recorded in Dorset, the first British record of Mediterranean Corn Borer *Sesamia nonagrioides* from St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly, a Slender Burnished Brass *Thysanoplusia orichalcea* recorded in Cornwall, and the Dark Mottled Willow *Spodoptera ciliium* trapped at a few places including Cornwall and in Taunton, Somerset.

To find out more about migration, the species mentioned or to see images, have a look at the blogs mentioned and for up-to-date migrant news visit <http://atropos.info>.

Skippers and Clearwings – an Update

A summary of the Members' Day presentation
by Russel Hobson, Head of Conservation, BC Wales

Grizzled Skipper

This is a butterfly we are very concerned about in Wales. Its strongholds are the post-industrial sites in North East Wales and along the coast of South Wales, but there are signs of a reduction in its range and abundance.

Butterfly Conservation is compiling a Species Dossier to identify its conservation needs on a site-by-site basis. For this we will visit known or recent sites, carry out timed counts and assess condition of the site. If you would like to help please contact Russel Hobson at the Wales Office rhobson.bcw@btconnect.com or 'phone 01792 642972.

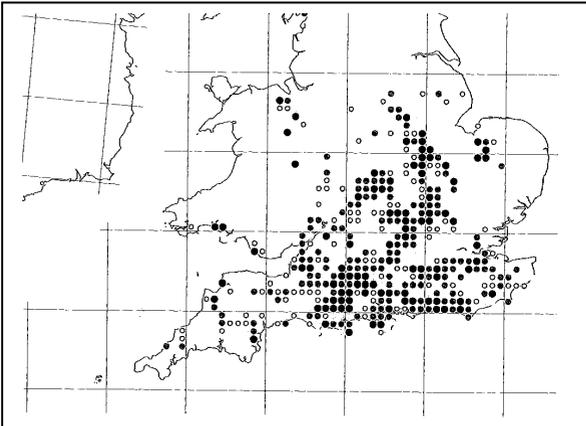


Figure 1: Distribution of Grizzled Skipper (up to 2010)

Welsh Clearwing

The discovery of the Welsh Clearwing in Radnorshire in 2009 now makes this officially a South Wales Branch species. The main populations are in Mid Wales centred on the Elan Valley and Radnorshire Wildlife Trust's reserve at Gilfach; Southern Snowdonia; Cannock Chase and a recent sighting in Sherwood Forest. There are also records from Scotland. The Welsh Clearwing generally likes big, old birch trees growing in relatively open situations (see picture on next page, page 25).

The moth is relatively easy to find at any time of the year by looking for its distinctive exit holes, looking for exuvia (the remains of the pupal case) in the hole or on ground near the hole, or using pheromones to attract the males during the flight period.

Much of the work to date has been led by Pete and Ginny Clarke (County Moth Recorders, Radnorshire). In the Elan Valley, Sorcha Lewis (from Welsh Water) has probably been the most successful person at finding exuvia, with over 30 in just one year. She is lucky to have the moth in suitable trees on her own farm so can keep a close eye out for when they emerge.

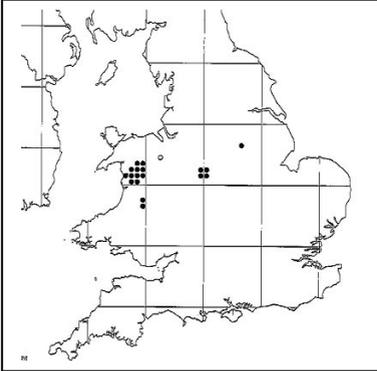


Figure 2: Distribution of Welsh Clearwing

There is still much work to be done discovering new sites for the moth. We also need to know more about the state of occupied trees, to know if any conservation action is required. A student project has been advertised to compare trees in the Elan Valley with those elsewhere in Wales and further afield.

If you would like to help with searches for Welsh Clearwing please contact Pete and Ginny peteandginnyc@tiscali.co.uk or 'phone 01497 847877.

(Many thanks to photographers: Alan Barnes, Sorcha Lewis, Pete and Ginny Clark, Norman Lowe and Andrew Graham).



Images: Above Left - a typical Welsh Clearwing birch; Above Right - Welsh Clearwing exit hole.

River Taff Hairstreaks

by George Tordoff: Monitoring Ecologist, Butterfly Conservation.

There aren't many butterflies that lend themselves to investigation after a day in the office, but the Purple Hairstreak is an exception. This species seems to be most active in the early evening, especially in warm weather, and with the aid of a pair of binoculars it can be observed making rapid flights around the canopy of oak trees during the July-August flight season.

Due to its arboreal habits, the Purple Hairstreak is inevitably under-recorded. In reality it is probably quite common wherever there are mature or semi-mature oaks growing in sheltered situations. The River Taff corridor in Cardiff is one such example of suitable habitat, with a scattering of mature oaks becoming more frequent as one travels up river from Bute Park to Tongwynlais. The Taff Trail makes this area easy to cover by bicycle – and so in late July, with settled weather and a good long-term forecast, I set myself a small evening butterfly project – to search for Purple Hairstreak in every kilometre square along the river between Bute Park and Tongwynlais. This area covers 12 different 1km squares that border the river. The species has been previously recorded in a few scattered places in Cardiff, but many of these records are historical.

I started on 27th July in my local patch at Hailey Park, and it wasn't long before two hairstreaks were seen dashing around the canopy of a large oak near the wildflower meadow, at 6:30pm. Encouraged by this early success, I tried a group of large oaks on the riverbank opposite the busy playing fields, attracting a few curious glances but without anyone being inquisitive enough to ask what I was looking for. Here the hairstreaks were more numerous – at least 12 were seen, including tussles involving 4 or 5 individuals, presumably males. This provided an impressive, albeit distant, spectacle. Jeremy Thomas in *The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland* (2010) sums it up nicely: 'from the ground they look like a handful of silver coins that has been tossed into the sunlight'.

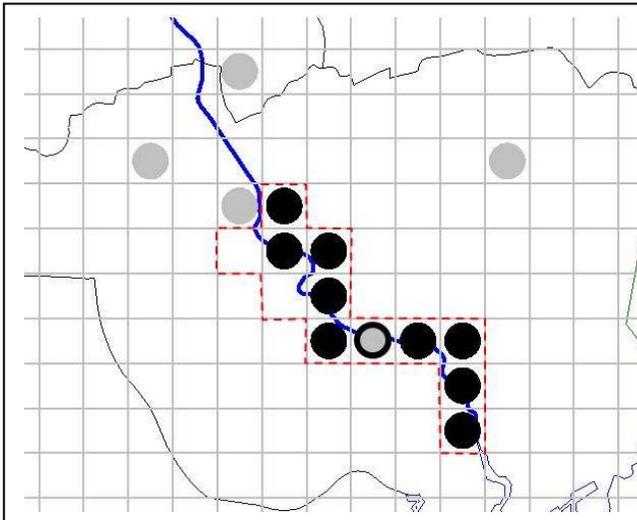
The following evening, as I cycled home through Bute Park, I stopped to check the large oak at the corner of the playing fields, on the opposite side from the ambulance station. Within a minute there were two hairstreaks flitting around the canopy. I have cycled under this tree many times without being aware of them – which just shows that to spot hairstreaks you really do have to crane your neck.

Over the next few days, I saw Purple Hairstreaks in all the remaining 1km squares in the area that had mature oak trees near the river. In fact, almost any large oak that was watched for a few minutes produced sightings of one

or two hairstreaks high in the canopy. These didn't need to be native oaks (Pedunculate or Sessile); a few hairstreaks were seen around Turkey oaks too. During this period the evenings were warm and humid but predominantly cloudy, proving that Purple Hairstreaks aren't only active in sunshine.

All in all, the butterfly was recorded in ten 1km squares between 27th July and 2nd August (see map below). The only squares where I couldn't locate any hairstreaks were those with only short sections of riverbank and which lacked any large oaks. Perhaps this has been a particularly good year for the species, as Thomas (2010) says that numbers fluctuate enormously from year to year and tend to be highest after warm springs and summers. We certainly had a warm spring in 2011, even if the summer was on the cool side.

Map: Purple Hairstreak records in Cardiff shown on a 1km grid



Key: Grey dots show pre-existing 1km square records (according to the Glamorgan database held by SEWBRc); black dots show squares recorded in the current survey. The thick blue line shows the course of the River Taff and the red dotted line the squares that were surveyed.

New County Recorder for Pembrokeshire

For those of you who record in Pembrokeshire, please note that there is a new County Recorder - Paul Warren (see page 16 for contact details). Don't forget to send your records to him.



Welsh Clearwing
Exuvia in hole (above) and adult (right)



The Silver-studded Blue and the Restoration of Prees Heath Common
A mass of blues at Prees Heath (above), and adult with Black Ants (right).