



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Butterfly & Moth lâr Fach yr Haf & Gwyfyn

*The Newsletter of the South Wales Branch
of Butterfly Conservation*

*Cylchlythyr Cangen De Cymru
o Gadwraeth lâr Fach yr Haf*



Summer Haf 2017

Front Cover; High Brown fritillary (Ben Williams), Large Skipper (B. Jackson)

Toadflax Brocade – Page 4.

Photos; moth (Mel Oxford), larva and site (G. Tordoff)



What your branch has been up to – Page 6

Photos; Himalayan Balsam clearing at Cwmduehen (Facebook forum). Brush cutting in the Alun Valley



Welcome to all members of the Butterfly Conservation South Wales Branch, to a new format for the branch newsletter and a new editor. In an effort to bring members as much additional information on branch activities and news, as well as keeping within budget, we have changed to a colour jacket and black & white interior. To take full advantage of the colour pages, this means that contact details for branch committee members and county butterfly & moth recorders are towards the centre of the booklet either side of Principle Diary events. This will enable you to pull out this section for your home noticeboard or diary.

As an introduction to your new editor, this is only my third year as a member of Butterfly Conservation. I've been recording butterflies and helping out when I can with work parties for 2 ½ years as well as sending in moth sightings for 18 months, so I'm a beginner. But, it just goes to show you don't need to be an expert to help out your local branch, so please contact anyone on the committee if you think you can fill any of the vacancies. We meet about 3 times a year.

Belinda Jackson
Editor

This newsletter is published by the
South Wales Branch of Butterfly conservation.
Copyright © 2017. All rights reserved. All photographic
images and text remain the copyright of the original
creators. Views expressed by contributors are necessarily
those of the Editor or of Butterfly Conservation either
locally or nationally. Butterfly Conservation is a non-profit
making company limited by guarantee, Registered in
England 2206468
Registered Charity No. 254937.

Toadflax Brocade *Calophasia lunula* arrives in Wales

On 26 May 2015 Mel Oxford caught a Toadflax Brocade moth in his garden light trap at Lighthouse Park, near St Brides Wentlooge on the Gwent Levels (Monmouthshire). This was the first Welsh record of a species which has been expanding its range in southern England. Mel's garden is coastal and at the time it seemed plausible that the moth was a wanderer



from England or further afield, rather than a locally bred individual. However, further individuals soon followed. Roger James trapped one in his Newport garden, around 6km north of Mel's garden, on 3 July 2015. On the following night one came to Stephen Hippisley's garden moth trap in Llandaff, Cardiff – the first record for Glamorgan – followed by one at light in Roath, Cardiff, on 17 July 2015 (David Gilmore). Mel Oxford caught another, presumably second generation, individual at Lighthouse Park on 21 August 2015.

The capture of five adults in a fairly small area, including first and second generation individuals, suggested local breeding rather than dispersal from English populations. Searches for the spectacular larvae were made in Cardiff during September 2015, and on 20 September two individuals were found on Purple Toadflax *Linaria purpurea* at Tremorfa Industrial Estate near Cardiff Docks. Both were

feeding openly during the daytime, in rather uninspiring surroundings (see photo!). A third caterpillar was found approximately 700m away, feeding on Common Toadflax *Linaria vulgaris* on a road verge at the entrance to the Port of Cardiff.

The 2015 records were followed by three adults in 2016, all from Cardiff. One was seen flying around Purple Toadflax by day in Canton on 19 July (Elaine Wright) and singletons came to light on 1 August and 13 August in Roath (David Gilmore).

Toadflax Brocade colonised the UK between the 1930s and 1950s, but until recently was restricted to shingle beaches and other coastal habitats in south-east England. Since the beginning of the new millennium, however, the moth has rapidly expanded its range and is now resident across much of south-east England, with records extending as far north as Yorkshire and west to Dorset. It has been known from Wiltshire for several years but has not been recorded in Gloucestershire or Somerset. It therefore seems to have made something of a leap in distribution in colonising South Wales.

It will be interesting to see whether this species spreads more widely across South Wales in the coming years. Only time will tell. If you spot any toadflax plants in your local area this summer it is worth having a look for the colourful caterpillars – and please let BC Wales know if you find any!

George Tordoff,
Conservation Officer, Butterfly Conservation Wales

What has your local branch been up to recently on the butterfly front?

We continue most of our conservation effort on three main species in South Wales. These dovetail neatly together in the calendar year.

June & July – weekly counts of **High Brown Fritillaries** at their last remaining site in Wales, along 6kms of “Transect route” in the **Alun valley** (western Vale of Glamorgan). This requires a team of a dozen or so volunteers for maximum availability. We’ve been doing this every year since 1995 and the overall trend shows an increase of >1000% since the all time low of just 7 observations in 1999, since when habitat management has taken place at increasing rates.

August & September – our attention focuses on counting larval webs of **Marsh Fritillaries** at a regular selection of Welsh sites. Each year, we also try to add new study areas to increase our width of coverage across the main South Wales counties of Carmarthenshire, Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire. In 2016, we added to a funded survey in mid & north Carmarthenshire, by putting in many extra days to expand coverage. We also do a count every year of larval webs on our reserve in Cross Hands, known as “Caeau Ffos Fach” (with “Median Farm” adjoining it).

In August 2016, we also needed to clear balsam which had started to smother the blackthorn regrowth from last winter’s coppicing at a regular Brown Hairstreak site, Cwmduhén, near Carmarthen, before egg-laying got going.

November as usual saw the start of our **Brown Hairstreak** egg counting, with group activities mainly weekdays during each week **through to late March**. We cover nearly 20

regular sites each year and also try to explore new areas where opportunities arise. We've just sent off to analysts in the Dorset head office, count data for fixed routes for the last 15 years and await with interest the graphs and charts which we expect to receive soon and which will be subject of a future article.

As well as BH surveys during autumn & winter, we carry out **habitat management, for HBF & MF**. This last autumn/winter, we've achieved probably the widest and largest amount of HBF habitat management with no less than 13 sub-sites worked on in the Alun valley across both private and public access areas, using volunteers, our project partners Glamorgan Heritage Coast and contractors, mostly by hazel coppicing and associated brush-cutting of bramble and denser scrub. Additionally Natural Resources Wales commissioned a little ash sapling clearance for botanical reasons, but which will also help our cause. It is unbelievable just how much brash and other cut material accumulates, so we've made a special effort this year to burn the majority. We had 15 bonfire days and still managed to leave some smaller brash piles for fungi and other invertebrates.

On the MF front, we've worked on three of the Cross Hands reserve fields, our MF grazing project in Seven Sisters and also private sites in Brynamman and Harford, where owners are committed to the local MF cause but lack necessary resources.

Richard Smith Projects / Events Co-ordinator

You can help out for a couple of hours, a morning or a whole day by contacting Richard (details page 10)

Ways to keep up to date

New Wales Office address

Butterfly Conservation Wales, Unit 4D, Cwm Road, Hafod,
Swansea SA1 2AY

Telephone No. 01792 642 972

e-mail wales@butterfly-conservation.org

Follow the links on Butterfly Conservation's main website

www.butterfly-conservation.org to the branch page or type
<http://butterfly-conservation.org/303/south-wales-branch.html>

The branch also operates via Facebook.

The main 'open to all' page is

www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservationSouthWalesBranch

Members only Facebook group

www.facebook.com/groups/ButterflyConservationSouthWalesBranch

If you already have a Facebook account you can ask to join
the BC South Wales Forum by searching under that heading.

The forum is designed primarily to help with identification
and to share sightings or information. Once you are a
member you can upload your photos and get advice from
the experts. It's a great way to find out what the rest of us
have visiting our gardens or what's been seen out and about
around South Wales.

Twitter @BCSouthWales



Annual Countrywide and Branch Events

A reminder that the **Big Butterfly Count** is from 14th July to 6 August so go to www.bigbutterflycount.org/about or check with your county recorder to find out more.

Moth night 2017 will be held between 12 - 14 October 2017 with the main theme of Ivy. Check with your county recorder for events in your area.

Members' Day on Saturday 21st October 2017. This will once again be held at Kenfig National Nature Reserve (see page 13 for more details)

Funding News

The South Wales Branch has successfully applied to the Pen Y Cymoedd Wind Farm Community Fund (Micro Fund) for the sum of £2000. The money is needed to pay for the impending replacement of our ageing mechanical tools. We currently have two large brushcutters and one small one along with two chainsaws. So far all of these machines have given us the ability to carry out a great deal of habitat management throughout South Wales area and, in particular, the Hirwaun and Heads of the Valley area. The grant will enable us to purchase two more chainsaws and two more large brushcutters and the necessary personal protective equipment. These will be added to our arsenal and the present ones can then be nurtured along for a few more years.

If anyone can identify similar schemes to replace the ageing machine users we would like to hear from you. Our current crop of machine users are in a similar state of repair as the old equipment, in as much that they too require more frequent servicing and prone to breaking down. We could do with some younger new models to carry on the work.

Ben Williams (Treasurer)

Committee Members and County Butterfly & Moth Recorders

<p>Chairman Vacant</p> <p>Membership Secretary Vacant</p> <p>Treasurer Ben Williams 7 Heol y Fedwen, Tonteg, Pontypridd, CF38 1TB ben@southwales- butterflies.org.uk</p> <p>Newsletter Editor Belinda Jackson Godrecynnen Barn Trausmawr, Carmarthen SA33 6NF news@southwales- butterflies.org.uk</p>	<p>Moth Officer Martin Anthoney 23 Malvern close, Risca, Gwent NP11 6QY chemlep@btinternet.com</p> <p>Web Editor David Slade c/o SEWBReC 13 St Andrews Crescent Cardiff CF10 3DB dave@southwales- butterflies.org.uk</p> <p>Social Media Mike Bright twitter@southwales- butterflies.org.uk</p>	<p>Projects/Events Co-ordinator Richard Smith 28 Llanmaes Road Llantwit Major, CF61 2XF projects@southwales- butterflies.org.uk</p> <p>Committee Member Martin White 21 Highmoor Swansea SA1 1YE martin@southwales- butterflies.org.uk</p> <p>Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey Officer Vacant</p>
---	--	--

Monmouthshire VC35

Butterflies & Macro-moths

Martin Anthony (above)

Micro-moths

Sam Bosanquet
Cnwc-y-llwyn, Brechfa,
Carmarthen SA32 7QR
sambbryo@aol.com

Glamorgan VC41

Moth & Butterflies

David Slade (above)

Breconshire VC42

Moths

Norman Lowe
6 Tai Canol, Llangorse,
Brecon LD3 7UR
Norman@enviro-
consulting.com

Butterflies

Andrew King
Heddfan, Pennorth
Brecon, Powys LD3 7EX
heddfan25@hotmail.com
01874 658351

Radnorshire VC43

Moths

Pete & Ginny Clarke
9 Dany-bryn,
Glasbury on Wye
Hereford HR3 5NH
peteandginny@tiscali.co.uk
01497 847877

Butterflies

Chris Ledbury
The Ffawydd, Llanstephan
Brecon, LD3 OYR
theffawydd@btinternet.com
01982 560469

Carmarthenshire VC44

Moths

Sam Bosanquet
(See Monmouthshire)

Butterflies

Dave Bannister
Glanrhyrd, Llanllawddog Rd,
Brechfa,
Carmarthenshire SA32 7QP
davebbannisterd@gmail.com
01267 202210

Pembrokeshire VC45

Moths

Robin Taylor
Maesteg, Haycastle,
Haverfordwest SA62 5NY
robintaylor@f2s.com

Butterflies

David Redhead
Badgers Lodge, Jefferson,
Kilgetty, Pembrokeshire
SA68 0RF
thecla.betulae@btinternet.
com 01646 650155

Cardiganshire VC46

Macro-moths

Tony Allenby
15 Dol Pistyll, Talybont
Ceredigion SY24 5DL
tony.allenby@gmail.com
01970 832841

Micro-moths

Ina Smith
15 Dol Pistyll (as above)
inasmith64@gmail.com

Butterflies

Lin Gander
Penwalk, Llechryd, Cardigan,
Ceredigion, SA43 2PS
lingander@strandings.demon.
co.uk 01239 682405

***'The Nature of our Village'* project in Ceredigion**
How are our Butterflies and Moths doing?

We didn't know. So, local Ecologist, Chloe Griffiths, set up a project called "The Nature of our Village" to find out. We planned to massively increase how much we know about how all wildlife is doing in Penparcau, West Wales.

We are now aiming to show how wildlife is faring in our village, compared where possible to how it is doing nationally. During 2016 we carried out 68 surveys, 369 people took part, and made 648 wildlife records!

We recorded butterflies in the village on 27 occasions throughout 2016, finding 17 species, the Speckled Wood holding steady as our most commonly observed butterfly, with a maximum of 15 seen on one survey. This butterfly is most tolerant of shade, so this is a likely explanation of its abundance on our two key partly wooded sites.

We have had live moth light trapping sessions, looked for Day Flying Moths with pheromone lures, sought out leaf mines and kept an eye out for caterpillars. One particularly valuable record was the re-finding of the Feathered Gothic moth, last recorded in Penparcau in 1937! It is fantastic to know that it is still hanging on. It was also good to see the Flame Shoulder moth, not recorded in the village since 1958.

We are creating a new generation of people with the skills to recognise and record the wildlife on their doorstep. Increased public understanding about wildlife and the threats it faces is often the first step to taking action to protect what we have.

We will continue our work in 2017, aiming to fill as many of the gaps as possible in the picture of how our wildlife is doing. There is a massive amount of work to do, and as the threats to nature continue to pile up, it is more and more vital to learn about and protect what we have.



"Meet the Moths" event we ran with the County Macro and Micro Moth Recorders

Thanks to our funders, The Nineveh Charitable Trust.
For more info, or for a copy of the full report, please contact:

Chloe Griffiths, The Nature of our Village project,
Penparcau Community Forum, 3 Glandinas, Penparcau,
Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 1RR. Tel: 01970 611099

Members' Day

Saturday

21st October



Butterfly
Conservation

Provisional programme

10.30 Tea/Coffee

11.00 onwards Speakers

Jim Asher (BC's national chairman)

Martin Davies (who will be talking us through some examples of saving endangered European butterflies)

Russel Hobson (Head of Conservation for BC in Wales)

1.00 p.m. Lunch Please bring sandwiches.

2.00 p.m. AGM

Finish at approx. 4.00 p.m.

Check out our branch website nearer the time for fuller details.

<http://butterfly-conservation.org/303/south-wales-branch.html>

Location

**Kenfig National
Nature Reserve
Centre**



Photography as a Moth Identification Tool

These days almost everyone has access to a camera of some sort, and almost everyone also needs identifications confirmed for some species. A photograph can very often lead to a species ID but not always. Some families are too similar and variable to confirm without dissection, such as the Ear moths or the *Epirrita* group, and sometimes a photo can only narrow the possibilities. Other factors such as habitat, flight period, distribution and previous records may also help.

These two moths 'in cop' are either *Incurvaria pectinea* or *masculella* but it is not possible to be sure from the photograph. They could almost be one of each species, which would raise some interesting questions!



On the whole, though, photographs are a wonderful tool! They provide a permanent record of what you've seen and proof of what you have recorded. It certainly adds to the excitement, particularly with some of our smallest moths. With a photograph much more detail is visible than with the naked eye, and, of course, the image doesn't move once you have it. If you have taken photos in the field or outside whilst going through your moth trap you can spend time later with reference books checking what you have.

Unfortunately, it does sometimes happen that what you have a beautiful picture of a moth that turns out to be controversial in some way. I often just take the picture

without keeping the moth, only to find that it is a rarity or one of several similar moths that should be checked by your county recorder for the record to be accepted.



This moth is either *Gynnidomorpha minimana* or *alimana*. The habitat at Crymlyn Bog, Swansea, is perfect for either but they are very similar. One would be the second county record or the other would be a first, but as I

didn't keep the moth we can't be sure which. I shall have to see if I can get a voucher specimen this year to be certain.



On the other hand many images are indisputable.

This *Pachyrhabda steropodes* seen in Aberglasney Gardens has only otherwise been recorded in Abbotsbury Gardens, Dorset, so extremely rare but no specimen is

needed. Also noted by Vaughn Matthews in Dinefwr Castle woods, near Aberglasney, this spring with a fine clear photo. In April this year I had 16 of these tiny *Dyseriocrania subpurpurella* in my trap under some big oaks, which are the foodplant, and took some photos. They don't show up well in amongst the egg boxes but look magnificent in a photo. Next day I had a few more and couldn't resist more pictures and then realised that one was *Micropterix tunbergella*, which I have not seen before. Without the

photo I wouldn't have noticed as they are only 5mm long!
Last summer Barry Stewart kindly invited me to look



through his traps on Gower one August morning when we spotted this Satyr Pug which looked just like the illustration in British Moths, with distinctive chequered veins. There

were two problems, though. Firstly, it usually flies much earlier in the year and secondly there is only one other record for VC41 and that was in 1857! Realising the potential importance of the record we actually retained the moth, in spite of the apparent clear identification. Fortunately, dissection did later confirm the ID.



On the other hand, not all rarities are debatable. This Royal Mantle was the first in the county since 1893. There is absolutely no doubt of its identity so a photograph is plenty of proof of the record,

which would not be accepted otherwise.

I just keep taking the photos; shoot first and ask questions afterwards is my principle!

Chris Manley