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## "FRITS ABOUT, 2016 - No.2"

**(35 new report items in this edition - received since 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016)**

Dear all,

Anticipation is still the theme at present. After one of the wettest ever winters (or was it six months of soggy autumn?) to end of February, we've had cold but often dry weather through most of March and April. Then, the first week of May gradually turns into a mini heatwave, only to cool right down again. Pearl-bordered Fritillaries have appeared in Ceredigion and Monts .....and at a site just 1.5kms into Herefordshire, have shown good numbers and positive response to some more recent management. Small Pearl-bordered Frits have started up on dog violet/dry grassland/bracken sites across South Wales....including first records for 15 years at a managed site in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

Meanwhile, there has finally been a smattering of Marsh Frit adult sightings starting with one/two on weekend of 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> May at Castlemartin, but then a gap until w/c 23<sup>rd</sup> May, when several sites revealed fresh males. So flight period seems to be later than normal and you might expect peak counts well into first half of June or later, depending on weather.

Don't forget that you should also have received with your previous e-newsletter a short article by Clare & George on how Marsh Frits seem to be doing in Wales, based on surveillance (regularly repeating identical standard methodology) of 21 sites and presence/absence visits to other known sites. If you think you can help with any of these activities, please get in touch with Clare or George or myself.

*As always, contributions to Frits About are very welcome - but **don't forget to send in your records to county recorders as well.** There is now also a Facebook discussion group <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ButterflyConservationSouthWalesBranch/>> set up & run by Mike Bright of BC's South Wales branch, in addition to North Wales branch's Facebook page and BC Wales facebook page. Judy in the Wales office will be pleased to receive feedback on the E-news generally, but please keep Frits About contributions coming to me but at my new e-mail address of [rgsoverton@gmail.com](mailto:rgsoverton@gmail.com).*

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## 1. Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF) - 12 new reports

### Ceredigion

See under SPBF below.

### Monts

Clare Williams reports: Went to Middletown and Y Golfa yesterday (12<sup>th</sup>) to get another count in. **Middletown Hill** - 10:35 - 11:20 = **15 PBF** in 45 min (20/hr). **Y Golfa** - 12:14 - 13:41 = **22 PBF** in 87 min (15/hr). Both counts done in good weather - very warm at Y Golfa - expected to see more as the count at Middletown was double the previous count but sadly not the case. Did the same route at Y Golfa in more-or-less the same amount of time. Looks like they may have peaked and numbers are low again this year.

Mike Green reports on 12<sup>th</sup> **May: 8 PBF at Y Figyn E** today, giving average of 15 ph, exactly the threshold for the site and a vast improvement on last year. Unfortunately, none at all at **Y Figyn W**, so we have to hope they are just late there and will be seen next week.

Tammy Stretton reports: "Managed surveys at **Fron Hydan** and **Y Frochas** in near perfect conditions this afternoon. **AMAZING** news from **Fron Hydan** - **6 PBF** in 30 minutes!! **12 PBF/hr** is the highest ever count for this site and is probably the peak count. **Y Frochas** looks like it is just starting - **6 fresh PBFs** in 48 minutes.

Issy Griffiths reports (24<sup>th</sup>): "**Frochas - North of the road**, 26mins (13.36-14.17) = **4 PBF**. Interestingly I found them below the wet patch below the ridge. **Frochas - South of the road**, 13mins (13.13-13.30) = **3 PBF**. **Figyn West**, 20 mins (15.19- 15.54) = **2 PBF**. **Figyn East**, 17mins (14.38-15.09) = **3 PBF** (& 4SPBF?). I hadn't taken my net and didn't manage to get close enough to them (*to confirm SPBF*).

### Nearly Wales

**Ewyas Harold Common** (just 1.5kms into Herefordshire). Bill Jones posted on UK Butterflies blog: "I spent over 5 hours last Saturday (14<sup>th</sup>) doing a thorough count of Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Ewyas Harold Common, Herefordshire I'm delighted to report that the work done on the bracken to create tractor wide 'corridors' along the common's 'plateau' has paid dividends, at least **90 to 100 individuals** were counted during a disciplined transect type 'survey', if this kind of habitat management is continued, this seriously threatened butterfly could hopefully have a much more secure future. These are the best numbers I've seen at Ewyas Harold, it's most encouraging. If I'm not mistaken the West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation deserve acknowledgement for this habitat management."

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Ian Hart reports on **12<sup>th</sup> May**: "**70 (Seventy)** butterflies (**PBFs**) were recorded. Interestingly, 32 of these were recorded on the plateau area (Area 13 in the Habitat Assessment report by S. Clarke and David Green, 2015) where tramlines were cut in the bracken by machine last Autumn. A further 12 were recorded to the south-east of this area where tramlines were likewise cut. All the Fritillaries were fresh, and one pair was found copulating"

## 2. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF) - 8 new reports

### Ceredigion

Russel Hobson: "Ran a training day at **Cwm Soden** yesterday (**26<sup>th</sup>**). **Lots of freshly emerged Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and using much more of the site - from the coast path to the meadows - than Pearl-bordered Frits."

David Woolley at **LLawr Cwrt** on **29<sup>th</sup> May**: "Frits about but only two. This afternoon (Sunday), brought out the first Marsh Frit and a **Small Pearl Bordered Frit**."

### Pembrokeshire

David Redhead: "John Steer told me this evening that yesterday (**23<sup>rd</sup>**) he and Robin Taylor saw a couple of **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** - **one each side of Solva on the coast path**."

### Rhondda Cynon Taff

Ben Williams and RGS went to known sites at **Clydach Vale** and **Tonyrefail** on **26<sup>th</sup>**, where we didn't find any SPBFs.

George Tordoff was at **Y Graig** (Llantrisant) on **26<sup>th</sup>** and encountered **13 SPBFs**. This is another boost to this site, where SPBF was lost in early 2000s, but as a result of a long term partnership with commoners habitat has been restored for violet-feeding frits. The return of SPBF is a real bonus, to add to the egg-laying female DGF recorded last year by Richard Wistow.

### Vale of Glamorgan

On **24<sup>th</sup> May**, RGS walked all 6kms of HBF transect routes in **Alun Valley/Old Castle Down** and counted **23 SPBFs**. All were on the south and west-facing slopes of the private side of the site. Expect SPBFs to appear on Old Castle Down soon and to peak in a week or so.

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### 3. Marsh Fritillary (MF)- 15 new reports

#### Anglesey

No reports of adults yet.

#### Ceredigion

David Woolley at **LLawr Cwrt** on **29<sup>th</sup> May** reported "Frits about but only two. This afternoon (Sunday), brought out the first **Marsh Frit** and a Small Pearl Bordered Frit. The Marsh Frit was close to the place where I saw the only larval web this year. I don't have high expectations but at least they are still here. .

#### Monmouthshire

**Aberbargoed Grasslands.** Mark Allen: "Saw my 1st Marsh Frit of the year today (**24<sup>th</sup> May**). Saw one definite and one possible on a twenty minute saunter through the bottom quarter of our best field".

#### North-west Wales (Merionethshire)

Clare Williams: "Just had reports of **two Marsh Frit** adults at **Harlech Golf Course** on Tuesday **24<sup>th</sup>** afternoon, from Rhodri Dafydd at NRW. This is always an earlier site but they hadn't been spotted until yesterday".

#### Pembrokeshire

Bob Haycock: "They are on the wing at **Castlemartin**. I was with Graham Clarke (Castlemartin Ranger) briefly on Sunday **22<sup>nd</sup>**. He mentioned seeing **one or two** near the **Wash** area weekend of **14/15<sup>th</sup> May**; this being at the first known breeding location on the Range back in c. 2003 or when-ever it was. Graham and I spent a few minutes looking in each of two areas of **Range West** on **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May**. Between us we probably notched up **50-60+** fairly fresh individuals (some mating pairs) at the **Wash** location and similar numbers at **Linney Head**. No attempts were made to do detailed recording only to note their presence in these places. Numbers of emerged adults will probably be growing this week and possibly a peak could occur over the coming Bank Holiday weekend - maybe a week later? So all is looking quite well so far. *(Ed - I was with Graham on Sat 21<sup>st</sup> on Range East coastpath, but it was cool & cloudy and none were seen there).*

David Redhead: "Mary Chadwick (NRW) has sent me an email today (**24<sup>th</sup>**) saying she saw a **Marsh Fritillary** at **Dyffryn Gwaun SSSI**, a private known MF site in the **Gwaun Valley**.)

Also "On the **last day of April** the Cokers managed to find **two MF larvae** on **Puncheston Common** - this was all they could find in an hour of searching".

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Maggie Sproule (28<sup>th</sup> May) reported "First warm day up in Preselis so checked **Waun Lwyd Common**. No sign of any butterflies including Marsh Frits. **Blaen Cleddau** also report no Marsh Frits

#### **Rhondda Cynon Taff**

Ben Williams on 26<sup>th</sup> May: "went over to **Bypass Fields in Church Village** this morning and saw **11 fresh male MFs** flying around in 1 hour, some in all three fields. After that I went over to **Tonyrefail** where I saw a cuckoo with a sore throat and another Frits Abouter (yourself) and together we didn't find any".

Ben returned on 30<sup>th</sup> May: "I went over to the **Bypass Fields in Church Village** ... and saw **five males and a female** in one field in a 30 minute walk. I went back there today (31<sup>st</sup>) to look at the whole site and in one hour I saw **four males and one female** ( Freshly hatched). The weather was bright but the wind was quite strong and all the ones I saw were sitting low in the vegetation and difficult to spot and reluctant to fly".

Richard Denning on 29<sup>th</sup> May: I had my first **Marsh Fritillary** at **Tonyrefail** this morning, alongside the road in unit 16.

#### **Swansea (Gower)**

RGS on 24<sup>th</sup> May: "Mike Clark, Paul Gadsby & I encountered **7 fresh MF males** in western corner of **Pengwern** and **5** along eastern edge of **Welsh Moor**. So I expect emergence to start at many Welsh sites this week but probably not all, so leaving surveys until next week earliest is probably a good plan to meet peak numbers at many of the early sites".

### **4. Dark Green Fritillary (DGF) - no new reports**

### **5. High Brown Fritillary (HBF) - no new reports**

### **6. Silver-washed Fritillary (SWF) - no reports**

This newsletter was compiled from reports received up to midday on 27<sup>th</sup> May with some later additions by Judy Burroughs up to 31st May. Do keep reports coming in. Many thanks to all contributors and apologies, if I've missed any out!

Richard Smith, 27 May 2016

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