

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

FRITS ABOUT (YOUR FIELDS), 2020 - No.1.1

105 report items in this edition - received up to 10th June 2020



Headlines: FIVE NEW SITES FOR MARSH FRITILLARY and earliest ever large fritillaries (DGF & HBF) in Wales?

FIVE MORE NEW SITES FOR MARSH FRITILLARY ALREADY in 2020

- The photo (left) from Howard Saunders shows a Marsh Frit in Rhondda Fawr
- Another new site was found by Rob Parry in Cwm Pedol, Amman valley
- Another was found by Lizzie Wilberforce in Tairgwaith, Amman valley
- Also Jeff Blencow found a new site near Nebo in Caernarvonshire
- And yet another near Letterston, reported to WTSWW in Pems



LARGE FRITS RECORD EARLIEST DATES?

- Dark Green Frit (far left) at Kenfig on 31st May. *Photo Tom Wright.*
- First definite High Brown Fritillary (left) in Alun valley on 29th May. *Photo Paul Dunn.*

Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. Please therefore submit records to [County Butterfly Recorders](#) as well.

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

Welcome. This is an unusual Frits About, due to current COVID related travel restrictions, as numbers of reports are bound to be limited this spring and BC wishes to align with regulations in Wales and therefore not encourage travel simply to see or record butterflies. Thus most of the reports come from landowners, particularly smallholders in Carmarthenshire, where we have close links with them, observing fritillaries on their own fields, with a limited number also sourced from individuals whilst taking permitted exercise, checking on livestock or contractors carrying out professional duties. Likewise, therefore, to avoid inadvertent encouragement to go beyond COVID related rules, circulation of this "Frits About (Your Fields)" is also restricted.

Exciting times again for Marsh Fritillary in South Wales - 4 new sites already, including Cwm Pedol, Letterston, Rhondda Fawr & Tairgwaith. These add two new one km grid squares to recent MF distribution, continuing the trend of 2018 & 2019 when 38 new one km squares were added, mainly in Carmarthenshire. Given recent exceptional weather, there may of course have been many more that might have been found but for Covid 19 restrictions. However, really pleased to see some long overdue good news from North Wales this year.

Also exciting times for both Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries which were first seen in Alun valley on 27th & 28th May respectively, the latter appearing to be earliest 2020 HBF record in the UK and possibly earliest ever HBF record in Wales (at least in 40 years that RGS has lived in Wales). By 2nd June, Paul Dunn & RGS estimate at least 80 HBF sightings in Alun valley, its one remaining Welsh site. DGFs are now reported from several sites.

A very grateful thanks to those who have contributed items to this edition.

As always, contributions to Frits About are very welcome - but don't forget to send in your records to [County Butterfly Recorders](#) as well. There is now also a [Facebook discussion group](#) set up by Mike Bright of BC's South Wales branch, in addition to [North Wales branch's Facebook page](#) and [BC Wales Facebook page](#). Please keep Frits About contributions coming to me at my e-mail address rgsoverton@gmail.com Contributions to Frits About are the views of the individuals concerned and do not necessarily represent the views of Butterfly Conservation Wales.

Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. Please therefore submit records to [County Butterfly Recorders](#) as well.

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

1. Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF) - 7 reports

Almost Wales

Ian Hart sent me some figures re Ewyas Harold Common & BC reserve - at 208 PBFs counted on the common, it looks like fourth best year in last ten. The site is just 2kms into Herefordshire, near Pontrilas, and border with Monmouthshire. It seems to be the last in that area.

Denbighshire

Al Wilkinson posts (17th May): "From today's bumble around **Eyarth Rocks** - plenty of Pearl Bordered Fritillaries.....😊".

Montgomeryshire

Tammy Stretton sent this summary of Montgomeryshire sites. "To summarise the 2020 flight season here in Mont, we have managed to confirm presence at the following:

- Y Golfa - 4 on 6th May;
- Y Figyn East - 1 on 16th April;
- Y Frochas - 7 on 20th May;
- Fron Hydan - 6 on 20th April;
- Middletown Hill - 13 on 23rd April"

*No reports received from **Cwm Soden** (Ceredigion) and only one from **Eyarth Rocks** where PBF also occurs - hopefully lack of visits rather than lack of butterflies.*

2. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF) - 33 reports

Almost Wales

RGS asked Ian Hart when he sent me some PBF figures re Ewyas Harold Common, whether SPBF had been recorded there, as two South Wales branch volunteers had spotted one in 2019. Ian said "No, but ironically one had turned up in our garden (**4 kms west of the Common**) a week ago (image verified by iRecord/John Tilt). I am unaware of any colony elsewhere so I guess this may have been its origin".

Bridgend

Vaughn Matthews, on 26 May: "By the forestry track in the Garw valley. I assume this (**photo right**) is just a fairly poorly marked SPBF?". David Moore suggested it is likely to be classed as an aberration.

Gill Barter contributed: "brilliant news! After 17 years I have at last seen a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on one of my fields! It was on 1st June.



Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. Please therefore submit records to [County Butterfly Recorders](#) as well.

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

2. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF) cont.

Caernarvonshire

Bruce Hurst posted:" VC49 Snowdonia 01/06/2020. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria selene*) in the garden (*photo right*).

Tony Pope commented on the photo:" The image is almost the same as the female represented in Peter Eeles " Lifecycles of British and Irish Butterflies " with, as Mark said, lighter edges to the wings ..(page 191 if you have it) ...it is also the same as the image of a female in David Newlands " British Butterflies".



Caerphilly

Re **Aberbargoed Grasslands**, John Pilkington posted (24 May): "A bright, warm, although breezy, day. Think I saw several Marsh Fritillaries and similar numbers of Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries" (*confirmed by photos - ed*).

Carmarthenshire

Isabel Macho sent a report from residents in **SN7440**, near **Cilycwm** where three SPBFs were spotted in a garden, next to open hills and moors, on 19th May.
Dave Bannister, near **Brechfa**, had his first ever SPBF in his garden on 21st May.
Debbie Greenish sent a photo of an SPBF in her fields near **Trapp** on 25 May.

Neath Port Talbot

Paul Parsons found 2 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary at **Abercregan** on 14th May.

David Moore posted on 26 May: "Nice surprise last week when I found a Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary at **Crymlyn Burrows**, the first I've ever seen here since I first started coming back in 2013. I was watching several Common Blues and a Brown Argus in the area opposite the Bay Studios building, *pictured right*, when it suddenly appeared. Lots of violets and damp areas on this site, so it would be great if they could colonise long-term".



Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. Please therefore submit records to County Butterfly Recorders as well.

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

2. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF) cont.

North-east Wales

Jan Miller posted (3rd June): "Small Pearl-bordered Frits out in higher numbers, in more sites and earlier than ever before (since 24th May) on **Halkyn Mountain**; 21 counted in 30 mins. Timed Count at **Rhes y Cae** yesterday".

North-west Wales

Robin Sandham posts on 30th May: "13 Small Pearl-bordered Frits at one site above **Tal y Bont, Conwy**, this afternoon. I presume that's quite good numbers".

Eddie Urbanski posts on 30th May: "More butterflies and moths out on the **Llŷn** today, including Marsh Fritillary, **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, Speckled Yellow and Cinnabar".

North Wales (somewhere!)

Catrin Owen on 22nd May: "Saw this on a walk yesterday I've tried to identify it from a book I think it's a fritillary but not sure which type specifically can anyone help." (Identified on Facebook page from photo as SPBF) *No idea where site is - Ed.*

Andrew Graham comments that "Record numbers of SPBF from all over North Wales just recently. Several sites, including both my properties, up to 26th May."

Pembrokeshire

Maggie Sproule reports: "I am lucky enough to live within hiking distance of **Waun Lwyd Common**. I went to check on 24th, 27th and 30th May.

I saw Marsh Frits scattered all over the Common on all three occasions but the area of high numbers is by the stream as always for about 100 yds downstream from the footbridge at SN 156 315.

On the **24th** there were really good numbers of Marsh Frits (at least thirty) and I also spotted **2 Small Pearl Bordered Frits**.

On **27th** there were even more Marsh Frits (over 40) and **at least 12 Small Pearl Bordered Frits**.

On **30th** the number of Marsh Frits seemed to have peaked but there were still plenty about (over 30) and the **Small Pearl Bordered Frits were in still greater numbers....at least 20**.

I have never known such good numbers of either species in that area. Indeed, I have never seen more than one or two Small Pearl Bordered Frits in the area. Exceptional year".

Jane Stone comments (26 May): "I've seen a SPBF on the little bit of common by me for 3 days running, but I still haven't managed to get a picture of it. It could be the same one each day? That's the 3rd year running for **Waun Ffynnon Clyn**."

*Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. **Please therefore submit records to County Butterfly Recorders as well.***

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

2. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF) cont.

Rhondda Cynon Taff

Liam Olds came across an SPBF at **Y Graig**, Llantrisant, on 3rd May.

Lucie Bromfield found just one SPBF on the "Battlefield" in **Tonyrefail** on 20th May. By 24th May, this had increased to 5 sightings. Also 12 at Gelliseren on 25th.

Paul Denning found **5 SPBFs** at site 29 of Rhos Tonyrefail on 7th June.

Howard Saunders recorded 4-6 SPBFs at **Clydach Vale** (known site) on 19th May.

Tate Lloyd photographed SPBF on 24 May, at a site near **Ton Pentre** (Rhondda Fawr).

Emma Williams posted several photos on 30 May: Small Pearl - bordered Fritillary out at **Maerdy Coal Spoil**, Rhondda Fach.

Swansea

David Moore reports (11th May) via UK Butterflies blog a single SPBF on **Fairwood Common** on 9th May and (13th May): "Both Small Pearl Bordered and Marsh Fritillaries now flying on the Gower Commons. With sunny, dry weather forecast, we could see healthy numbers within a few days".

Vale of Glamorgan

Paul Dunn managed to spot a lone SPBF in **Alun valley** on 2nd May and with photo. It turns out to be earliest SPBF record in UK so far in 2020. Often, this particular very warm slope produces record early flights, as it did on 26th April 2011 - earliest known SPBF in 20 years of local recording.

Two regular observers, on exercise walks, on private part of Alun valley, found really good SPBF numbers flying e.g. 93 sightings on 10th May; 82 sightings on 15th May in 119 mins timed count; 104 sightings on 16 May and >60 on 21st May. These are probably our best figures in 20 + years of recording this part of the site.

Tom Wright on 11th May posts; "Saw a few Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries up on **Old Castle Down** this afternoon. I wasn't really expecting to find any due to the strong winds but it was quite a successful walk." He returned following day and saw more.

George Tordoff encountered a SPBF at Lavernock WTSWW reserve on 9th June - a first record for several decades for that location it seems.

*Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. **Please therefore submit records to County Butterfly Recorders as well.***

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

3. Marsh Fritillary (MF) - 43 reports

Caernarvonshire

Eddie Urbanski posts on **30th May**: "More butterflies and moths out on the **Llŷn today**, including **Marsh Fritillary**, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Speckled Yellow and Cinnabar".

Caerphilly

Re **Aberbargoed Grasslands**, John Pilkington posted yesterday (24 May): "A bright, warm, although breezy, day. Think I saw several Marsh Fritillaries and similar numbers of Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries" (*confirmed by photos - ed*). Frank Sengpiel posted (25 May): "Good numbers of Marsh Frits at **Aberbargoed Grasslands**, including two mating pairs".

Carmarthenshire

First news this year came via Rob Parry concerning well developed MF caterpillars at a site near **Llansadwrn** in April. Further enquiries with owners Lou & Adam, revealed not only advanced state but also numerous sightings, suggesting perhaps a good year to come. I shared this news with Carms Meadows Group (CMG) and Sue & Richard had noticed the same in their fields near **Capel Dewi**.

Following news of Marsh Frits flying during the last week of April in Wiltshire, RGS also shared this info with Carms Meadows Group and Gwilym Roberts, at his small-holding in **Cross Hands**, saw his very first on **2nd May** (with video of it hiding in grass), followed by a second one sitting on his polytunnel on 10th May. Since then, several sightings have been reported, mostly from Carms Meadows Group people or local visits for purposes within COVID regs, e.g exercise or animal welfare.

Cross Hands (1 MF on BC reserve on 19th May & 4 on 30th May); **Cross Hands** (reported north of BC reserve); **Gorslas** (c 15 on 21st May); **Harford** (several on 20th May); **Capel Dewi** (flying in most of owner's four suitable fields on 20th May); **Llandeussant** (5 on 10th May, then 13 by 20th, then 23 by 1st June), **Llansadwrn** (10+ on 8th) and **Brechfa** (6 on 20th). Negative reports so far from Alltwallis, Capel Gwynfe and Taliaris, although they had late frost and possible consecutive days of submersion last winter. Stop press: now (6th June) 1 MF reported at Alltwallis, in a different field to usual.

Rob Parry reported 2 MFs at a new site towards the top of **Cwm Pedol** in Amman valley in a small field at 200m, on 15th May. Then a few days later, 2 more slightly higher up the small field. This may well be as high in altitude as they get to in Amman valley, although there are recent records at 230m and 305m in other parts of Carms. This is a new site (but not a new one km square).

Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. Please therefore submit records to County Butterfly Recorders as well.

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

3. Marsh Fritillary (MF) cont.

Heads of Valleys

At a site near **Penywaun (Cynon valley)**, **300 MFs** were counted on 20th May, despite there apparently being only a handful of larval webs found last year. Also, just **north of the A465**, **three sites** were recorded with **60** (on 14th, 45 on 13th), **43 and 14 MFs** flying during May. One of these sites was destined to be lost under a slip road for dual carriageway work, another nearby has been managed for years by volunteer Ben Williams, with help from RCT's Tidy Towns Team and an enthusiastic owner. The third site is in SN9706 which could be another additional one km square occupied of recent times.

Merthyr Tydfil.

Thanks to Elen Hall of SWTRA for not only spotting but informing us of **an MF near Abercanaid**, just north of A470, where previous record seemed to be back in 2001. There is suitable habitat nearby and some parts are within a SINC site.

Neath Port Talbot

Lizzie Wilberforce is able to take exercise locally in Amman and was keeping an eye open for interesting wildlife whilst so doing. There is a good number of footpaths and some common land around Tairgwaith, so ideal in many ways. This approach has turned up a **new MF site in SN7111**, the first record for several years in the Tairgwaith area, where RGS has looked for MF several times w/o success after a 2015 habitat assessment for Carms/NPT in the area. On **27th May**, there were **5MFs** on this site at eastern end of the main field, but by **29th May 2 more** were noted at far western end.

Tracey Woodward reported having seen some MFs in her fields, north of Pontardawe, last week.

North Wales

Andrew Graham reports: "Marsh Fritillary discovered at a **new site in Caernarvonshire** on **9th May**. Jeff Blincow found some fields at Nant Nodfa, nr. **Nebo** (SH483511) with excellent habitat and photographed an adult on that date. Later, on the **22nd May**, he counted a dozen adults. He also found more adults in several other **fields a kilometre or so to the east**. These unsuspected 'new' sites are about three kilometres from the nearest known colonies. Clearly, the area could use a survey. Annie Seddon lives very close to **Cae Pencefn, Dolgellau** and was able to walk past on the **20th May**. She reported **large numbers** of MF. This amazing site is producing a huge surplus each year and we have evidence for dispersal. On the same date, **20th May**, James Taylor photographed an adult **in the middle of Dolgellau** over a kilometre away.

Pembrokeshire

Maggie Sproule reports: "I am lucky enough to live within hiking distance of **Waun Lwyd Common**. I went to check on 24th, 27th and 30th May. I saw Marsh Frits scattered all over the Common on all three occasions but the area of high numbers is by the stream as always for about 100 yrs downstream from the footbridge at SN 156 315.

On the **24th** there were really good numbers of Marsh Frits (**at least thirty**) and I also spotted 2 Small Pearl Bordered Frits.

On **27th** there were even more Marsh Frits (**over 40**) and at least 12 Small Pearl Bordered Frits.

Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. Please therefore submit records to [County Butterfly Recorders](#) as well.

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

3. Marsh Fritillary (MF) cont.

Pembs. cont.

On **30th** the number of Marsh Frits seemed to have peaked but there were still plenty about (**over 30**) and the Small Pearl Bordered Frits were in still greater numbers....at least 20.

I have never known such good numbers of either species in that area. Indeed, I have never seen more than one or two Small Pearl Bordered Frits in the area. Exceptional year".

Just one further report so far of a new (private) site near **Letterston** received via WTSWW facebook page.

RCT (Rhondda valleys).

As reported in Frits About 2019, Phillip Leyshon posted on BC Wales' website of **an MF** in the **Rhondda valley** on **28 May**. RGS had a look around last summer but couldn't find obvious habitat nearby. Then I received this e-mail from Howard Saunders: "Hi Richard, please find attached pictures of a marsh fritillary butterfly which I pictured yesterday afternoon (19/05/2020) at the steep sided slope behind the top lake at **Clydach vale** in the Rhondda valley. It was sharing the same patch of ground as the small pearl bordered fritillaries which were about 4-6 in numbers, The marsh fritillary was solitary, I asked in a local wildlife group for help with getting it recorded and have done that on irecord....." The photos which Howard took are rather good (one is on first page of this newsletter). This Clydach vale site is only 2-3kms from last year's sighting - we just need to find out where they are breeding.

Swansea, including Gower,

David Moore reports (13th May): "Both Small Pearl Bordered and Marsh Fritillaries now flying on the **Gower Commons**. With sunny, dry weather forecast, we could see healthy numbers within a few days". It seems there has been extensive burning on Gower Commons.

Gillian Morgan contacted South Wales branch, excited to have seen an MF flying on 27th May when walking a footpath between Three Crosses and Dunvant. RGS put Gillian in touch with David Moore who lives locally and it turns out they'd crossed paths (socially distancing) on Fairwood Common the day before but now had each other's names and contacts!

Tonyrefail and South RCT

Lucie Bromfield was unable to confirm definite MFs on the Waun this year or indeed at Gelli Seren, but was able to find them **flying on two sites to NE of Tonyrefail** on **26th May**. Altogether Lucie had **9 definite MFs** and up to 20 more that were flying rapidly over very uneven terrain and could have been MF or SPBF. Lucie commented positively that there was not so much burning here this year and also that some males were fighting and flying up to 30ft high before lunging back down towards ground. Lucie & Paul Denning both visited **site 29** (at different times) but recorded **no MFs** but several SPBFs.

Not such good news from **Church village** area, where **no MFs** were recorded on exercise visits to two suitable habitat sites in second half of May. However, Paul Denning has now (7th June) reported seeing just **one MF** there this year "about a week ago".

Ystradgynlais metapopulation (including Ystradgynlais, Crynant & Seven Sisters)

No reports yet.

Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. Please therefore submit records to County Butterfly Recorders as well.

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

4. Dark Green Fritillary (DGF) - 11 reports

Flight period normally early June to mid July.

Bridgend

Tom Wright sent a photo of DGF at Kenfig on 31st May.

Mike Clark reported (6th June) "Huge numbers of Dark Green Frit. on the meadow thistle at Kenfig slacks, the most I have ever seen".

Neil Donaghy spotted **3 DGF** on the wing at Kenfig Pool despite cool and breezy conditions on **7th June**.

Kerie Grant posted a photo of what seems likely to have been a DGF on 9th June, near Coychurch.

Caernarvonshire

Eddie Urbanski posts: "I saw quite a few butterflies and day-flying moths on the **Llyn** yesterday (**29th May**), the highlight being **Dark Green Fritillary**".

Neath Port Talbot

David Moore posts on **31 May** "For the first time ever, I have seen Dark Green Fritillaries in the month of May. There were four of them on the wing this morning at **Crymlyn Burrows**, although only the first one settled to have its image taken."

North Wales

Robin Sandham posts on **1st June**: "A few bits from west shore/marine drive- probably **8 DG Frits** out in the end getting chased by everything and each other and weren't easy to approach".

Ian Gorton posts on **31 May**: "Everything is crazy early this year and a first for me this year and at site close to home a dark green fritillary".

Robin Sandham adds: "2 on west shore, **Great Orme** now too".

Paul Board posted on 7th June: "My first frit of 2020, on a local coastal walk this afternoon, a few hundred yards east of The Beachcomber at **Llandulas**. A solitary Dark Green Fritillary".

Vale of Glamorgan.

Paul Dunn saw his first definite DGF on Old Castle Down on **27th May**, "but sadly no photo". However, photo obtained of one on **28th**. DGFs were then noted by several observers since.

*Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. **Please therefore submit records to County Butterfly Recorders as well.***

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

5. High Brown Fritillary (HBF) - 10 reports

Flight period normally early June to early August. Only one current site in Wales in **Vale of Glamorgan**.

Over the winter, Andrea Rowe has come across more old photos of St Brides Major and surrounding area, which all help to show how the common in particular has changed from essentially open grassland habitat three or four decades ago to one now significantly wooded in several places. We are working with NRW and commoners to try to ensure that suitable management for High Brown Fritillary can be continued, slowing or reversing the scrub invasion by cutting and grazing. Every four years, we sample habitat during April/May across whole site for its suitability for High Brown Fritillary, but this exercise has had to be postponed this year.

Late afternoon of **28th May**, RGS got a fantastic view of the underside of a pristine male HBF which landed right in front of him to nectar on low bramble (Marsh Thistles not yet out). No photo, as disturbed by an inquisitive SPBF just as focused in viewfinder. This turns out to be earliest UK record in 2020 (although they appeared at a Devon site on 29th). It is, as far as RGS knows, earliest sighting in Wales in 40 years and only one in May until this year.

Paul Dunn posted on 31 May: "It's always a worrying time waiting for the first view of a High Brown Fritillary in the new season. Luckily, they have appeared early this year so it's just a question of what the numbers will be like. Initial signs are good, so the winter management by all has been beneficial in securing this magnificent butterfly for another year. Dark Greens are flying as well".

From visits to private part of the Alun valley site between 28th May and 2nd June, Paul Dunn and RGS recorded between them almost 80 HBFs, with HBF: DGFs identified to species being roughly a ratio of 8:1. There seems to be a trend over recent years, with some exceptions, for more HBFs than DGFs across the whole site, including common land and private. So saying, when highly active in high temperatures, they can still be a challenge in flight, so there will still be many "unid" recorded.

Andrea Rowe recorded was there on afternoon of **2nd June**, finding 20 large (15 HBF, 1 definite DGF and rest not definite ID out of corner of eye zooming past on Rhiw Forgan). Overall, saw lots of frits, including around 15 SBPF. Someone else, who also knew the site, had visited that morning, commenting "This summer could be an amazingly early Fritillary fest. I checked out Alun Valley from 8.45 this morning. Spent 3 hours there and I reckon I counted around 3 dozen Frits. 4 were SPBFs, 7 were positively ID'd as DGF and 6 as High Brown....the rest will remain UFOs. Seemed strange to see these beauties with the bracken only waist height rather than round your neck".

*Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. **Please therefore submit records to County Butterfly Recorders as well.***

To retain and respect confidentiality of precise sites and often extremely sensitive goodwill towards conservation efforts, some site descriptions are such as only to be recognisable to those already aware of each site's location. Sites only have public access to extent shown on OS maps.

6. Silver-washed Fritillary (SWF) - one probable/possible report

Flight period normally, late June to early September.

Carmarthenshire.

Dave Bannister e-mailed me on 4th June to say: "Saw a **SWF in the garden (nr Brechfa Forest) on 1/6** but then thought "that's a bit early" so most probably a DGF - couldn't get close enough for proper id. Have you any recs for SWF this early?".

No other definite reports yet in Wales but a male SWF was photographed in Devon on 30 May, so could have been and keep a look out for them soon!

This newsletter was compiled from reports received or available up to midday on 10th June 2020.

Richard Smith, 10th June 2020.

*Reminder: reports to Frits About, to Facebook and to Twitter are no substitute for actual records. However, county recorders are included in Frits About circulation list and will thus be alerted to look out for actual records in due course. **Please therefore submit records to County Butterfly Recorders as well.***