

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, 2021 – No.3

101 new reports – received from 1st August 2021 to 29th November 2021

Welcome

Apologies once again that this third issue of 2021 has been very late emerging.

Of the three earliest flying species – (Pearl-bordered (PBF), Small Pearl-bordered (SPBF) and Marsh Fritillaries (MF) – apart from late starts, there hasn't been much trend of note. In some ways it's been a very average year perhaps. That said, numbers were modest at best, whether a factor of the general late 2021 emergence or not isn't clear. Ben Williams' timed MF counts around Hirwaun were encouraging at close to 100 on each of two regular sites. Liam Olds did send a report (not to hand) from Castlemartin in Pembs, (where adult numbers are often high) suggesting good numbers on day of his visit.

Dark Green (DGF), High Brown (HBF) & Silver-washed Fritillaries (SWF) also emerged later generally in 2021, with most being 2 to 3 weeks later than last year and probably a week to 10 days later than last decade average. DGF haven't been reported in big numbers on sites but there have been reports from many coastal sites as usual. HBF has shown much lower sightings than 2020 (which was best year to date of last 26), being about 40% down and with a slightly shorter flight period. SWF was still recorded as late as September.

The mission since Frits About 2021 No 2 has been Marsh Fritillary (MF) web surveys. Unfortunately, shortage of staff resource curtailed the usual breadth of activity with our BC South Wales branch. The volunteer team instead focused on Neath Port Talbot and Carmarthenshire into Brecon Beacons National Park. The task becomes larger annually, as known MF-occupied sites increase – a measure of success? Particularly notable were 130 webs on a new site in Neath Port Talbot, 154 webs near Dolgellau and 402 webs across Blaen Cynon SAC – counts by BC team, Andrew Graham and NRW team respectively.

Richard Smith

PS Andrew Graham reminds us that all Lepidoptera records for north Wales can be viewed at www.trawsgoed.com/nwleps.aspx. "Records put onto any Facebook site will not necessarily enter the recording system ..." – as is the case in all areas (Ed). Contributions to Frits About are the views of the individuals concerned and do not necessarily represent the views of Butterfly Conservation Wales. There is also a [Facebook discussion group](#), [North Wales branch Facebook page](#) and [BC Wales Facebook page](#).

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1. Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF) - 3 new reports

Flight period normally late April to end May. (35 reports already in 2021, No 1 & 2 editions).

Montgomeryshire

Simon Spencer advises more detail at an earlier count at **Y Galfa**: "I was mainly trying to show Frank Bell **Y Galfa** and when we arrived **26/04/21** it was about 9c. We walked across the bottom of the site for half an hour from 11.20 with me leading the way. We saw 19 PBF and Frank spotted another 3 behind me. On the way back I was below the bottom pylons and Frank above the top pylons. 11.55 to 12.25. Frank had 24 and I had 26 both in half an hour. Mine were all on the western end (probably too many bluebells to start with) but Frank's were more spread out. Combined score **50 in an hour**. Final air temp was about 10c. Very sunny wind east 2".

There is a planned re-introduction on-going between Montgomeryshire and West Midlands sites. Contact: Mel Mason mbg.records@btinternet.com for info.

Stop press: Mel informs me (23 Nov): "We finally finished filming for the **BBC Countryfile** today. I was filming for four hours with Matt Baker and a film crew on the **Eastnor Estate** this morning - very exciting and a lot of fun. It will be **broadcast on Sunday 12th December**". Pictures below. *Ed-Site once had HBF as well.*



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2. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF) – 4 new reports

Flight period normally mid-May to end June (dry grassland/dog violet habitat) or end May to mid July (rhos pasture habitat and/or uplands). Second broods some years during August.

(32 reports already in 2021, No 2 edition).

Anglesey

Graeme Mathiesen posted on 12th August: "Second generations thriving at Newborough Forest today, despite keen winds ... **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries (5)**,

Bridgend

Gill Barter noted "**two** Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at my fields on **15 June...**". Fields are near **Pencoed**.



Photo: Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary: Graeme Mathiesen.

North Wales

Tammy Stretton: "On **22nd July**, I was on an organic farm **near Llanidloes** and saw 30/40 Dark Green Fritillary and, rather surprisingly, a **single Small PBF**".

Andrew Graham: "Lots of SPBF records from across North Wales".

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3. Marsh Fritillary (MF) – 64 new reports

Flight period normally mid-May to late June. Core web search season mid-August to end of September. (65 reports already in 2021, No 1 + No 2 editions).

Caerphilly

Karen Wilkinson advises: "For Aberbargoed the total count was 40 webs".

Caernarvonshire

Clare Williams reports: "**Cors y Wlad SSSI: three webs** found on annually walked BC web transect: one more than last year. BC is working with the new grazier to achieve more favourable management for the butterfly".

Carmarthenshire

Rob Parry reported on 1st **September**: "Not long finished at **Cwmgors**. **149 webs** in total and I still have some of the field to finish off. I have grid references for the webs which I can send. There were also signs of cattle (droppings) in there. No idea how they got in, it's not fenced, but its looking ok in there".

Dave Bannister on 2nd **September**: "Nipped down to the field just outside the village (**Brechfa**). Found **one web** but the caterpillars were very small".

Ivy Denham, Isabel Macho and Bronwen Berkshire found **16 larval webs** on 6th **September** at a traditional farm near **Harford**, which still seems to be a N Carms stronghold location for the species. The BC South Wales branch volunteer team visited several other private **Harford** sites in two days (**25th & 29th September**), finding another **14 webs** across **5** more **occupied** sites.

Becca Killa tells us that **47 larval webs** were counted at Rhos Cefn Bryn this year, the highest count since 1996. See link below for details.

https://www.welshwildlife.org/wtsww-news/marsh-frits-larvae-web-count-at-rhos-cefn-bryn/?mc_cid=d0092c4dd9&mc_eid=ef873572e4

Julie Bowes reported **71 larval webs** at a private site near **Alltwallis** – a considerable increase on last few years when 10 to 20 was the normal across these sites.

Amanda Evans (**Caeau Mynydd Mawr project**) sent a short summary of searches of **12** of the **project sites** finding **92 webs in total**, ranging from zero to 47 (Rhos Cefn Bryn as above). One of the sites had adult MFs first found in 2020, but the **5 larval webs** found with help of owners were first webs found there.

BC's reserve at **Median Farm/Caeau Ffos Fach** yielded only **2 webs**, although a couple of fields were missed, due to observer shortage.

BC (SWb) team also found **2 larval webs** at **Ynys Dawela nature park** and **7 webs** (highest number in 18 years) at a **regular site close by**, with two other sites in between and one nearby having **nil webs** this year.

Amanda Evans, Dave Bannister & RGS found a **larval web** on **9 September** at a different part of the **Tir Eithin** site, near Bancffosfelen. We ran out of time to finish searching the usual fields there.

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Marsh Fritillary cont. [Carmarthenshire cont.](#)

RGS and BC volunteer team found some larval webs in the targeted area between Llanybie (Carms) and Gwynfe (BBNP/Carms). Although no webs were found at two adjoining (new in 2019) sites between Llandybie and Glynhir golf course, we did find **37 webs** at a known site just south of Trap, **21 webs** at a known site north-east of Trap, **1 web** at a new site nearby and **50 webs** at a site south-west of Gwynfe. Surprisingly, **7** of those latter 50 webs were still visible on **6th October**, despite short/late season at this location at 225m asl.

[Ceredigion](#)

Rhos Talglas SAC: 68 webs recorded during annual web counts by BC and NRW.

Paul Taylor sent a few interesting notes with his VC46 MF report: "Although we had seen Marsh Frits at **Rhos pil bach**, we never found any larval webs, but the one field was full of young Devils Bit Scabious, so it may be better next year. Adjacent to Rhos pil bach, is **Rhos Marion** with **8 webs**. This has no decent access, the only way through is via an overgrown path through the woods from Rhos pil bach. Doug, from the Wildlife Trust, is going to create an improved path through this winter, so a better check can be made on the butterflies next summer as I was unable to access the site during the summer months. **Rhos Glyn Helyg** revealed **34 larval webs**.

Rhos Llawr Cwrt: we gave all the results to David Woolley. The first Wednesday count, we counted **99 larval webs**, and the following Wednesday, Lesley and I finished off the site. We noted 6 larval webs in the one field, but only one was in a transect, so the other 5 could not be counted. There was one larval web counted in the field that was started in the previous week that had not been completed. The end result that David has submitted was for 91 larval webs, so I am not sure what happened to the missing 10 webs. I now have all the maps, etc from David, so hopefully next year we can get Rhos Llawr Cwrt checked earlier.

Two more sites at Talsarn/Llangeitho have been identified (with photographic evidence) as having a number of butterflies flying during the summer months, so I will check these out next year and see if it is possible to identify the landowners to gain access permission to check for larval webs.

[Heads of Valleys \(NPT-RCT-BBNP\)](#)

Ben Williams reports: "After the meeting on **24th September**, I went up to a site in **SN9705**, near **Hirwaun**. I found **39 webs** and they were a real mixed bag. Some were really large, with large numbers of caterpillars and others were small with only a small number of occupants. The other thing I found was that were frequently mixed age groups (by size) in the same webs. Last year I think the count was about 56 so numbers were down quite a bit".

Karen Wilkinson advises: "**Blaen Cynon SAC** - the total count was **402**".

Peter Sturgess reports "I recorded quite a lot of Marsh Frit webs along the **A465** construction works area **between Hirwaun and Dowlais Top** this season (mostly mid-August to early September). I reckon it was in the **region of 360 webs**." [Ed - one of those sites was a new site in SO 0708 where Peter found 7 webs in a small patch of suitable habitat but within a land parcel that we hope might be possible to manage for the species \(thus a stepping stone between Merthyr Tydfil and Aberbargoed\).](#)

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Marsh Fritillary cont.

Merionethshire

Clare Williams advises: "Dolgellau area: **Tir Stent SSSI: 64 webs** recorded in standardised annual sub-site searches by BC and volunteer. **Llwyn-iarth: 9 webs** recorded during walkover of eastern part of the site by BC. **Harlech NNR: no webs** recorded during BC annual monitoring".

Neath Port Talbot (NW)

In September, Paul Dunn, Nicola Nesbitt, Alan Reynolds, Francis Lawson & RGS visited the **Tairgwaith** site, where three of us found **25 MFs in 30mins** on a field close to the trotting track in June. We found a total of **130 webs** in the main field and one more close by. The high web numbers may be due to a very recent local colonisation (first reported by Lizzie Wilberforce in 2020) where the host specific parasite is not yet present. The larger field seems to be in NPT ownership and improved drier part of what is a big field is mown, whereas the wet (M24'ish but possibly revegetated over coal spoil in distant past) is left intact or at least not cut in spring or summer. We hope to discuss management further with NPT Nature Partnership.

On **15th September**, Paul Dunn and RGS counted **13 larval webs** at a private site, with an enthusiastic owner, to south-west of **Cwmgors** and where BC with WTSWW carried out scrub management in early 2020.

North Wales

Andrew Graham: "MF. The usual sites. **No records from Anglesey** where it may now be extinct. (The NNR was grazed flat by horses when I visited late in the summer). There was one curious sighting from a reliable recorder (Joanna Clark), miles from any known site, on rough, unused land near **Betws-y-coed**. A follow-up visit, later in the year, failed to find any webs. The most positive news is that the SNPA is continuing to take an active role in managing several sites near Dolgellau. The amazing **Cae Pencefn** colony on the **Nannau Estate** will undergo careful scrub clearance, in managed stages, very shortly. **154 larval webs** were found there this autumn."

Pembs

Sarah Mellor advises in a passing e-mail: "In other news Jon has just found a large site that wasn't on our radar, with loads of *succisa* and with a friendly landowner within the Puncteston metapop!".

David Redhead comments: "We did not do an adult count this year (at **Knapp Farm**) but the site owners (Terry & Mary Clarke) did and on the **30th May** counted **71 adults**. I think this is an all-time record for the site and the count is valid as Terry commented they did not count the ones that came from behind them. In **early August**, whilst checking her ponies, who help keep the site in order, Mary noticed **a few webs**".

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Marsh Fritillary cont. Pembs cont.

David also comments on 28th September: "There are normally 5 Pembrokeshire web Transects carried out under the auspices of BC Wales. It has been decided the largest two Ambleston & Puncteston will not be done this year, 2 were done last Tuesday and the fifth (Knapps) will be completed tomorrow and amongst those doing the counting will be two PCNPA vols. The two done last Tuesday produced a total count of **zero**. Not surprising at one (**Shortlands**) as it was zero a year ago. The other (**Copybush**) has crashed over the last few years and it seems to have completed the process this year - the habitat is OK except for some scrub invasion but that cannot be held totally responsible for the crash".

John Whitehurst comments in passing: "Photo of one of the webs at Knapp on the Friday (1st October) and some of those found at Wallis on Tuesday 5th October". Four of John's photos are shown below. Ed - It can be almost impossible to separate third instar from fourth instar caterpillars in the field.



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3. Marsh Fritillary cont



Four photos above:: Marsh Fritillary larvae (third or fourth instar) John Whitehurst.

RCT

BC SWB is funding RCT's Tidy Towns Team to carry out habitat management on a range of (non SSSI) MF sites in RCT this winter. NRW appears to be funding some habitat management on SSSIs around Hirwaun area.

The latest edition of Natur Cymru updates the **INCC** led initiative to re-introduce MFs to a site near Llantrisant.

Ystradgynlais area (including Crynant, Seven Sisters, and NPT (NE)).

BC South Wales branch volunteer team were out and about in this area on several days. **Rhos Common - 1 web; Nant y Rhos SSSI - 39 webs; Nant y Ffin pony field - 5 webs; Seven Sisters - 21 webs** (either side of forest road) and two fields **further south** (new in 2018) - **8 webs**.

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4. Dark Green Fritillary (DGF) – 13 new reports

Flight period normally early June to mid July. (32 reports already received – FA 2021, No 2)

Monmouthshire (inc VC35 in BBNP)

Nicola Davies (BBNP) e-mailed on **15th June**: "I went up to **Cwm Bwchel**, near **Llanthony**, today in search of Himalayan balsam but it was an excellent day for butterflies. We saw two species of fritillary. (ed- from poor quality mobile phone pics, it looked to Paul Dunn & myself likely these were some SPBF and some DGF).

30th June: First Dark Green Fritillaries of the year at Blaenserchan (Rupert Perkins) and at **Slade Wood** (Martin Anthoney and Roger James). MA commented: "A very late date for Dark Green to appear".

14th July: 4 Dark Green Fritillary at Slade Wood (Lee Gregory).

16th July: 1 Dark Green Fritillary at Slade Wood (Highmoor Hill).

10th Aug: Dark Green Fritillary at Tintern (Kathryn T. Dawson).

Nicky Davies (BBNP staff) reported: "I was at **Cwm Bwchel** all day again (**7th August**). It was hooching with butterflies, lots of the more common species (I noted 7 species) plus more fritillaries. I wasn't able to take pics as they were too far into the bracken and brambles on steep ground, BUT, they were certainly larger than the SPBF and behaved differently – lots of frenetic flapping about whereas the SPBF (earlier in the year) were more delicate and obliging".

Nicky Davies: "I was up at **Cwm Bwchel** again on Tuesday (**17th August**) and there were still large fritillaries on the wing. I have a shockingly bad vid taken on my phone taken over a barbed wire fence, brambles and bracken. I'll send it over later. The site that just keeps giving!". Ed – could be late DGFs but SWF is a possibility.

North Wales

Tammy Stretton: "On **22nd July**, I was on an organic farm near **Llanidloes** and saw **30/40 Dark Green Fritillary** and, rather surprisingly, a **single Small PBF**".

Andrew Graham: "DGF. Records mainly from around the coast. E.g. **50+** seen in the **Aberffraw dunes** on **19th July**. (Philip Constable). Also inland, e.g. land by **Minera Quarry**."

Dave James (near **Bala**) posts on **28th July**: ".....**Dark Green Fritillary** spotted in our neighbour's field – really pleased to see these so close to home".

Powys

Simon Spencer reports: "No DGF found at Y Golfa (on **19th July**) this year. We saw one probable DGF on Middletown Hill (fast flying large Frit) and a single Silver washed".

Katherine Eilbeck posted: "Lovely **Dark Green Fritillary** at **Penwyllt** this afternoon (**1st August**) with splendid views down the Swansea Valley".

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5. High Brown Fritillary (HBF) – 1 new report

Flight period normally early June to early August. Only one current site in Wales; in **Vale of Glamorgan**. (Flight period reports in FA 2021, No 2)

Vale of Glamorgan.

It looks like "Natur am Byth" (Nature for Ever) funding will be available from 1st December for a 15 month development phase for the HBF project in Wales.

6. Silver-washed Fritillary (SWF) – 10 new reports

Flight period normally, late June to early September. 31 previous reports in 2020, including several new sites. (20 reports in FA 2021, No 2)

Carmarthenshire

Quentin McGarvie contacted to say: "Richard, can you confirm identify please? Photo (right) taken at Dolgoy (nr Cynwyl Elfed) on 28th Aug on my flower beds. **Silver washed Fritillary?**". Ed: Yes, indeed it is. Also interesting as there is advice to gardeners that "double" (hybridised or bred for appeal) flowers don't really attract pollinating insects. Maybe not bees, and maybe this SWF didn't stay long, but from photo it looks like a variety of French Marigold".

Gwent

2nd July: 6 Silver-washed Fritillary at Panta Arches, Angidy Valley. (Roger James and Martin Anthoney).

16th July: 5 Silver-washed Fritillary at Slade Wood (Highmoor Hill).

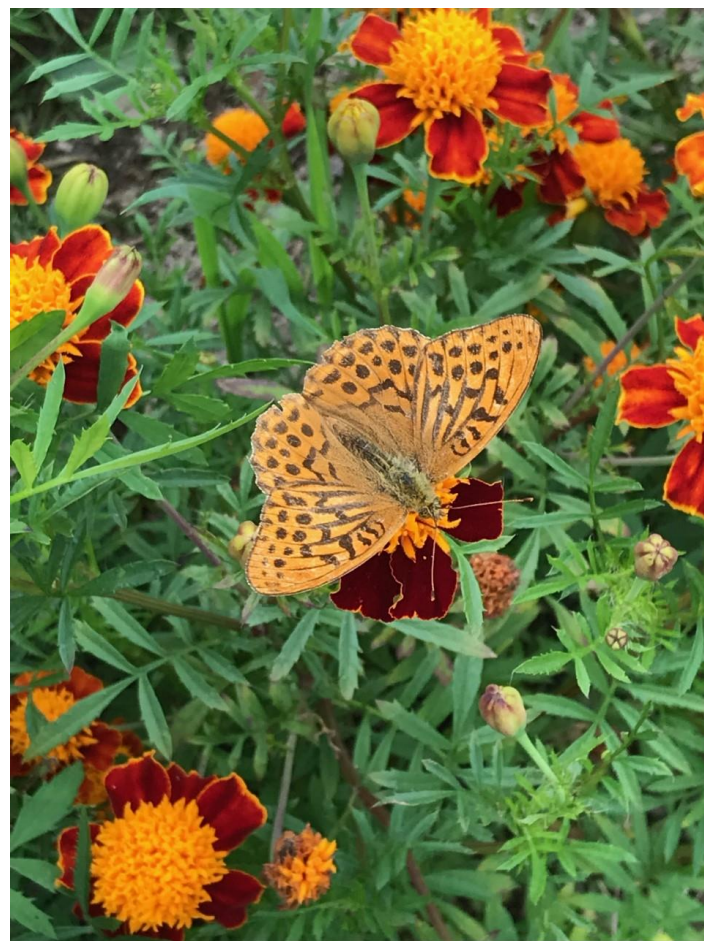
26th July: Silver-washed Fritillary flying at Tintern. (Hazell Mitchell).

29th July: Silver-washed Fritillary at Llandogo (Juliette Phipps).

1st Aug: 3 Silver-washed Fritillary at Llandogo, the first of fifteen during August.

2nd Aug: Silver-washed Fritillary at Chepstow Park Wood) (Paul Lidgett)

4th Aug: The first of six Silver-washed Fritillary at Tintern during August. (Hazel Mitchell).



Silver washed Fritillary: Quentin McGarvie

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Silver-washed Fritillary cont.

North Wales

Andrew Graham: "SWF. A few records from NE Wales. None yet from NW Wales."

Pembs

David Redhead: "This summer I saw Silver-washed Fritillaries at my **three regular local sites** - **West Williamston WTSWW Reserve, Cresselly Big Wood & my garden buddleias** - but the numbers seemed to be the lowest of all 9 of my residential summers in Pembrokeshire and attempts to spot them at my less regular sites all failed.

This newsletter was compiled from reports received or available up to 10am on 29th November 2021.

Richard Smith

29th November 2021.

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