FRITS ABOUT, 2022 - No.1

85 reports - received from February 2022 to 12th June 2022



Welcome

Of the three earliest flying fritillary species (Pearl-bordered, Small Pearl-bordered and Marsh Fritillaries), start dates of flight periods have not been particularly unusual. What has been unusual, at least to seasoned readers of Frits About, is the insertion of the local modern "county" headings of Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan in relation to Marsh Frits. Both areas seemed to lose the species in the mid noughties, despite much of the Bridgend habitat remaining in good heart and overall in just about sufficient amounts. We did try to persuade INCC to consider Bridgend before they settled on Llantrisant Common, where the species has now been "bolstered" by some introduced captive bred, under licence from NRW. Interestingly, from reports to hand, it looks like first MFs across Wales were around 15th, (with three Llantrisant Common individuals emerged by 12th - slightly earlier but presumably from larva over-wintered in the wild). It's early days yet though, but one slightly worn MF has come to light in Maesteg and the MFs at Lavernoock all (three?) looked very fresh with no more records since that first week. We have experienced large mobilisations of MFs occasionally in recent years e.g. Carms and NPT in 2018 & 2019 when over 100 additional fields seemed to become occupied. The Lavernock specimens being so fresh are unlikely to have flown there this year, so there must remain questions which might not ever be answered. Any further information gratefully received.

Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries' first sightings as adult butterflies in Wales were slightly earlier than recent years, although not as early as 2020 which was exceptional. One of our expert caterpillar finders, Paul Dunn, has found > 20 HBF cats and one DGF in Alun valley, whereas he found none last year. Paul will be away most of HBF flight season, for the first time for many years, so anyone interested in helping with our weekly count walks in Alun valley, please let me know. Also, as we are still without a Conservation Officer in Wales, anyone interested in looking at Marsh Frit sites, during June would be most welcome.

Richard Smith, 13th June 2022

As always, contributions to Frits About are very welcome - but don't forget to send in your records to County Butterfly Recorders as well. 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. There is also a Facebook discussion group, North Wales branch's Facebook page and BC Wales Facebook page.

1. Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF) - 12 individual and one summary reports

Flight period normally late April to end May.

Ceredigion

Rosie Hemsley encountered one PBF on 13th April, at a grid ref which seems to be part of Cwm Soden area. Ed. Possibly earliest sighting of PBF in Wales this year? Lloyd Garvey encountered 7 PBFs at Cwm Soden on 24th April.

Rosie Hemsley also recorded 9 PBFs on 29th April at Cwm Soden.

Brennig Huws posts (30th May): "Pearl bordered fritillaries at Cwm Soden this morning, along with Small Pearl-bordered",

Montgomeryshire

Tammy Stretton (MWT) reports: "first PBF of season flying on 19th April at Y Golfa".

Then on 25th May:

"Good morning all you PBF lovers out there! Since my last update, there have been two more surveys at Y Frochas; one by Rowan on Saturday (14) and one by me yesterday (11). Numbers are dropping on this, our late site, so I am officially calling it! - the 2022 PBF survey season is over! Here is a full summary of the results:

		Actual		Peak count	No.
Site	PBF/hr	No.	Minutes	date	visits
Y Golfa	16	19	72	05-May	8
Y Figyn E	44	11	15	29-Apr	3
Y Figyn W	17	10	35	19-May	4
Y Frochas	20	22	65	19-May	6
Fron Hydan	18	11	36	26-Apr	3
Middletown Hill	7	8	69	18-May	5
Llanymynech Rocks	0	0	22	-	5
Llanymynech Hill	0	0	22	-	4

Montgomeryshire cont.

Whilst the total of looks a bit depressing when using the PBF/hr - 122 (159 in 2021) - total actual numbers recorded during the peak counts are up on 2021 - 81 (77 in 2021). Still not sure why Y Golfa has been so low the last couple of years - the habitat is looking good and both violets and nectar are stable. The big change is a very significant decline in bramble! We need to get to the bottom of the situation and there are plenty of minds working on it! As we celebrate 20 years of CSM monitoring for PBFs in Montgomeryshire, it is most definitely time to review the situation and we are planning an all-Wales meeting later in the year. If you wish to contribute, please get in touch with me. In the meantime, please do promote our Pathways for Pearls project and let me know if you wish to be involved. That just leaves me to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped with the surveys this year. Trying to cover eight sites regularly in tight weather windows is very challenging; even one site covered by someone else can make a big difference. I am very grateful to you all.

Tammy". Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust

Nearly Wales

Ian Hart advises that "We counted 80 PBFs at Ewyas Harold Common on Friday 13th",

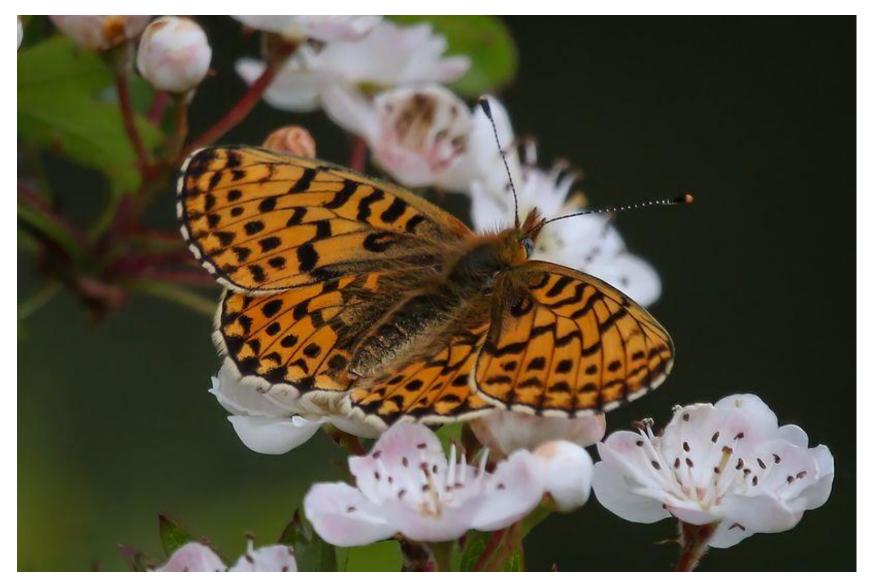
North Wales

Mark Hughes posts (8th May):" Good numbers of Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Eyarth Rocks today. Many mating".

Alun Williams posts: "Precious pearls - Craig Adwy Wynt, May 14. Pearl bordered fritillary, Britheg berlog".

Dan Gorton posts (on 15th May with photo below): "Pearl-bordered fritillary, Eyarth Rocks". The post provoked some comments including "Clare Williams seems to have got the peak count at 50" (no date given).

Tony Pope also posts on 15 May: "Pearl Bordered Fritillaryat Eyarth Rocks today 17' but mainly overcast".



Pearl-bordered fritillary, Eyarth Rocks: Dan Gorton

2. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF) - 21 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.

Bridgend

Matthew Sparks noted a **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** on Coity Wallia common, near **Pencoed**, on **27 May** (photo right).

Liam Olds posts (29th May): "Much excitement at Ogmore Washeries this morning with Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (Boloria selene)"

Carms

Debbie Greenish reports (with photo): "SPBF found today (19th May)(on our fields) near **Trap**.

Ceredigion

Rosie Hemsley identified several SPBFs amongst PBFs on both 4^{th} & 5^{th} May, Cwm Soden/Silio.

Jane Beck posts (1st June): "Small pearl bordered at Cwm Silio today.

One of three". (ed: photo is of a female).

Brennig Huws posts (30th May)": "Pearl bordered fritillaries at Cwm Soden this morning, along with Small Pearl-bordered",

Ruth Kent (26th May) posts, with photo: "small pearl boarded fritillary, seen on the coastal path between Llanrhystud and Aberystwyth".



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Coity Wallia common: Matt Sparks

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (cont.)

Heads of Valley

Both Paul Dunn and Steve East each reported an individual SPBF on their MF visits to Cwm Cadlan NNR on 18th & 29th May respectively (see under MF below).

NPT

Paul Parsons reports on 1st June: Saw my first Small Pearl-bordered Fritilliaries of the year today, at Bryn reserve"

North Wales

Post on 1st June: "Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary reported on the wing near Rhes y Cae" - presumably part of Halkyn Mountain?

Mark JD Hughes posts: "SPBF Nant Ffrancon 19/05/22".

John Ellis-Jones posted (7th June): "SPBF (photo) found in the Carneddau, above Llun Cowlyd".

Rhondda Cynon Taff

George Tordoff saw "two SPBFs at Y Graig today" (5th May).

Kathleen Job reports seeing 3 SPBFs in Merthyr Vale on 27th May.

Vaughn Matthews reports SPBF on Llantrisant Common on 27th, as does Paul Denning a few days earlier. Ed: Unlike MFs there, these SPBFs are not "introduced".

Vale of Glamorgan.

The first SPBFs were seen second week of May, with numbers building, after slow start, to a peak in last week of May. Paul Dunn counted 50 on a walk around the common on 28th and he'd counted 33 on the private part of site the week before.

3. Marsh Fritillary (MF) - 36 reports

Flight period normally mid May to late June. Core web search season is mid August to end of September. (Caterpillars often bask in spring)

Bridgend.

Paul Parsons, via South Wales branch FB forum on 29th May: "Great to see that the Maesteg population of Marsh Fritilliary is still there, albeit in a slightly different spot. I last saw them 15 years ago and gave up looking a few years ago when the field was cleared. Pic taken and sent to me today by Paul Tabor (image right). Will have a look for more very soon".



Marsh fritillary at Maesteg: Paul Tabor

Caerphilly

Frank Sengpiel reports (14th May) a serious burn at main field at Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC, but a few fresh MFs flying nearby.

Neil Jones posts: "I spent some time at **Aberbargoed** early this afternoon (19th May). I managed to see my first Marsh frit since 2019. Just the one but the sun was in and it was just basking. The big field was badly burned but not completely."

Owen Erasmus also visited the same day (19^{th}) : "Had an enjoyable visit to **Aberbargoed** this morning. The burning wasn't as extensive as I'd feared and despite it being very wet under foot and cloudy there was a lot of wildlife around".

Carmarthenshire

Amanda Evans reports: "I saw my first Marsh Frits of the year yesterday (17th May) morning. Private site, just south of Caeau Ffos Fach."

Louise & Adam (Llansadrwn): "Just to let you know we spotted the first MF here at Llwynbwch yesterday (1st June), photos attached. It was resting on a buttercup in the shade and looked like it's been on the wing for a few days". Then on 4th June: "We just popped out for a walk - saw somewhere between 10 & 13 MF's in the long, narrow east-west field".

Clare Williams reports: "CFF/Median Farm - 31/05/22 - I was out mapping management required (so mainly looking at boundaries) but saw three Marsh Fritillaries at Median Farm (Field 3) and another four at Caeau Ffos Fach (top 3)."

Marsh Fritillary (cont.)

Ceredigion

Rhos Llawr Cwrt; David Woolley advises: "I walked the reserve this afternoon (15th May) and counted 17 MF's on the transect. They all looked pretty new. I hadn't been round for a week so they may have been out for a couple of days. Having walked the same route with 11 sections for 38 years, I am going to have to abandon 5 sections as they have become impassable, at least to me. They are sections that were not very productive anyway".

Then on 25th: "Numbers are building up nicely. The walk last week was 112, which is the first daily total over 100 since 2014".

Paul Taylor posts: "Good numbers of fresh Marsh Fritillary butterflies flying at a nature reserve in Ceredigion this afternoon" (19th May).

Then again on 24th May: "A quick visit to Rhos pil-Bach Nature Reserve, Plwmp, this afternoon to see if any of the Marsh Fritillary butterflies are flying, managed to observe 2 butterflies". Andrew Turner encountered one MF at Rhos pil-Bach Nature Reserve on 27th May.

"A visit to Rhos pil Bach and the adjacent Rhos Marion Nature Reserves, Plwmp, Ceredigion yesterday (25th). A total of 10 Marsh Fritilaries flying, all appeared to be in pristine condition".

Philip Dennis posts (2nd June): "Marsh fritillaries at an SSSI on private land just south of Cross Inn, Llanon".

Paul Taylor advises that MFs also recorded at Rhos Gndenys, Rhos Fulbrook & Bwlch Llan, by various recorders between 19th May & 2nd June.

Arfon Williams posts (3rd June): "......and Marsh Fritillaries at Cross Inna very enjoyable morning".

Paul Taylor advises: "Rhos Glyn Yr Helyg, 8/6/22, 41 Marsh Fritillary on a survey done by Doug Lloyd (Ceredigion Reserve Manager) and volunteers".

Heads of Valleys (NPT-RCT-BBNP)

Paul Dunn called at Cwm Cadlan NNR on 18th May, finding about 40 MFs on the south-facing meadow.

Steve East reports on 29th May: "Cwm Cadlan NNR. Thanks so much for all your information on the MF. We found them on the South Bank as you'd told me. We then went over the bridge, turned right and fought our way along the tree line until we came to a "green path", which was a left turn, and eventually entered a field. The reason I'm mentioning this is that there were more MFs here than on the south bank, and as an extra bonus a small pearl fritillary too!".

Holly Tudball posted a photo of an MF at Cwm Cadlan on 12th June.

Marsh Fritillary (cont.)

Pembs

Julie Garlick advises of a site owner, **near Letterston**, sending in a photo of MF larvae in sunshine on 13 March.

Laurence Harris advises on 14 May: "Great day at Castlemartin today. Saw just emerged marsh frits....."

RCT

Elaine Wright got a photo of a Marsh Frit "hanging on" in the SN0288 part of Rhos Tonyrefail SSSI last week

Swansea

Megan Jenkins posts on 14th May: "Marsh Fritillary at Welshmoor this afternoon".

Vale of Glamorgan.

Up to 3 sightings of MFs were recorded at Lavernock LNR by various observers (word spreads quickly) over a few days (starting 14th) in mid May. Photo typically is of a fresh male. This has led to much speculation over the source of the individuals recorded, as although the site has plentiful Devil's Bit Scabious in species rich dry grassland, which can be used as overspill breeding habitat from time to time, there is no history of the species in the Vale of Glamorgan since early 2000s when they seemed to disappear from both Aberthin and Talygarn at roughly the same time. We may never know the answer - the only strong certainty is that, being so fresh, they would not have colonised the site naturally from another site this year.



Marsh Fritillary larvae in sunshine, 13th March_Letterston:
Credit the site owner

Marsh Fritillary (cont.)

RCT

Llantrisant Common. Carys L Romney posts on 18th February: "Great news from the Marsh Fritillary project - INCC staff went back to Llantrisant Common last week to see some of the sites where caterpillars were released back in September. We were thrilled to see that they have survived hibernation in the wild and are busy out basking in the weak spring sunshine. We initially found them by using a thermal scope through which the difference between the ambient temperature and that within the groups of larvae really showed up. We will be going back soon to do some more thorough surveys and then in the summer to see how many survived the dangers of caterpillar-hood to emerge as adults. Thanks again to everyone who has helped us get to this point".

Paul Denning posts on 12 May: One of three Marsh fritillaries at Llantrisant common this afternoon".

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

Francis Lawson & Alan Reynolds undertook some timed counts for BC South Wales branch on 1st June: "Seven Sisters - overcast and cool - south of the track and the northern triangle yielded no frits. With the sun trying to come out the rest of northern area yielded 5 in an area close to the houses. The cemetery field, however, produced over 30 and probably a lot more not counted. The sun was fully out by this time. (RGS visited on 11th June and during a 5 mile circular walk did find one fresh MF south of the track but none elsewhere around Seven Sisters - however conditions were far from ideal with a persistent strong breeze all day).

North of Crynant - warm sunshine - in the SSSI fields we surveyed the bottom half first and counted 65, again probably more and in the top half another 22. Going next door in to the pony field yielded a measly 1, found by Francis near the roadside.

Finally we moved on to the forest clearing, well we would have done if we actually found the clearing but all we found was forest. Having walked down the track opposite the sub-station it dead-ended with no paths to the left. We back-tracked along the road looking for an alternative entrance but there was no way in and no obvious clearing visible so we cursed you and went home".

RGS did a circular walk of 4 miles on 11th June from Ystrad Fawr Villas to just beyond the school fields in Penrhos, but again with a strong breeze, only 3 MFs were seen, two worn males near the tip in Ystrad Fawr meadow and one fresher female nectaring on Marsh Thistle further north.

4. Dark Green Fritillary (DGF) - 5 reports

Flight period normally early June to mid July.

Bridgend

Mike Clark advises on 30th May: "Saw my first Dark Green Frit. Today at Kenfig."

Monmouthshire

No reports

North Wales

No reports

Powys

No reports

RCT

Emma Williams reported "fast frits" on Maerdy coil spoil on 2nd June. DGF we both think.

Vale of Glamorgan

Paul Dunn found his first **DGF** caterpillar for several years on **29 May**, in same habitat patch as HBF cats.

Then on 4th June, Paul saw a freshly emerged DGF on bracken in Alun valley.

The transect (fixed route) count for HBFs in Alun Valley on 12th June produced 4 def HBF, 1 def DGF & 17 unidentified in very breezy conditions over about 3 hours.



Dark Green Fritillary caterpillar, Vale, 29th May: Paul Dunn

5. High Brown Fritillary (HBF) - 11 reports

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

Vale of Glamorgan.

Paul Dunn found his first HBF larva on 13th May. At least four that day. He found more on 20th & 21st and several on 24th. Two videos were obtained of caterpillars demolishing whole violet leaves. Mike Clark also found two larvae on Old Castle Down. Altogether > 20 HBF caterpillar sightings in 2022, which bodes well as none found last year.

First adult HBF photographed by Paul Dunn on 4th June, on private land east of river. They are expected to be flying over the common this week (w/c 6th).

Ed: Jenny Plackett (BC in West Country) advises that Matthew Oates saw 20 HBF (inc 2 females), 12 DGF and 6 indeterminates in his surveys on 6th June at Exmoor site and 2 HBF were seen today at one of the Dartmoor sites.

Images: Paul Dunn. Right: High Brown 4th

June.

Far right: High Brown larva wonderful camouflage!.



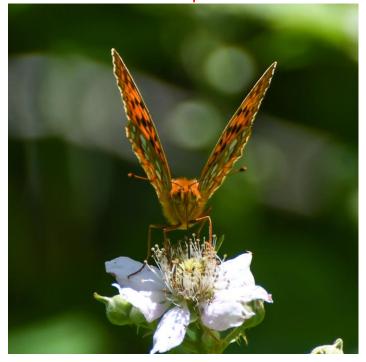
High Brown Fritillary (cont)

Paul Dunn and Simon Spencer saw about a dozen large fritillary sightings between them on private side of Alun valley on Monday 6^{th} **June**, of which most identified to species were HBF.

Emmanuelle Juan has a chance encounter with a HBF on 10th June in windy conditions but was lucky enough to get good photos.

On 12th June, Dot Williams, Frank Sengpiel, Mike Cram & RGS carried out the first transect (fixed route) count on private land east of the river, producing a total of 4 def HBF, 1 definite DGF & 17 unidentified in very breezy conditions over about 3 hours.

ED: Later this week, as wind calms and temperatures improve, should see more on the wing.



High Brown Fritillary 12th June: Frank Sengpiel

6. Silver-washed Fritillary (SWF) - no 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)

This newsletter was compiled from reports received or available up to 10pm on 12th June 2022.

Richard Smith, 13th June 2022.