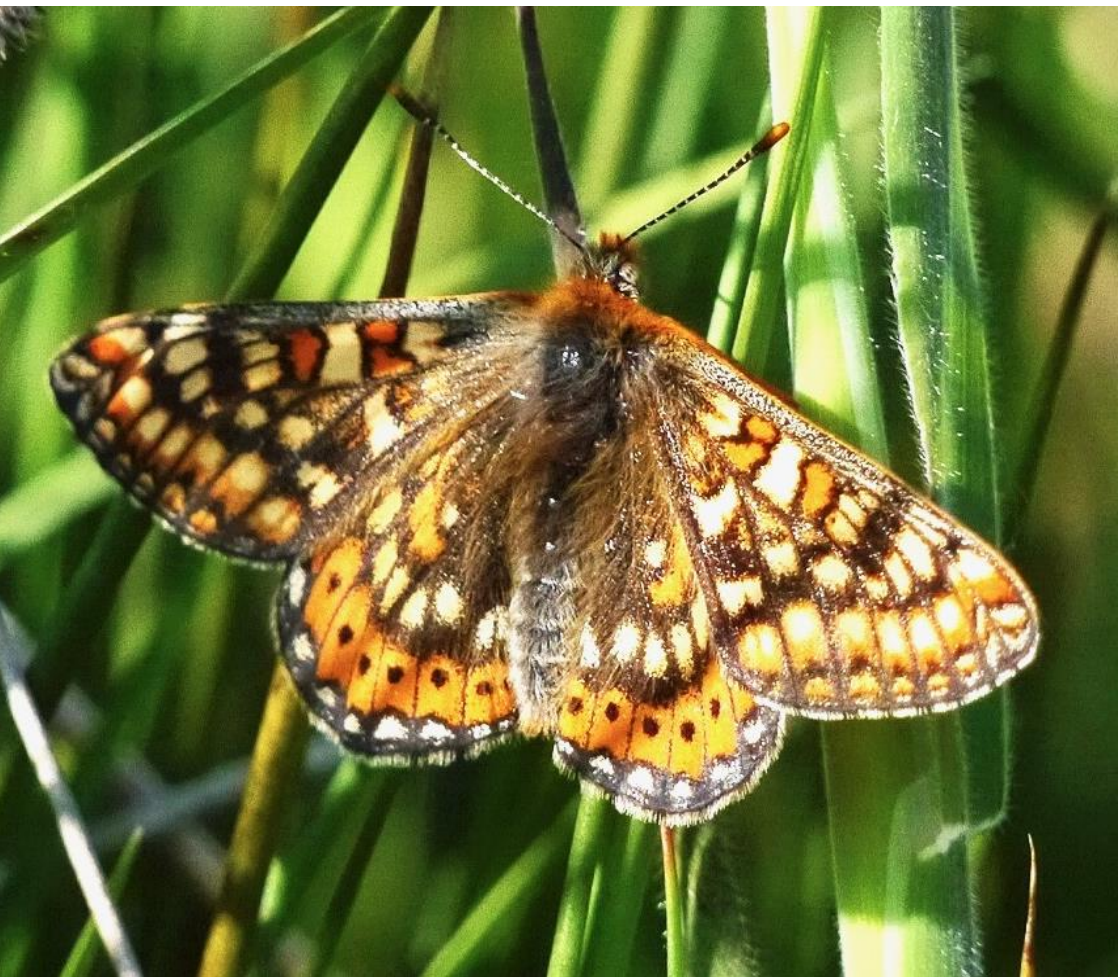


NORTH WALES BRANCH

# Newsletter

2023



**Butterfly Conservation Wales**  
**Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Cymru**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment Yn achub glöynnod byw, gwyfynod a'n hamgylchedd ni

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Cover photo – Marsh Fritillary taken by Mark Sheridan
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**Welcome** to our 2023 edition which at 48 pages is the longest that I have had the pleasure of editing. The contents list above shows the variety of topics covered, and thanks go to everyone who has contributed articles and features. This printed copy is also available in digital format, and we've been discussing whether we should make a move to sending it out to members this way in the future. A quick look at the finance report on page 26 shows how much it costs to print and post. If you have a view about this, please let us know before our AGM in August (or maybe come along and express it) as it will be included on the agenda, I'm sure.

As a volunteer branch we hope to assist, in whatever way we can, each of the 3 Saving Butterflies and Moths Strategic goals. Actions in support of these are discussed by Clare Williams in her article, and we hope to arrange events based around these. This may be done at short notice, and we'll communicate what, where and when on our Facebook group and via e-mail. If Head Office don't have your current email address, please let me know. You'd be most welcome to join these and indeed any of the events already timetabled.

We're doing something different this year for our Members' Day/AGM in having a Wild Spaces family day at Pensychnant on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August, which we hope you'll come along to support. This will be open to all and will include a variety of stands, craft activities and games all based around the goal to create 100,000 wild spaces in the UK by 2026. We will have moths from the previous nights' traps and will hope to see butterflies on our guided walks during the day. During a break from these guided walks, we will hold a brief North Wales branch AGM at 1pm. Please join this to meet your committee and express your views.

**Mark Sheridan**



A Wild Space is one where butterflies and moths can complete their lifecycles. The area needs to enable them to feed, breed and shelter. There is no defined size, so long as the requirements are met – it is a Wild Space.

You can find out more about Wild Spaces and how to register yours here <https://butterfly-conservation.org/wild-spaces/register>

# WORKING TOGETHER

*for butterflies and moths in 2023*

**by Clare Williams – Conservation Manager – Wales**

Saving Wales' butterflies and moths requires a collective effort by BC staff, branches, volunteers and partner organisations. Focussed and ambitious staff work programmes for the year ahead are ready to go and we're working closely with the North Wales branch and partners to identify areas where collaboration is key to successfully delivering our goals.

## Goal 1 - Halve the number of the UK's threatened species of butterflies and moths

A list of 71 species, identified as priorities for action at a UK level, has been compiled. Eighteen of these species occur in Wales and nine in North Wales: three butterflies (Large Heath, Marsh Fritillary and Pearl-bordered Fritillary), four



Yellow-ringed Carpet © Roy Leverton

macro-moths (Large Red-belted Clearwing, Silky Wave, Silvery Arches and Yellow-ringed Carpet) and two micro-moths (Brown Sweep (*Sterrhopterix fusca*) and White-spotted Sable (*Anania funebris*)).

Together we will be acting to reduce the threat status of these species through targeted conservation action, removing the drivers that threaten them, and/or improving knowledge of

their status. Species will be guided towards a lower priority status by moving them along the Species Recovery Curve towards sustainable management.

For some of these species we have little knowledge of their distribution and abundance and effort will focus on gathering data to assess geographical extent and trends. Large Red-belted Clearwing, Yellow-ringed Carpet and White-spotted Sable fall into this category. Yellow-ringed Carpet records, from several locations including Snowdon, Cwm Idwal and Tregarth, all pre-date 2005. Light trapping and larval searches are priorities for 2023.



Until 2021, the White-spotted Sable (*Anania funebris*) was known only from one site in North Wales, near Dolgellau. In 2022, volunteers discovered further colonies both by looking for Goldenrod, the day-flying adults and discovering that larval searches were an easier survey method. In 2023, we'll be encouraging people to help us get this moth on the map – identifying



*Anania funebris* adult © George Tordoff



*Anania funebris* larvae © George Tordoff

areas supporting its larval foodplant Goldenrod and undertaking subsequent larval and adult searches to determine presence.

Goldenrod growing amongst bracken and scrub on the rocky outcrops at a site near Dolgellau.



Goldenrod © Clare Williams

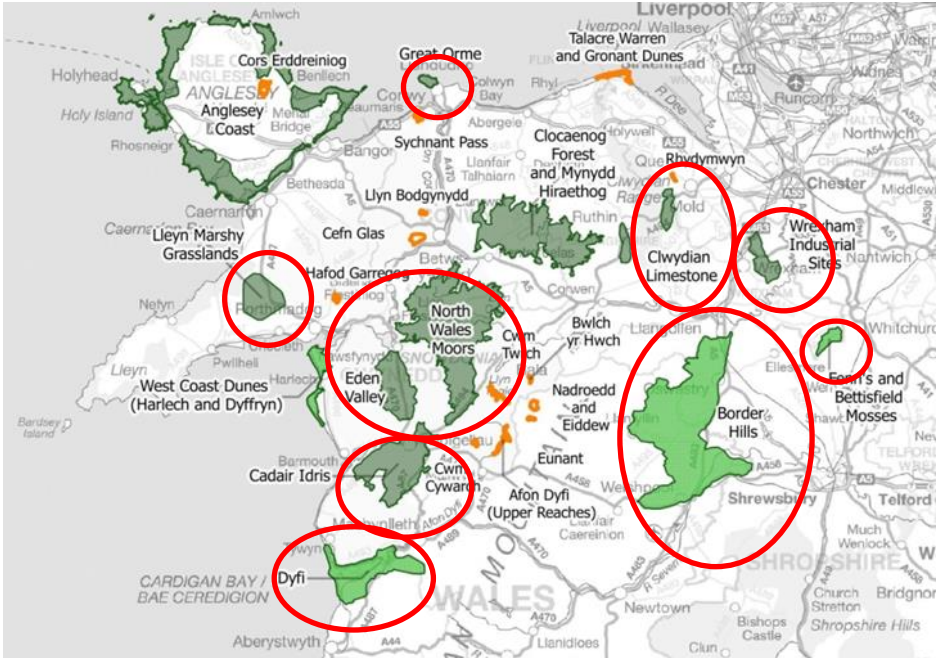
For other species like the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Marsh Fritillary, we understand their status, autecology, and how to recover populations. Ensuring favourable management across site networks and restoring enough habitat to support and connect populations across landscapes is the next step, and one which requires committed collaborative action across individuals and organisations to achieve.

**Goal 2 – Improve the condition of 100 of the UK’s important landscapes for butterflies and moths.**

Liaison with branches and volunteers has helped whittle down 200 priority landscapes we were already working in, to varying degrees at a UK level, to a long list of 114 which will be the focus for the rest of this strategy period. Still ambitious, this allows a more targeted approach in line with current and forecast capacity. In Wales we now have a portfolio of 22 landscapes with nine in North Wales (north of the Dyfi):

- **Border Hills**
- **Cadair Idris**
- **Clwydian Limestone**
- **Dyfi**
- **Fenn’s & Bettisfield Mosses**
- **Great Orme**
- **Llyn Marshy Grasslands**
- **North Wales Moors and Eden Valley**
- **Wrexham Industrial Estate**

In each of these landscapes we are selecting a small number of key species to collect habitat data for, to evidence that we are making these landscapes bigger, better and more connected. These key species are threatened (Goal 1), Wales priority and widespread species, chosen to tell us something useful about land use in each landscape.



**Landscapes (within red circles) where BC efforts will be focussed up until 2026.**

In some of these landscapes work is already well underway. On Wrexham Industrial Estate Butterfly Conservation has been working in partnership with the North Wales Wildlife Trust and the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust on several funded projects. These have undertaken positive on-the-ground actions to improve biodiversity and local amenity. The Industrial Estate is a key landscape for Grizzled Skipper



and BC has been advising on habitat enhancement and creation measures. In a





Raised beds with limestone aggregate and Grizzled Skipper foodplants installed at a car park on Wrexham Industrial Estate © Clare Williams

Grizzled Skipper and working with partners and volunteers to monitor our success.

In other landscapes, partners are leading on project work, with BC providing support when required. NRW is leading a 5-year EU LIFE funded Quaking Bogs



Marsh Fritillary habitat bordered by improved grassland and forestry on the Llyn Peninsula © Clare Williams

recent very positive step forward BC, NWWT and ARC have been awarded a 5-year management contract for the HMP Berwyn Ecological Mitigation Area. At around 17ha, this is a large and incredibly important site for biodiversity on the Industrial Estate. BC's focus will be restoring the habitat mosaic, including vital bare ground, required by the

project. The project aims to restore peatland, quaking bogs and their wider supporting wetland landscapes to favourable conservation status at seven project sites around Wales. On the eastern Llyn, this is addressing Marsh Fritillary requirements



2023

both within and around the statutory sites, bringing landowners into management agreements to restore and maintain habitat. BC will provide any specialist advice required and work with NRW to track species and habitat responses.

There are also landscapes where we still need to gather further data to get a fuller picture of a species status and the habitat resource present. The North Wales Moors and Eden Valley landscape supports key populations of Large Heath and Welsh Clearwing. For both species we need current data on their extent, core areas, better resourced monitoring to track abundance, and habitat condition assessments to evidence the resources available to these species, and to highlight issues to address.



Large Heath adult and the Rhyd-y-fen transect site near Trawsfynydd.  
© Clare Williams

**Goal 3 – Transform 100,000 wild spaces in the UK for people, butterflies and moths**

A Wild Space is one where butterflies and moths can complete their life cycles. The areas need to enable them to feed, breed and shelter – there is no defined size as long as the requirements are met. They should be free from pesticides; compost should be peat-free if used and the space should be permanent.



A small container of comfrey in the authors garden hosted around 30 Scarlet Tiger larvae in the spring with the brightly coloured adults subsequently seen zipping around all over the garden and adjacent village green.



We need your help to create 100,000 wild spaces across the UK by 2026. You can register a Wild Space, or pledge one on BC's website: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/wild-spaces>.

**Get Involved**

There will be opportunities for BC members and volunteers to help us work towards our goals over 2023. Keep an eye on the Butterfly Conservation North Wales Forum Facebook page for further details.

# BLAENAU FFESTINIOG REPORT 2022

*(Final Edition) by Malcolm Watling*

This year, just before Christmas, we moved to Pontypridd in the centre of the famous South Wales Valleys. Nevertheless, there was still recording to be done before we left, so I am able to bring you an account of my findings. The weather, my health and the distractions of preparing to move house meant that I only managed one session of moth trapping this year. July 11<sup>th</sup> produced a potentially good mothing night, and there were 32 species in the trap. Puss, both Elephant Hawks, Buff Tip and Peppered were the spectacular ones. Numbers were low, mostly single individuals, and only five Dark Arches. There had been 44 of these on a similar night three years ago.

In my nearly seven years of moth trapping in and around Blaenau I found that the number of new species I found tended to reduce each year. This gave me the impression that we were getting close to having found the full fauna for the district, and Satin Lutestring was the only one new to my trap. Also new to the area, in a friend's kitchen window, was Lime-speck Pug, and resting on a building, Wormwood Pug. One moth species that was noticeable in July was Buff Ermine, attracted to the lights along the High Street in several places.



Satin Lutestring

Numbers were again down as far as the butterflies were concerned. I managed to get to a couple of my regular sites. Ringlets and Small Skippers were in good numbers at one site, Meadow Browns and Small Heaths less so. Green-veined



Lime-speck Pug

Whites and the Vanessids were around but not in exciting numbers. Just one Painted Lady, on the Buddleja in our garden in September.



Wormwood Pug

It remains now for me to see what treasures await in the Rhondda and Taf Valleys, and we are not too far from numerous Marsh Fritillary colonies and the one remaining site in Wales for the High Brown Fritillary! Best wishes and happy hunting to you all.

# CHURCHES COUNT ON NATURE

by *Rev'd Susan Blagden*

'Churches Count on Nature' is an annual UK event for recording flora and fauna in churchyards, and the finds are then uploaded to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) database for monitoring. This is important because burial grounds contain some of our oldest trees, rarest lichens and fungi, and precious wildflowers, which are in serious decline throughout the UK.

St Mary's Caerhun, Conwy, is a relatively small churchyard and the community was interested to find out about the biodiversity it might contain. We promoted the event via Facebook and word of mouth.

On Saturday 4 June '22 over 30 people came from this very rural community, aged 9 months to 90 years old! Some were experts and some knew very little about flora and fauna. Some people checked their finds with specialist books whilst others uploaded data using iNaturalist that linked directly to the NBN database.

The results of what we found surprised us all.

<b>Bats x 2</b>	<b>Ferns x 2</b>	<b>Insects x 10</b>
<b>Birds x 8</b>	<b>Flowers x 73</b>	<b>Trees x 4</b>
<b>Butterfly x 1</b>	<b>Grasses x 6</b>	

But this was not all: Mark Sheridan from *Butterfly Conservation* kindly set up the moth traps the night before for a couple of hours for a spectacular find of no less than **38 species of moths**. These were all photographed, and a display was then made available in church with an encouragement for people to



Large Skipper





continue recording. It was a particular joy to see two teenage boys handling the moths and eager with their questions to learn more. They then got their grandparents involved and had a

couple of moth evenings later in the summer. This has now led to a request for a moth evening on the local church's open weekend in May.



What next? Now we now know so much more about the wildlife in our churchyards and more importantly, the appropriate management plans needed to sustain and maybe even increase the biodiversity present, we are keen to extend the learning in the coming months to the other churchyards in our group so that we can create a joined-up corridor of wildlife-sustainable churchyards at the top end of the Conwy valley.

We will participate in 'Churches Count on Nature' once again this summer. Who knows what we will find and how this will compare to last year? Partnership with multiple organisations has been key to the success of this project. Our particular thanks go to *Butterfly Conservation*, and *North Wales Wildlife Trust* for their proactive support.

Rev'd Susan Blagden, [susancameracoach@icloud.com](mailto:susancameracoach@icloud.com) Tel: 077 41 900360

# DYNAMIC BEYOND COMPARE

by *Bruce Richmond-Hurst*

In my mind's eye looking from the top, I always think of a blue hindwing with a black stripe across it. The reality is a black hindwing, with a blue stripe.

The only time I have seen this moth, was when a superb specimen turned up at Pensychnant Conservation Centre, early September 2020 whilst the COVID plague was raging through the United Kingdom. A live specimen of the insect was exhibited for the Moth group meeting by my predecessor, Julian Thompson. It was the first known record ever in North Wales.

The moth was completely tranquil and unafraid in its temporary confinement, it



The Clifden Nonpareil caught by Julian Thompson at Pensychnant Conservation Centre way back in 07/09/2020, the first known record in North Wales. It does appear to be fresh. It shows the black ground colour and characteristic blue stripe.

didn't seem to mind being examined and photographed by the people there including myself. The moth was large, exotic looking and seemed to pose like a celebrity at the BAFTAs. It was undeniably the star of the show.

I had not long taken over as Vice County Moth Recorder from Julian, it seemed the moth gods had awarded him with a medal of honour for his years of loyal service to Mothing!

I am of course, writing

about the magnificent macrolepidopteran, called *Catocala fraxini* (Linnaeus, 1758) with its charming, vernacular name - the Clifden Nonpareil. The first word Clifden refers to the place it was originally discovered in Britain, the second word is French, meaning 'beyond compare' and it is easy to see why. It is also known

more prosaically, as the Blue Underwing. I will shift between the three names in this piece.

The word underwing when we talk of Lepidoptera, is a reference to the hindwings of moths which usually, have some characteristic feature concerning the appearance of their hindwings, for instance colour. Other examples of this 'underwing' include, Large Yellow Underwing, Orange Underwing, Pearly Underwing and some family members which share the same genus as *Catocala fraxini* being, the wonderful and widespread Red Underwing. The latter two are in fact classed as a group in the Erebidae family as 'underwings,' although they were originally housed in the Noctuidae family. This small tribe have been called Catocalinae

The Clifden Nonpareil and the Red Underwing, are two of eight species encapsulated within the Catocalinae genus which have been recorded in Britain however, six of them are very rare migrants confined to the coastal regions of Southern England. The Red Underwing (*Catocala nupta*) is found throughout lowland England and Wales. The Blue Underwing (*Catocala fraxini*) is the largest of this genus to be found in the UK and is both a migrant and a colonist.

The small group of moths, encompassed within the Catocalinae species as I have already mentioned, are part of the large complex family called the Erebidae, these contain interesting species such as the Pale Tussock, The Vapourer, the Herald and of course the Clifden Nonpareil. There are ten sub-families, one is called the Erebinae currently holding fourteen species, this is where we find lepidopterans such as the Mother Shipton and the marvellous moth we are discussing. The Erebinae family is also given the vernacular name of 'Underwings and their Allies.'

The Erebinae underwings described as Catocalinae, including the Clifden Nonpareil, have a grey or greyish ground colour to the forewings, with crosslines and have an extended resting position, which naturally reveals the remarkable vibrant hindwing colours. They look more like geometrids in appearance at first glance. The Blue Underwing being the largest, has a forewing of 41-48mm.

The hindwing colour of *Catocala fraxini*, differs from its seven cousins, in the way the colouring presents itself. For example, the Red Underwing, its five cohort members including the Oak Yellow Underwing, when looking at them dorsally, have bright coloured hindwings with a slim, black postmedian band and another separate black band leading from the subterminal area to the terminal shade before the fringe. Clifden Nonpareil has two black bands on blue ground colour too, but only ventrally. The Dorsal view of *Catocala fraxini*, has a black hindwing with a blue band or sometimes, tertiary blue-violet band running across it, between the postmedian and subterminal area. This moth together with its other Catocalinae relatives have a whitish fringe. Hopefully, I've established the Blue Underwing's place in relation to its cousins, so we can talk about the Clifden Nonpareil generally.

The caterpillar feeds on Aspen mainly and other poplars either natural or plantations. There is not much Aspen in North Wales and The Clifden Nonpareil has not yet been found as larvae here. It is yet to be established whether, the moth is now resident or migrant from either abroad or from England, more research is needed, to see if it has colonised North Wales.

Blue Underwing caterpillars, feed nocturnally. They are seasonally active as caterpillars between April and July. The caterpillars have an ochreous grey appearance and can be seen resting diurnally on the bark of its foodplant trees. The Larvae then pupate into a silken cocoon amongst leaf litter or between leaves. The species also overwinters as an egg. Perhaps we can look out for Clifden caterpillars on Aspen in the NW vice counties.

The Clifden Nonpareil has now been recorded in every vice county in Wales except for VC48 (Meirionethshire.) Why this is, is unknown. It maybe because it has not yet been observed there, as a matter of timing of people recording. It is sure to show up soon perhaps in 2023. It was first recorded, in North Wales in VC49 Caernarvonshire. It is important to give a brief and wider history of this moth and its rather rapid but gradual, proliferation through the British Isles, during the Twenty First Century.



The Blue Underwing is very much an inhabitant of mainland Europe which has migrated into Great Britain, although sightings have been rare. The earliest specimen was recorded in July 1740 in the village of Cliveden, Berkshire. Clifden is the archaic spelling of this village and associated with Cliveden House in Maidenhead, where the specimen is probably kept. Another specimen caught in Dorset is said to be placed in the Dale collection in the Hope Museum in Oxford. There does seem to be a few conflicting accounts relating to the discovery of this moth. The Cliveden account is the most relevant as it was recorded as being first encountered resting on an Ash tree. Carl Linnaeus gave the Clifden Nonpareil its binomial name of *Fraxini* meaning Ash. It was supposed erroneously that Ash was the larval foodplant. Since that time, there were a range of single captures of Clifden Nonpareil from 1821 - 1917. These records are all over Britain for example London 1840, Kent 1889, Somerset 1850, Sussex 1838, Lincoln 1872, Yorkshire 1896 being five specimens, Durham had six in 1917, Cheshire had, four, Lancashire six specimens. It was found in Aberdeen and Orkney in 1898. Shropshire had a record in 1872 despite that, there has been no mention of North Wales. Is this because no one was looking for it? Who knows?

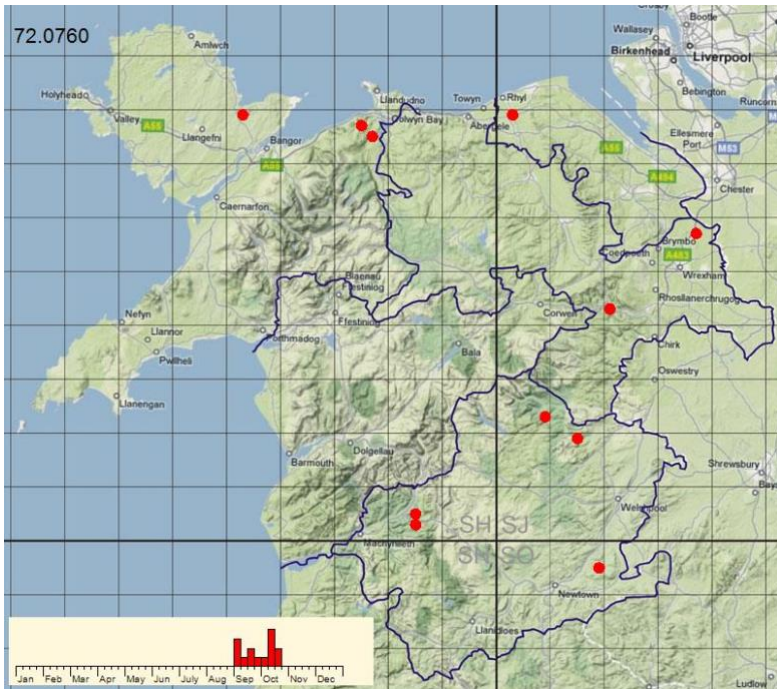
During the 1930s, it was found that Clifden Nonpareil was happily established in Orlestone Forest in Kent and believed to be possibly resident in Norfolk as well. The moth population of *Catocala fraxini* seemed to collapse after 1956 and the moth then became extinct in the British Isles in the early nineteen sixties. It did, however, start to reoccur after the year 2000 in Kent and has been recorded throughout England ever since. It was then being noticed in Wales; I think possibly Monmouth was the first Welsh recording. Climate change may be the dynamic behind this yearly advance of the species. Finally, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2020, Clifden Nonpareil, turned up in Pensychnant Conwy, to an MV trap, which is of course my very own VC49 (Caernarvonshire.) There was some debate as to whether the Clifden Nonpareil had been reared and released accidentally. It seems not likely after the way the moth's appearance has spread throughout the country.

North Wales Lepidoptera, (the database administrator not the moths!) has kindly allowed me to republish the map showing the sightings of *Catocala fraxini* in North Wales. This includes the latest record from October 2022 in Conwy with

2023



these two worn specimens, caught and photographed by Mark Sheridan in his garden with an MV trap. They were caught 18/10/2022 and have certainly been round the block. There is no Aspen at this location although there are poplars. Clifden caterpillars will take poplar in captivity, so Poplar in the wild is not unlikely.



We can see from the vice county map of North Wales, there have been 12 sightings of Clifden Nonpareil. The red spots represent the areas not the moth numbers particularly. The earliest year was 2020 in Caernarvonshire, Montgomeryshire had 2 sightings the same year, Denbighshire had one sighting in 2021. Anglesey, Caernarvonshire, Anglesey and again Montgomeryshire had more sightings in 2022 and the Conwy area having its second record. Alas, we

must spare a thought for the Merionethshire Vice County Moth Recorder, where there have been zero sightings so far! Anyway, I best not rub my eminent colleague of VC48's nose in it! So, moving on...

As far as I believe, we are unaware if the Clifden Nonpareil we have seen were either males or females. I understand however, that the VC49 and VC52 capture locations, do have Aspen growing close by. The male *Catocala fraxini* imago, does have a tendency to wander in search of females it can, therefore, appear to be itinerant in its quest. History seems to indicate the moths are rare migrants but, there are now colonies in England. Time will only tell if they manage to establish themselves in North Wales and become fully fledged localised denizens.

I should perhaps mention that the Welsh name, ol-adain las, which translates as Blue Underwing.

This photo is one of the 2022 VC49 Clifdens, taken by Mark Sheridan showing the equally beautiful sky-blue underside and two black stripes.



Let's hope they continue to fly in North Wales and maybe establish themselves locally where there is Aspen and perhaps acquiring a taste for Poplar.

**The Clifden Nonpareil certainly is a splendacious moth, on a dynamic mission to expand its territory perhaps, beyond compare.**

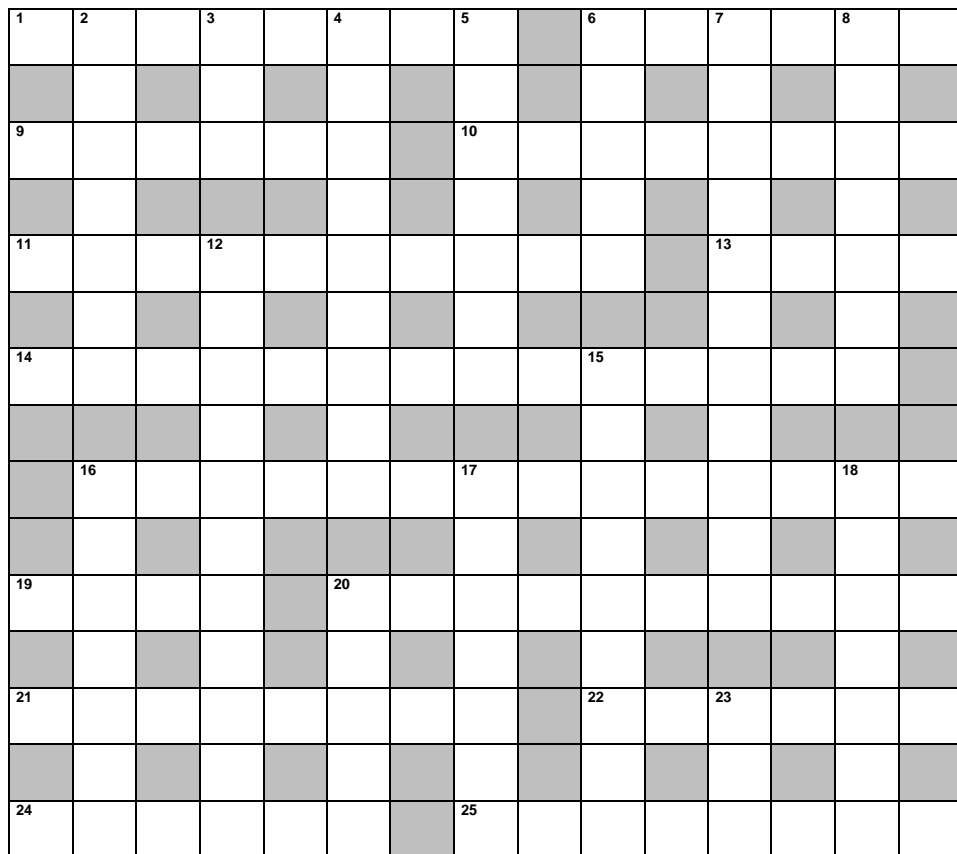
2023

# LEPIDOPTERAN CROSSWORD- *Mostly!*

## *No 4*

### *By Paul Board*

With some clues that are Cryptic (like the Wood White butterfly!).



Solution on page 46





## Across

- 1 Photo 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Moth Caterpillar (or is it Van Morrison?) (8)
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Hawk-Moth in Photo 2 (6)
- 9 *Vanessa* \_\_\_\_\_, butterfly in Photo 3 (6)
- 10 Butterfly in Photo 4 (8)
- 11 Composed comic prose about this instrument (10)
- 13 Returned part for snare (4)
- 14 Drunken pilot persisted to get people like you? (14)
- 16 Foodplant of the plume moth (*Wheeleria spilodactylus*) (5,9)
- 19 Lily classed as an invasive species in Australia (4)
- 20 Overcrowding in the preserves factory? (10)
- 21 I stepped around the compounds (8)
- 22 \_\_\_\_\_ Fawr, Welsh for butterflies that have been known as 'summer snowflakes' (3, 3)
- 24 Some forms as ash trees in Africa? (6)
- 25 Detecting pheromones for example (8)

## Down

- 2 Fancy aiming east perhaps? (7)
- 3 Initially never offered dancers a show of approval (3)
- 4 Moth in Photo 5 (9)
- 5 Common \_\_\_\_\_, Foodplant of 1 Across (and shown in Photo 1) (7)
- 6 London \_\_\_\_\_, foodplant of the London Midget moth (*Phyllonorycter platani*) (5)
- 7 Moth in Photo 6 (4, 7)
- 8 Yearly books about certain plants? (7)
- 12 Insects that feed on dried fruit(*Cadra figulilella*) (6, 5)
- 15 Victor leaves a veneer mix assortment to reconsider (9)
- 16 Female bees (7)
- 17 Diffusion (7)
- 18 Relative enthusiastic about this material? (7)
- 20 \_\_\_\_\_ *lactearia*, Little Emerald Moth (5)
- 23 Every other roost is rubbish! (3)

2023

# BC & RAMBLERS CYMRU

by *Clare Williams*

The Pwll Glas/Graig Fechan area which includes BC's Eyarth Rocks reserve is one of 18 communities around Wales involved in the Ramblers Paths to Wellbeing Project. The project focusses on improving access to nature and local green spaces and also enhancing biodiversity and environmental quality.

As part of their engagement activities, the Ramblers worked with Ruthin Brownies to build bird boxes which have been kindly



donated to BC for our Eyarth Rocks reserve. The boxes and their beautiful cheery designs can now be seen from the main paths around the reserve; the Brownies are

looking forward to seeing birds take up residence in their new homes.



The 'Community Miles' page of the Ramblers website details a number of walks in the Eyarth Rocks area and further afield <https://www.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk/community-miles>

The Woods and Rocks walk takes in BC's reserve as part of a 3.5km walk.

2023

# BUTTERFLY & MOTH EVENTS 2023

All our events are free, but donations are always appreciated and will help towards the work of Butterfly Conservation.

Please wear strong footwear and dress for the weather - possible need for sunscreen - and bring adequate drinks and snacks.

## First Monday of every month 7.30pm

### North Wales Moth Group Meeting

Come along to our monthly meeting whether you're a time-served trapper, a beginner or just want to know more – and we even talk about other wildlife!

**Pensychnant, Sychnant Pass, Conwy, LL32 8BJ. SH751770**

**Contact Julian Thompson for more information 01492 592595**

### Occasional Zoom Moths Meetings

Are you a moth-er in North Wales and would you be interested in joining a Zoom session to share your photos and ask about tricky IDs? If so, then please contact [mark.sheridan.mgc@gmail.com](mailto:mark.sheridan.mgc@gmail.com) to receive the link for these sessions.

## Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June 10pm - late

### Moths of the Gwydyr Forest

As part of the North Wales Wildlife Trust Conwy Valley Branch event to look for Nightjars in Cors Bodgynydd, Pensychnant's Julian Thompson will set up his moth traps. All are welcome to join him and see what is attracted to the light.

**Meet at Cors Bodgynydd Reserve Car Park: SH766597**

**Bring a torch and be prepared for midges.**

**Info - Julian Thompson [julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com](mailto:julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com) / 01492 592595**

## Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 11am - 4pm

### Halkyn Mountain Bioblitz

Halkyn Mountain Nature Conservation Group Bioblitz will be based again in Halkyn Parish Hall and entrance will be FREE.

Iwan Edwards from the North Wales Wildlife Trust will lead children on bug hunts in the fenced off area around the hall.

Stands with live moths trapped the night before, Newts etc.

Cofnod will be helping us record everything on guided walks with local experts.

We will be particularly on the lookout for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

Parents can sit and chat over tea and cake in the Hall.

Families with young children are very welcome (but no dogs please!)

**Halkyn Parish Hall, Rectory Cl, Ysceifiog, Holywell CH8 8BU**

**<https://www.facebook.com/Halkynmountainconserv>**

## **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June 10pm - late**

### **Moths of the Great Orme**

As part of the North Wales Wildlife Trust Conwy Valley Branch event to look for Glow-worms on the Great Orme, Pensychnant's Julian Thompson will set up his moth traps. All are welcome to join him and see what is attracted to the light.

**Meet at Toll House, West Shore, Llandudno. SH768823 Bring a torch. For more info - Julian Thompson [julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com](mailto:julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com) / 01492 592595**

## **Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June 1.30pm - 3.30pm**

### **Conwy Valley Silver-studded Blues**

When flying in numbers, the Great Orme Silver-studded Blue butterflies are truly impressive. We also hope to see other butterflies and day-flying moths plus a wide variety of other wildlife on this short walk. Uneven paths and steps.

This is a joint event with the North Wales Wildlife Trust Conwy Valley Branch.

**Meet at Toll House, West Shore. Llandudno: SH768823. Bring binoculars.**

**Booking Essential go to <https://www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/events>**

**Info - Mark Sheridan at [mark.sheridan.mgc@gmail.com](mailto:mark.sheridan.mgc@gmail.com)**

## **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 11am - 5pm**

### **National Meadows Day at Pensychnant**

97% of Britain's wildflower meadows have been destroyed since the War.

Pensychnant has created three new ones. This day will be a blatant celebration of Pensychnant's meadows, with instructive guided walks on the creation and traditional management of meadows, plant identification, invertebrate sampling and recording, crafts and children's activities and games.

FairTrade tea & cakes available on the lawn in the sunshine amidst flowerbeds, buzzing insects - butterflies, bees and hoverflies. Free but donations appreciated.

**Info - Julian Thompson [julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com](mailto:julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com) / 01492 592595**

**Pensychnant , Sychnant Pass, Conwy, LL32 8BJ. SH751770**

## **Weekend 15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> July**

### **Ashworth's Rustic Weekend at Pensychnant**

Our annual search for Pensychnant's rarest moths, the Ashworth's Rustic and Weaver's Wave. We will set the traps at 9pm and some will stay with the traps all night! Others will come at 11am on Sunday to peruse the catch over a cuppa. Weather permitting there will be hundreds of moths of maybe over a hundred species. Good photo opportunities on Sunday. Tea & cakes on sale.

**Meet at Pensychnant, Sychnant Pass, Conwy, LL32 8BJ. SH751770**

**Info - Julian Thompson [julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com](mailto:julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com) / 01492 592595**

### **Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 11am - 5pm**

#### **Insectaganza**

A celebration of our six-legged friends (and maybe a few non-insect crawlies)  
Various activities, walks, chat, nature-friendly gardening tips, insect safaris,  
moths, butterflies, bees, children's craft activities and games.....

Tea & Cake stall will be open. Donations appreciated

**Info - Julian Thompson** [julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com](mailto:julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com) / 01492 592595

**Pensychnant, Sychnant Pass, Conwy, LL32 8BJ. SH751770**

### **Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July 1.30pm - 4.30pm**

#### **Bryn Eurn Transect Walk**

Paul Board will lead us along his regular butterfly transect route to see and  
record not only butterflies but day-flying moths and other wildlife.

Spectacular views.

**Meet at 122, Dinerth Road, Rhos on Sea SH827802**

**Booking essential - email** [mark.sheridan.mgc@gmail.com](mailto:mark.sheridan.mgc@gmail.com)

### **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August 11am - 5pm**

#### **Butterfly Conservation Wild Spaces /AGM**

Butterfly Conservation is on a mission to create 100,000 Wild Spaces by 2026 to  
help improve the fortunes of butterflies and moths and other wildlife. This could  
be a window box or a woodland. Obviously Pensychnant is wealthy in terms of  
existing habitat and opportunities for improvement. Come along for a guided  
walk and chat about ways in which you can improve somewhere for wildlife - and  
sign up to Butterfly Conservation's pledge to create 100,000 Wild Spaces.

All are welcome to come along to this event.

If you're a member (if not you will be able to join on the day) please join our brief  
BC North Wales Branch AGM at 1pm.

Tea & Cake stall will be open.

**Pensychnant, Sychnant Pass, Conwy, LL32 8BJ. SH751770**

**Info Julian Thompson** [julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com](mailto:julian.pensychnant@btinternet.com) / 01492 592595

### **Surveying & Monitoring Events**

We hope to arrange events that involve surveying and monitoring on the  
Selected Priority Landscapes, particularly butterflies and moths on the  
Threatened Species list for North Wales.

Look out for details of these events - dates, times and places - by email and  
posted on our Facebook group.



2023

**Butterfly Conservation North Wales**  
**Branch Financial Statement 2022-2023**

	Income	Expenditure	Balance
Opening balance April 2022			1265.29
Subs from H.O.	1902.00		3167.29
Newsletter		781.00	2386.29
Reserve Maintenance		1000.00	1386.29
AGM		240.00	1146.29
Balance 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023			1146.29

- During the current financial year we received £1902 from Branch subscriptions. This was a reduction on last years £2085
- We have had three items of expenditure – production of the Branch newsletter, contribution to groundworks at Eyarth Rocks and costs of the AGM which was held at Pensychnant
- Our current book balance is £1146.29

***Robert Lee***  
***(Branch Treasurer)***

**WELCOME**

to all our new members who have joined during the past year.  
We look forward to meeting you at an event or our AGM.

**WE NEED YOU**

If you would like to know more about your committee, become involved in any of its activities, or maybe even join us, please let us know – we'd love to hear from you!

**MANY THANKS**

to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter.  
If you, too, would like to see your article in print, the next newsletter deadline will be **28<sup>th</sup> February 2024**.

I look forward to hearing from you with your contribution!

***Mark Sheridan***  
***(Newsletter Editor)***

# ASHWORTH'S RUSTIC & WEAVER'S

## WAVE in North Wales, Summer 2022

by *John Mulley*, School of Natural Sciences, Bangor University

Despite living in North Wales for some time, the existence of Ashworth's Rustic (*Xestia ashworthii*) and Weaver's Wave (*Idaea contiguaria*) had passed me by, until a chance discussion with Julian Thompson at Pensychnant in spring 2022. As a geneticist, these two species, found in North Wales but nowhere else in the UK, intrigued me, as their limited range and lack of new individuals (and genes) from populations on mainland Europe leaves them at risk of inbreeding and the associated reduction in genetic diversity. Populations that lack genetic diversity struggle to cope with change, whether it be climate-related or new diseases or parasites. Both species are listed in Section 7 ("list of the living organisms of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales") of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, and a better understanding of their potential genetic resilience, and especially the extent of genetic variation within and between populations will be a vital part of their conservation. The distribution of both species suggests they are cold-adapted, and whilst many cold-adapted moths in the UK are shifting their range northwards (or even north-westwards (Hordley et al. 2023)) as the climate changes, there is obviously only a short distance that these moths can shift before they hit the Irish sea! Altitudinal shifts to higher elevations are also likely to be only a short-term solution. I was therefore keen to get some samples of both species to get to grips with levels of genetic diversity, and to provide samples for whole genome sequencing through the Darwin Tree of Life Project (<https://www.darwintreeoflife.org/>), which aims to sequence the genome of every plant, animal, fungus and protist in the UK.

Both Ashworth's Rustic and Weaver's Wave were popular targets for amateur entomologists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where they are often referred to as being "common". Indeed, there are several reports in the annual reports of the Manchester Entomological Society and others of excursions to Penmaenmawr and Sychnant Pass to hunt for moth or caterpillars, especially for Ashworth's

Rustic, all of which seem to have been pretty successful. However, more recent records from the North Wales Lepidoptera database generally consist of only 1-2 individuals at irregular frequencies. Properly determining the range and population size of these species in North Wales is going to require a concerted trapping effort, and I thought I'd use 2022 to trial a few sites and a few different trapping approaches. Wine ropes resulted in only a couple of Small Angle Shades (*Euplexia lucipara*), but light traps met with (some) more success. Given the mountainous habitat I was particularly keen to try the LepiLED (Brehm, 2017), which is powered by a USB powerbank, and so is more portable as it doesn't need heavy batteries or generators.



Trapping at the Jubilee Path, Penmaenmawr, July 2022 (top). Weaver's Wave (*Idaea contiguaria*, bottom left) and Ashworth's Rustic (*Xestia ashworthii*, bottom

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> of July and the middle of August I visited sites across North Wales with LepiLED and actinic light traps, paying particular attention to the original hotspots around Penmaenmawr and Sychnant Pass, but also extending out to other sites which seemed to meet the requirements of one or both species. Ten nights of trapping around Sychnant Pass turned up three Weaver's Waves and two Ashworth's Rustics, with several attempts along the Jubilee Path at Penmaenmawr resulting in another two of the latter (Figure 1). Two nights trapping near Llyn Ogwen (each lasting around 3 hours from sunset) however gave 40 Ashworth's. These results seem to be in line with the North Wales Lepidoptera database records, as while most records consist of 1-2 intermittent individuals, there are sites where Ashworth's Rustics at least are locally abundant, and in some cases almost dominant. Around Llyn Ogwen appears to be one, and Douglas Boyes identified another apparent hotspot at Glaslyn in 2014/15. It's difficult to draw too many conclusions from a single summer, but my efforts in the Sychnant Pass, which at times included half a dozen traps, ranging from MV, to actinic, to LED, combined with the regular trapping at the Pensychnant Nature Conservation Centre does perhaps suggest that these species are much harder to find in this historic stronghold than early 20<sup>th</sup> century records would suggest. Tait, in his 1923 review of the life history of *Xestia* (then *Agrotis*) *ashworthii*, did suggest a decline in abundance around Penmaenmawr following an increase in the number of individuals parasitised by ichneumon wasps, and it may be that the species never re-established itself there over the intervening century.

In addition to sampling from wild populations, I'm also keen to establish some lab colonies of both species to provide virgin females for pheromone trapping, and luckily several retained Ashworth's Rustic females produced eggs in late July 2022. The eggs start white and then become brown a day or two later, and in my hands hatched after 7-9 days, contrary to Tait (1923) who claimed 10-14 days. Caterpillars have been reared on an artificial diet over the winter, and the first individual pupated on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January (below).



Rearing Ashworth's Rustic (*Xestia ashworthii*). Top, left to right: freshly laid eggs; 2 day old eggs; 7 day old larvae. Bottom, left to right: 14 -day old larvae; pre-pupa;

Hopefully this season will see the addition of some Weaver's Wave eggs, although that will require a more successful trapping season in 2023. On that note, if anyone has suggestions of additional sites for either species, do please drop me a line at [j.mulley@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:j.mulley@bangor.ac.uk)

## References

Brehm, G., 2017. A new LED lamp for the collection of nocturnal Lepidoptera and a spectral comparison of light-trapping lamps. *Nota lepidopterologica*, 40(1), pp.87-108.

Hordley, L.A., Fox, R., Suggitt, A.J. and Bourn, N.A., 2023. Precipitation buffers temperature-driven local extinctions of moths at warm range margins. *Ecology Letters*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ele.14195>

Tait, R., 1923. *Agrotis ashworthii*: Life History Up to Date. *Manchester Entomological Society Report and Transactions 1922 and 1923*, pp 19-32.



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE LLANDUDNO, COLWYN BAY AND DISTRICT FIELD CLUB 1906-1950

by *Paul Board*



*The Field Club's first President, Dr Willoughby Gardner (1860-1953), taken when he led one of the Club's rambles*

In December last year I was browsing the above at Llandudno Library and came across some notes on our local butterflies which might be of interest. This Field Club was formed in 1906 to '*encourage the study of natural history and archaeology in North Wales.*'. It arranged excursions in the summer and lectures in the winter and kept going until 1950.

The 1949 Proceedings (Vol XXII) list the butterflies found within a 25 mile radius of Llandudno sometime after a talk by Mr

Gordon Ellis FRAS FREntS on March 29<sup>th</sup> at Llandudno Library. I have annotated further details for the species (or forms) we would consider somewhat rarer locally today and also added some notes from a previous report in the 1909 Proceedings (which also cover moths and blames the development of Llandudno as a seaside resort, and particularly the Golf Club for the extinction of several species):

1. Large White
2. Small White
3. Green-veined White
4. Pale Clouded Yellow '*Although I have not observed this species locally, single specimens have been observed at Deganwy in 1929 and Trefriw in 1932.*'

5. Clouded Yellow *'Generally rare; a few in 1941, 1943 and 1945; but common everywhere in 1947. When great numbers invaded Britain from the continent. The white form (variation Melice) occurred in some numbers in 1945 and 1947 especially during August of the latter year.'*
6. Brimstone *'Scarce generally but seems to be increasing in numbers during recent years. Most specimens observed in the Pydew and Eglwysbach district in Spring after hibernation.'*
7. Silver-washed Fritillary *Decidedly scarce everywhere; a few in the Pydew district 1942, and usually a few in the Aber Valley, Abergele district and east of Eglwysbach.'*
8. High Brown Fritillary *'Very local and scarce, a few Bryn Pydew, Llandulas, Eglwysbach and Bryn-y-Maen. A small colony exists and apparently thrives in a valley about Ffondlas Bridge.'* 1909: *'Very rare. Mr T H Court took five specimens on Gloddaeth hill side and has seen no others before or since.'*
9. Dark Green Fritillary *'Scarce on Great Orme and in Pydew district. Common on high ground throughout area bounded by Llysfaen, Glan-Conwy, Betws-y-Coed, Gwtherin... '*
10. Pearl-bordered Fritillary *'Common in Conway Valley, especially on East side of river around Eglwysbach. Also common on Conway Mountain. Occurs in Nant-y-Glyn Valle, Colwyn Bay and is quite common each Spring around Bryn Pydew. It appears that this species has become established in the Colwyn Bay-Pydew and Llandudno districts quite recently....'. 1909: 'Marl Woods-very occasional.'*
11. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *'The distribution and history of this species is identical to that of the preceding one.'*
12. Comma *Fairly commo...I took a specimen of the rare Nigrocaria form with large black blotches on the wings at Bryn Pydew in 1943.'*
13. Small Tortoiseshell
14. Large Tortoiseshell...*I observed a specimen...in Bodysgallen Woods..in April 1944...again in that area and at Bryn Pydew in 1945, 1946 and 1948.'*
15. Camberwell Beauty *'An extreme rarity, the only records I can find are as follows:-Lyn Ogwen June 1955; Pensarn, Conwy and Penmaenmawr all in 1872 and Llandudno August 6<sup>th</sup> 1948. This last specimen was handed to*

*me by a gentleman who captured it in a tea garden near the Old Abbey Hotel.'*

16. Peacock
17. Painted Lady
18. Red Admiral
19. Speckled Wood
20. Wall Brown
21. Grayling *'Common... a dwarf form (var. Thyone) exists on the Great Orme and on a hillside above Glan Conwy. This form emerges about mid-June, the normal type some three weeks later; during 1949 I took a few specimens of both forms during early October.'*
22. Meadow Brown
23. Gatekeeper
24. Ringlet
25. Small Heath
26. Duke of Burgundy *'Very rare indeed, Bryn Pydew one specimen 1943.'*
27. Small Copper *'...Very rarely the typical red ground colour by creamy white (var. Schmidtii). I have taken this form at Mochdre.' 1909: 'quite rare within the district, while just over the river on the Conway Mountain it is found in great profusion.'*
28. Brown Hairstreak *'Rare. I have only observed this species at Trefriw.'*
29. Purple Hairstreak *'Fairly common, at least since the mid-1940's. Occurs at Bryn Pydew, Llangwstenin, Aber, Trefriw and generally in the Conwy Valley (West side).'* 1909: *'Marl Woods-rare.'*
30. White-letter Hairstreak *'Rare in Aber Valley. A single worn specimen was taken at Bryn Pydew in 1941.'*
31. Green Hairstreak *'Rare on coast but very common around Betws-y-Coed and between Llayn Crafnant and Capel Curig.'*
32. Silver-studded Blue *'Very common on Great Orme especially on side facing south-west. Also found less commonly at Bryn Pydew. The local form of this species (var. Caernensis) is smaller than the usual type and emerges about three weeks earlier. It is only found in this district. It is smaller than the normal type and is covered with blue scales. Elsewhere the females are brown.'*
33. Brown Argus

34. Common Blue
35. Holly Blue
36. Small Blue '*Very rare; my personal experience is limited to a couple of specimens which I observed on the hill above Gloddaeth in 1944. Said to occur near Llandulas.*'
37. Grizzled Skipper '*Rare, only occurs sparingly in the Llandulas and Abergele districts.*'
38. Dingy Skipper '*Common generally on rough, uncultivated ground, much commoner than formerly and seems to be getting commoner.*' 1909: '*Marl Woods-common but local.*'
39. Small Skipper
40. Large Skipper

## TWO NEW COUNTY RECORDS FOR MONTGOMERYSHIRE

by *Dr Simon Spencer*

The mild autumn encouraged me to keep on trapping moths in my Garden in Llanyllin in north Montgomeryshire. I was well rewarded. On the 26th of October I had White Point (*Mythimna albipunctata*), (right), a first for Montgomeryshire and North Wales and on the 1st of November I had **TWO** Tunbridge Wells Gem's (*Chrysodeixis acuta*), (below). This species is again new for Montgomeryshire and the whole of North Wales. To give you some idea of how rare this species apparently that



up to 2017 only

around 30 Tunbridge Wells Gems had ever been recorded in the UK. Warm southerly winds obviously helped as these are presumably migrants from somewhere further south.

## AN APPEAL

### **The Llanymynech Butterfly transect. Volunteers required.**

The Llanymynech Butterfly transect has been running for about 20 years and most recently walked by Frank Bell who lives in Oswestry, who usually manages both this and the shorter Llyncllys common transect every week in the season. It takes at least 2 hours and is quite difficult walking in a few places due to negligence of Powys County Council in keeping footpaths safe. Frank would like some help. It is one of the best butterfly sites in Wales and Shropshire though it appears to have lost Pearl-bordered Fritillary again. Although I set up the transect and have offered to help Frank I am frequently away and I find the transect almost impossible in one place. There are 2 sections on the MWT reserve, 1 on the SWT reserve and 4 on footpaths on the Llanymynech Golf Course including a long section on Offas Dyke path. As reported in a previous newsletter there has been considerable habitat restoration and scrub clearance on the Golf Course, which is part of the SSSI, funded by the Nature Network Fund with the Golf Course as the lead partner. It would be really good to see how this work affects butterfly numbers. We need some more local volunteers. We could break it up to make it easier or we could have more of a team. Please contact Simon Spencer [cerisyi@btinternet.com](mailto:cerisyi@btinternet.com) or 07866428875 if you can help.

## A BOOK REVIEW



Little moth is lost, and he's sure the moon is close. But the city lights confuse and disorient him, and he can't find his way home. Can you help guide him through the hustle and bustle of the city? It will be a challenge, but with your help and determination, can he make it? Join the intrepid little moth on his mission and help him find the moon!

A brilliant interactive story that teaches children about determination, with a subtle introduction about our environment around us, with plenty of laughs along the way. Hayley Griffin is an author-illustrator of children's literature and a passionate book designer. She lives in rural North Wales with her partner, two young children, and two Huskies.

Copies available on Amazon.



# BUTTERFLIES IN TENERIFE AND THE CANARY ISLANDS

by *Victor H. Hitchings*

Recording or seeing butterflies can be a rewarding part or addition to our vacations. A popular tourist destination for many Brits are the Canary Islands. They lie in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Africa, at the closest, they are 83 km from Morocco. A four hour plus plane ride from Manchester Airport they are easily accessible from the U.K.



Map showing the Canary Islands and Tenerife

The Canary Islands are volcanic and range in age from 1.1 to 1.2 million years for El Hierro to 22 to 23 million years for Fuerteventura. Tenerife, the largest of the islands and the focus of this article, is about 12 million years old with multiple episodes of island formation. The volcanic nature of the archipelago leads to rich soils and well vegetated areas where the rainfall and moisture permit. Tenerife is characterized by a generally dry, warm climate. It has most rainfall from the north and the vegetation is consequently lusher on the north and northwest of the island whereas the south is arid. Mount Teide, at the core of Tenerife, is 3,715 m (12,188 ft) high and is the third highest volcano in the world. Tenerife

2023

has six major vegetation zones that are directly related to altitude and the direction in which they face. A characteristic zone is the forest of Canary Island Pine which encircles the Las Cañadas caldera of the volcano, and which is visible from most of the island.



Mount Teide from Puerto de la Cruz.

The mid ground trees are part of the Canary Pine forest.

### Butterflies of Tenerife

Tenerife has twenty-five resident butterfly species and three migrant species. Of the residents, seven belong to the Pieridae (Whites, Yellows, Migrants and Brimstones), nine are from the Nymphalidae family (Brush-footed butterflies), eight are from the Lycaenidae family (Gossamer-winged butterflies) but the Hesperiidae family is only represented by a single species.

Tenerife Butterflies by Family



■ Lycaenidae ■ Hesperiidae ■ Nymphalidae ■ Pieridae

Pie diagram of the number of species per butterfly family in Tenerife

Most butterflies are to be seen from May to September with a marked decrease in numbers in October.

The Canary Islands have the highest percentage of endemic species in Europe with 29% of the species being endemics.

In 2017-2021 the Council of Tenerife conducted a monitoring campaign with volunteers and identified 17,805 individual butterflies over the five year period. Twenty-five species were identified and 86% belonged to eight species, Small White, Canary Blue, Pea Blue (or Long-tailed Blue), Canary Speckled Wood, Painted Lady, Clouded Yellow, Southern Brown Argus and Canary Red Admiral. These, therefore, will be the most likely species to observe.

In the following notes the family sections start with a list of species with their common English and scientific names. Thereafter are some brief notes on the more interesting species.

Pieridae Family: Whites, Yellows and Brimstones

Canary Large White *Pieris cheiranthi*, Small White *Pieris rapae*, Bath White *Pontia daplidice*, Green-striped White *Euchloe belemia*, Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*, African Migrant *Catopsilia florella*, Canary Brimstone *Gonepteryx cleobule*.

The Canary Large White is more heavily marked than the Large White in the U.K. and Europe and the black discal patches are much larger and fused together. Small Whites are more commonly seen, and in December 2022 I counted around 30 flying in a small area in a barranco (gully) in Puerto de la Cruz. Bath Whites are extremely rare immigrant to the British Isles but can be seen on most of the Canary islands. The Canary Brimstone is very similar to the Cleopatra of Europe and behaves in a very similar manner.

The Green-striped White ranges across northern Africa, Arabia (Oman, United Arab Emirates), the southern Iberian peninsula, especially Spain and Portugal as well as some of the Canary Islands. At least three subspecies of the species have been recorded, *hesperidum* in Fuerteventura, *eversi* in Tenerife and *grancanariensis* in Gran Canaria.

Nymphalidae Family: Brush-footed Butterflies

Monarch *Danaus plexippus*, Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*, Canary Red Admiral *Vanessa vulcana*, Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*, American Painted Lady *Vanessa virginiensis*, Cardinal *Argynnis pandora*, Canary Grayling *Hipparchia wyssii*, Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*, Canary Speckled Wood *Pararge xiphoides*

Monarch butterflies are a North American species and very well known for their Autumnal migrations from the northern U.S.A. and Canada to Mexico for hibernating. They have been observed crossing the Atlantic and are now established in the Canaries and small resident populations occur in Southern Spain, in the province of Malaga. They are quite common on Tenerife and frequently seen flying in twos or threes.

The Canary Red Admiral was previously considered an isolated population grouping of the Indian Red Admiral but is now recognised as a different species! Several explanations have been suggested for the geographic gulf between the two species, but a definitive solution has yet to be arrived at. It is also found in Madeira and is referred to as having a Macronesian distribution.

The Canary Islands were important stops on the transatlantic trade routes. American Painted Ladies are also to be found in the Canary Islands and are understood to have been accidentally introduced from trading ships from the Americas.

The Canary Speckled Wood is often seen in gardens and wooded areas. It has strong orange markings. It is one of the eight most common species found in Tenerife.

An interesting grouping of species are the Graylings. Canary Graylings are found on Tenerife and Gran Canaria, whilst La Palma, La Gomera and El Hierro all have different Grayling species. This is discussed in the latter part of this article.



Distribution map of the species of the Canary Graylings

## Lycaenidae Family: Gossamer-winged Butterflies

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*, Pea Blue *Lampides boeticus*, Canary Blue *Cyclrius webbianus*, African Grass Blue *Zizeeria knysna*, Southern Brown Argus *Aricia cramerea*, Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*, Geranium Bronze *Cacyreus marshalli*, Common Zebra Blue *Leptotes pirithous*

The Small Coppers in the Canary Islands are darker than the U.K. with a reddish-orange ground colour on the forewings. The Southern Brown Argus is a southern European species is easily identified and distinguished by the expanded lunules on the upper side which form orange bands. Lang's Short-tailed Blue is an African species that has become resident in the Mediterranean area and in some of the Canary Islands. In Africa it is known as the Common Zebra Blue. Another African species you may encounter is the tiny African Grass Blue, a small and rather plain butterfly with a wingspan of 18-26 mm seen flying around grassy areas, as the name implies.

The Canary Blue is an endemic to the Canary Islands and is found on five of the large islands. It has several generations and can be seen flying throughout the year. Wiemers (1995) witnessed extremely high population densities and it occurs as high as 2000 m in the Las Cañadas and up to 3,500 m on Mount Teide. In 2017 Merit, Manil, Vila & Wiemers published a paper describing the inter-island differentiation within the species and two new subspecies were defined, one on La Palma and the other on Gran Canaria, based on external wing characteristics and molecular genetic analysis.



Distribution map of the subspecies of the Canary Blue



Geranium Bronze butterflies are a southern African species accidentally introduced on imported Geraniums and/or Pelargoniums. They are often found in gardens or cultivated flower beds with these flowers throughout the year.

Hesperiidae Family: Skippers

Canary Lulworth Skipper *Thymelicus christi*.

The only skipper in the Canary Islands is the Canary Lulworth Skipper which was previously considered a subspecies of the *Thymelicus acteon*.

## Discussion

Tenerife, and the Canary Islands, offer us the opportunity to see a several different things. Firstly, the high proportion of endemic butterflies, higher than any area in Europe. Secondly, we can see African species flying alongside European butterflies. There is also the riddle of the Canary Red Admiral, which has a possible Indian origin.

When we consider the Graylings and the species varying between islands, it is an example of evolution in action. We can imagine ancestral Graylings arriving in the islands. As time passes they change sufficiently to be considered different species. A similar process is currently happening with the Canary Blues where La Palma and Gran Canaria now have subspecies of their own as well as Green-striped Whites with different subspecies in Tenerife, Gran Canaria and Fuerteventura. In time we can imagine that further changes would make them so different that they would be recognised as different species all together.

Lastly, we have examples of accidental introductions. The American Painted Lady was probably brought in, as caterpillars or chrysalises, on goods from the Americas. The Canary Islands were stops for Spanish traders in the days of sailing ships. More recently Geranium Bronzes were brought in the shipments of Geraniums or Pelargoniums.

## Reference Materials

Merit, X., Manil, L., Vila, R., & Wiemers, M. (2017) Inter-island differentiation of *Leptotes* (*Cyclotrius*) *webbianus* (Brulle, 1839) in the Canary Islands (Spain), with description of two new subspecies from La Palma and Gran Canaria. (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae), SHILAP Revta lepid. 45 (179) septembre 2017: 513-520.

Wiemers, M. (1995) The butterflies of the Canary Islands. A survey on their distribution, biology and ecology (Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea and Hesperioidea) Linneana Belgica, Pars XV, No 2, juin 1995 and Pars XV no 3, octobre 1995.

Online

<https://www.guidetocanaryislands.com/study-finds-18-000-butterflies-25-speciestenerife-many-endemic/>

2023

A selection of butterflies from Tenerife



Canary Large White	Green-striped White
Canary Blue	Common Zebra Blue
Geranium Bronze	Monarch
Canary Red Admiral	Canary Speckled Wood

# 30 YEARS FROM NOWT - TO A MAJOR AWARD! *(Or how to get more people involved in saving biodiversity)*

by *Jan Miller-Klein*

In October 1986 we bought an 8-acre smallholding in Northeast Wales so we could start a wildflower meadow. I joined Butterfly Conservation and the North Wales Wildlife Trust, from whom I got a lot of helpful advice. As a volunteer I gave talks to local gardening clubs and went into schools to help them grow wildlife plants in school grounds. This raised money from small fees as well as from selling the plants I had produced from my own unimproved meadow seed and my garden. These funds were useful for the local branch of Butterfly Conservation when I was organising volunteer work on a new reserve, Eyarth Rocks near Ruthin, and recruiting new members. I also wrote articles in local newsletters and newspapers about wildlife that I observed on our land and how I tried to manage the habitats accordingly. In 2005 I published a collection of these articles, called 'A Country Diary for North Wales'. This was partly to get to know my way round the publishing industry so that I could self-publish a much bigger book with lots of colour photos, many of which were kindly donated by friends I had made in NWWT and Butterfly Conservation. This I did in 2010, a book entitled 'Gardening for Butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects' which has sold nearly 3,000 copies in 10 years. Sales were boosted by the arrival of the Varoa mite, as the national media were alerted to the die-out of pollinators. Through this I became a member of the Garden Media Guild and a Trustee, conference organiser, website page and Blog writer for the Wildlife Gardening Forum from 2009. These are both based in London and hence draw in many more media people. I also applied for and finally obtained Plant Heritage National Collection status for my collection of Eupatorium (Hemp Agrimonies) around 2004. This seems to have got me noticed by TV and radio stations when looking for unusual plants to talk about. (Maybe Plantlife could start their own scheme for National Collections of wild plants?)

I also started my own website with info, sales and blogs about my various biodiversity projects ([www.7wells.co.uk](http://www.7wells.co.uk)). This is essential so people can find out about what you are doing, and it also can raise funds for your projects and charities. I became a volunteer member of the Welsh Government Pollinator Task force on behalf of NWWT and wrote the recommended plant list for them. This put me in touch with more influential people. I tried for many years to get my writing into mainstream gardening magazines, without much success, although recently asked by the Guardian to write for their Country Diary.

I also tried for many years to get my garden into the National Garden Scheme of private gardens open to the public, initially without success. The county lady who co-ordinated the open gardens list visited and asked *'Well, how long do you think it would take you to get it under control? Because we do get complaints, you*



*know'!* I finally managed to get into their Yellow Book (so good for publicity) for the 2020 season. It was going to be an open weekend with lots of local naturalist colleagues I had got to know from all the different wonderful volunteer groups, with tables around the garden having trays,

microscopes, ID charts and different creatures and plants collected by them from my land in the previous days - moths, pond life, beetles from fall traps and rotting logs etc. etc. It was going to be wonderful - but then of course we all know what happened in 2020!

But I have been able to open to small groups arranged in advance, not able to have all the specialists there at the same time though. Then, miraculously, after years of 1000s of people like all of us banging on about it, the winner of the best in show at The Chelsea Flower Show was a wildlife garden – complete with

beaver dam! There is now huge public interest in wildlife gardening. This is a huge industry and one we should be maximising our efforts on. If you have a child (or even grandchild!) who is competent online with websites and social media, they could help you with this very important way of getting new ideas out to young people.

On 25th November 2022 we received a national Garden Media Guild award for the BBC Gardeners' World wildlife gardening special, based on a visit to my garden and fields (episode 25, sadly broadcast the day after the Queen died, but still available on iPlayer). Why is this important to us? Because it is a huge change from the crackpot label people like me (and you too?) had in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. It is changing the way governments act and fund biodiversity conservation around the world.

This is a brief rundown on how I have personally done my small part in getting more public interest in the importance of conserving biodiversity, but it was a long hard slog over 35 years that had a lot of knockbacks, and continues to do so, including being told at the GMG awards dinner that I was not to receive the award myself, but it would be given to the famous BBC presenters, who had spent half a day at my place. I was however invited by the producers to tell the presenters what to say! The producers and cameramen did most of the work, but the BBC would not allow me to nominate them... Now I am nearly 70 and don't have the energy to do so much. But I hope it gives you all encouragement to keep beavering on and plugging the message! I have never been trained as a writer (other than an online course on writing magazine articles in 1999, but that was before the internet really took off), nor as an ecologist or publicist. Anyone could do what I have done, or at least some bits of it!! If you would like to have more information about contacts, societies, how to publish and advertise your own books or pamphlets and articles please do contact me on [jan@7wells.org](mailto:jan@7wells.org). And maybe I could do a workshop for our group on it all.

**If you'd like to see my award-winning butterfly garden during late August and September, just give me a ring to book.**

**10 people max. £5 each for charity.**

**Saith Ffynnon Farm, Whitford, Holywell. Tel 01352 711198**

## Paul's CROSSWORD SOLUTION

C	I	N	N	A	B	A	R		P	O	P	L	A	R
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(If you like puzzles why not try Paul's book Elementary!)

## MOTH TRAP LOAN SCHEME

If you've been to a moth 'show & tell' event and thought that you'd like to give moth trapping a go, but were not sure if it's for you - then why not make use of our scheme? It would give you a taster of what it's like before you invest in equipment yourself. Our equipment as illustrated is all you need to attract, collect and start identifying the species in your garden. Interested... then email me Mark Sheridan at [mark.sheridan.mgc@gmail.com](mailto:mark.sheridan.mgc@gmail.com)





## County Butterfly and Moth Recorders

To check which Vice County (VC) you're in from your Grid reference go to  
<https://www.cucaera.co.uk/grid-ref-to-vice-county/>

See records of N. Wales butterflies and moths at [trawsgoed.com/NWLEps.aspx](http://trawsgoed.com/NWLEps.aspx)

### Butterfly Recorders

#### **Montgomeryshire VC47**

Clare Boyes [clareboyesvc47@gmail.com](mailto:clareboyesvc47@gmail.com)

Bridge Cottage, Middletown, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 8DG. **01938 570418**

#### **Merionethshire VC48, Caernarvonshire VC49 and Anglesey VC52**

Andrew Graham, [angrhm@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:angrhm@globalnet.co.uk)

Trawscoed, Llanuwchllyn, Bala, Gwynedd LL23 7TD. **01678 540370**

#### **Denbighshire VC50 and Flintshire VC51**

Jan Miller [Jan@7wells.org](mailto:Jan@7wells.org)

Saith Ffynnon Farm, Downing Road, Whitford, Holywell, CH8 9EN. **01352 711 198**

### Moth Recorders

#### **Montgomeryshire VC47 (All species)**

Peter Williams [peterwilliams.lep@outlook.com](mailto:peterwilliams.lep@outlook.com)

"Pandy", Commins Coch, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 8LG. **01650 511583**

#### **Merionethshire VC48 (All species)**

Andrew Graham [angrhm@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:angrhm@globalnet.co.uk)

Trawscoed, Llanuwchllyn, Bala, Gwynedd LL23 7TD. **01678 540370**

#### **Caernarvonshire VC49 (All species)**

Bruce Richmond-Hurst [bruce.richmond51@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bruce.richmond51@yahoo.co.uk)

6 Cefn Cwellyn, Rhyd Ddu, North Wales, LL54 6TP. **01766 890287**

#### **Denbighshire VC50 and Flintshire VC51 (Macro-moths)**

Justin Williams [northwalesmoths@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:northwalesmoths@hotmail.co.uk)

The Old Orchard, Sunnyside Ave, Marford, Wrexham LL12 8TE.

**01978 851381 / 07762 105439**

#### **Denbighshire VC50 (Micro-moths)**

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#### **Flintshire VC51 (Micro-moths)**

Helen Bantock [hbantock@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hbantock@yahoo.co.uk)

101 Crouch Hill, London, N8 9RD

#### **Anglesey VC52 (All species)**

Charles Aron [aronmycology@aol.com](mailto:aronmycology@aol.com)

4, Refail Fields, Pentraeth, Anglesey, LL75 8YF. **01248 450129 / 07766613417**



## Butterfly Conservation Wales Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Cymru

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment Yn achub glöynnod byw, gwyfynod a'n hamgylchedd ni

### North Wales Branch

Visit our website at [butterfly-conservation.org/304/north-wales-branch.html](http://butterfly-conservation.org/304/north-wales-branch.html)

- learn more about our North Wales reserve at Eyrarth Rocks
- view previous branch newsletters
- discover recommended places for seeing butterflies
- read the latest news from Butterfly Conservation

Join our Facebook group at



[www.facebook.com/groups/277847912412601/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/277847912412601/)

- to post your sightings of butterflies and moths
- to ask for help with species identification
- to keep up to date with your local events
- to share interesting Lepidoptera-related news

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