Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

Issue 14
Spring 2016

SEWBReC
SOUTH EAST WALES BIODIVERSITY RECORDS CENTRE
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Contents

Front page photo: Wild garlic © Amy Hicks

Welcome to the fourteenth issue of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter. It's a super-sized edition, offering a smorgasbord of fascinating articles. A variety of species are covered from fluffy water voles at Magor Marsh (p4-5) and leggy centipedes on colliery spoil (p6); to handsome hawfinches in the lower Wye Valley (p10) and majestic emperor moths at Crymlyn Bog (p30). Some recorders have been finding some interesting species whilst poking around some unusual habitats such as garden sheds (p3), colliery spoil (p14-15), and the rot holes of trees (p24); whilst in Monmouthshire, plant recorders have been finding saltmarsh plants nowhere near salt-marshes (p19)!

A couple of events are advertised so make sure you get involved if you can (see p9 Gellideg Recording Day (9th June), p31 Cefn-yr-Hendy & Dare Valley Country Park Recorder Field Days (15th & 21st July) & p31 'Go Wild' held on 4th June during Wales Biodiversity Week). A very big **thank you** to all those who have contributed to this newsletter. I think it's the best yet! I hope you enjoy it.

Rebecca Wright-Davies, SEWBReC (Editor)

My Garden Shed…

Graham Watkeys

The habitat designation for my garden shed has become a bit of an issue. On the whole it resembles your ordinary shed; it has piles of plant pots, bags of compost, tools etc but the species living in it seem to think it's a cave. So who am I to argue? "I have an above ground cave in my garden" is not a statement everyone can make. There are cave spiders (*Meta sp.)* in my shed thereby proving it's actually a cave; being dark, humid with plenty of hiding places (which is a euphemism for untidy) makes it actually a rather good substitute.

"I have an above ground cave in my garden with pirates living in it" is yet another statement many may think to be frankly an unwarranted boast, a bending of credibility maybe but nevertheless I also have pirates living in my shed. Pirate spiders (*Ero sp*.) are fascinating in the way they go about getting a meal, they tap on the webs of other spiders mimicking prey items and when the webs owner comes to investigate it gets jumped on and eaten by the pirate. Ero species leave a very beautiful and unmistakable egg sac which I found on my shed door.

So what else resides in my pirates cave? Quite a number of woodland species (so it's now a shed, an above ground cave and a forest?) also reside quite happily, woodlice are generally found under rotten logs or in leaf litter and I have both common rough (*Porcellio scaber*) and smooth woodlice (*Oniscus asellus*) under the pots and the gently decaying pallet and planks in the corner as well as *Lithobius* centipedes and millipedes (it's not just the invertebrates that think my shed is actually woodland as I've found a wood mouse's stash of nibbled hazelnuts as well). Oh it's also a cellar (so that's a shed, a pirate lair, an above ground cave, a woodland and a cellar) although I will admit that the distinction between cave and cellar are rather (some would use the word pedantically) fine but cellar spider (*Pholcus phalangioides*) also lives in my now rather confused shed (Um I've also found house spiders (*Tegenaria sp*.) but even I won't try to equate my shed with a house).

Other species calling my shed home include garden snail (*Cornu aspersum*), brown lipped snail (*Cepaea nemoralis*) and a running crab spider (*Philodromus sp.)*. I hope to record more and maybe my shed will turn into something else?

Left photo: cave spider (*Meta* sp.). Right photo: pirate spider egg sac (*Ero* sp.)

Magor Marsh Water Vole Reintroduction – How is Ratty doing?

Charlene Davies, Acting Water Vole Project Officer, Gwent Wildlife Trust

Water voles used to be a common sight on the Gwent levels. In fact they were once such an integral part of the British landscape that they were immortalised as characters in children's books, most famously Kenneth Grahame's Wind in the Willows. Many riparian mammals were formerly designated by the Catholic Church as fish. This derogation allowed them to be consumed during fast days. There is even anecdotal evidence of them being used as target practice and advertised as such by air rifle manufacturers, and despite their relatively small size, their fur was occasionally made into waistcoats and rugs!

But water voles have suffered a catastrophic decline since the early 1900s; it is thought that numbers were in decline even earlier than this (in Wales at least) but that this trend went unrecorded. A steeper decline from the early 1990s, when we lost about 90% of our population, has led to the water vole becoming Britain's fastest declining mammal. Although once widespread, the population has crashed to only a few isolated populations across the UK; they are currently believed to be extinct across 97% of their former range. A SEWBReC search (prior to 2012) revealed that the last known record of a water vole at Magor Marsh was by a local naturalist in 2003 and subsequent surveys revealed no sign of presence on the reserve.

The decline of the water vole can be largely attributed to habitat loss and predation by the non-native American mink. Magor Marsh comprises a mosaic of habitats including a network of reens, wet grassland, reed beds and a pond and is prime water vole habitat. This suggests that the reason the water vole were no longer found within this area was predation by the non-native American Mink. Therefore, Gwent Wildlife Trust has been humanely trapping mink on the reserve since 2006 and has seen mink numbers dramatically decrease over the years as a result.

In 2012 we were in a position to reintroduce water voles to our Magor Marsh reserve. Around 250 captive bred water voles were released on to the reserve between 2012 and 2013. We carefully survey the water vole population twice a year, once before winter and once just after. Water voles do not hibernate and suffer very high mortality rates over winter, particularly amongst dispersing juveniles. The pre and post winter surveys are a really good way to estimate how well the voles survived the winter months. During the survey, 10 lengths of predetermined section of reen or ditch are searched for signs of water vole including feeding remains, latrines (distinctive piles of droppings used to mark territories), burrows and, to a lesser extent, footprints. The best evidence to find (aside from a vole itself!) is a latrine. Latrines are used by voles to mark their territory and it can be very roughly estimated that six latrines on a stretch of water way equates to one female water vole. More and more water vole evidence is being found on the reserve and things are looking really promising. Figure 1 depicts the change in the number of latrines both pre and post winter each year since the release in 2012. Although post-winter reductions in the number of latrines are evident,

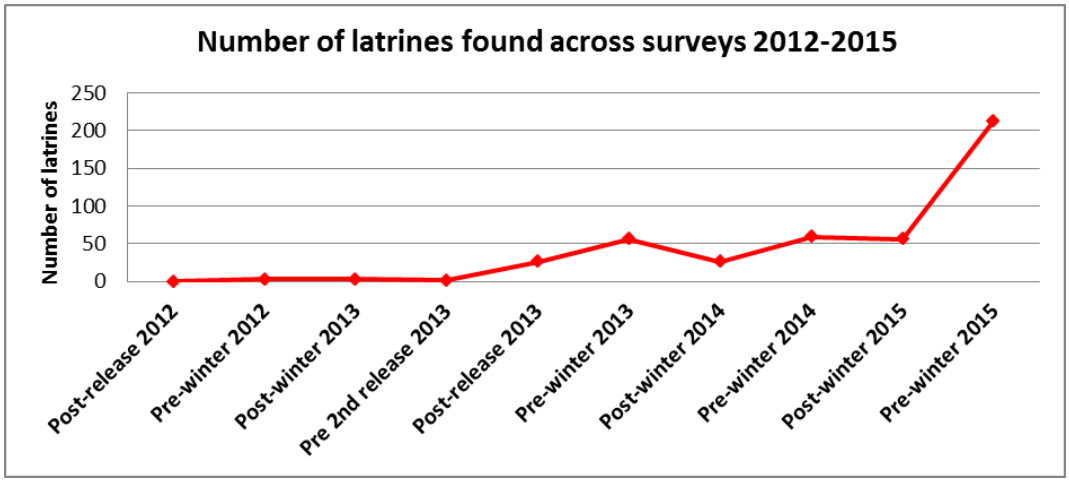


Figure 1. Graph showing total number of latrines found during the pre-winter and post-winter surveys at Magor Marsh

the most recent post-winter survey recorded a higher count of latrines than any previous post-winter survey and the population seems to be increasing, with 2015 appearing to be a particularly good year for the voles!

Not only have the numbers increased year on year at Magor Marsh, but the water voles seem to have spread extensively across the Gwent Levels, reaching distances of up-to 8.5km west of the original release site!

The project is lucky to have a very dedicated group of volunteers who give their time to conduct weekly checks of a series of mink monitoring rafts that are spread out across the Gwent Levels. The data collated from this is entered into a spreadsheet and analysed (and shared with SEWBReC of course!). Figure 2 shows a comparison of the mink raft data collected in 2012 and 2015. The figures suggest that mink numbers have decreased in the wider environment, and that water vole and otter are doing particularly well. It is also clear that the identification skills and confidence of our dedicated group of volunteers are increasing, with the number of records attributed to the 'unknown' category reducing from 18% to just 3%!

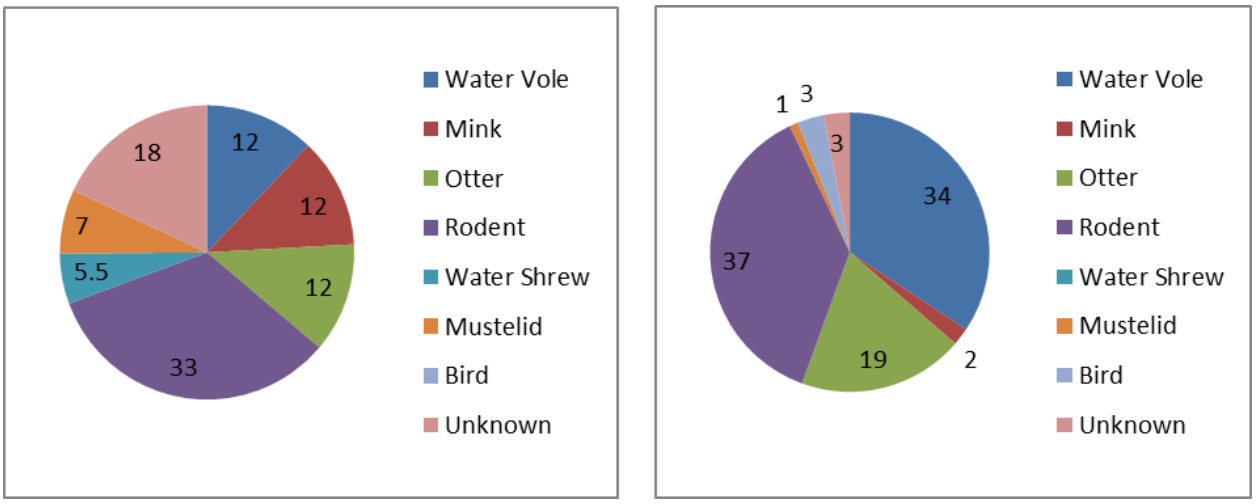


Figure 2 Comparison of data retrieved from the mink monitoring rafts in 2012 and 2015

Fortunately, there are many conservation organisations across the UK that are working really hard to 'rescue ratty' and return water voles to the areas where they were once abundant. Owing to the very successful reintroduction programme by Gwent Wildlife Trust, Magor Marsh is home to a thriving population of water voles so why not pay us a visit this spring/summer and maybe you will get the delight of seeing one of our furry friends, feasting upon an apple near the centre.

As part of our Magnificent Marshy Mammals project, which is part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and The Co-operative Wildlife Heroes campaign, we are compiling a series of oral histories.

Can you remember a time when water voles were so common? If so we'd really love to hear your stories (where did you see them? When did you see them? Do they bring back any fond memories?). Please do send them over, no matter how long or short!

We'd also be keen to hear of any recent sightings that may help to inform survey effort.

Please send any stories or sightings to Charlene at cdavies@gwentwildlife.org or call 01600 740600

Photo: *Lithobius pilicornis* from Gelli Coal Tips, Rhondda © Liam Olds

Centipede Discoveries

Liam Olds, Colliery Spoil Biodiversity Initiative, National Museum of Wales

One day in early March, I was informed of a rather exciting discovery made at the former site of Coedely Colliery and Coking Works (GR ST016857). Emma Williams, an enthusiastic amateur invertebrate recorder, had discovered *Lithobius pilicornis* - a 'Nationally Scarce' centipede species. There are 57 different species of centipede in the UK, with *Lithobius* species being among our most familiar. *Lithobius pilicornis* is one of several large, brown centipedes found in Britain. The species is locally frequent in parts of south-west England (particularly Cornwall), but there are scattered records across other parts of England and south Wales also. Although somewhat out-of-date, the map from the NBN gateway clearly highlights the lack of records for *Lithobius pilicornis* across the UK.

Emma's discovery prompted me to check the identity of a centipede that I had collected from Gelli Coal Tips in 2015. With great anticipation, I put the centipede under the microscope. As there are several similar-looking *Lithobius* species in Britain, they cannot be reliably identified in the field and require microscopic examination. I keyed the centipede out using the user-friendly AIDGAP key to the identification of British centipedes – written by Anthony D. Barber. Lo and behold, I too had discovered *Lithobius pilicornis* - with the specimen subsequently receiving verification from Anthony Barber himself. Given my enthusiasm for colliery spoil tips, this find proved very exciting as the species had now been discovered on two coal tips in Rhondda Cynon Taff. Given the abundance of coal tips in the south Wales valleys, perhaps there are more populations of this scarce species awaiting discovery.

UK Distribution of *Lithobius pilicornis* © NBN Gateway

Some weeks later, I was informed of yet more discoveries of *Lithobius pilicornis* made by Emma Williams. This time she had recorded several on Llanwonno Mountain, near Mountain Ash. It therefore appears that Rhondda Cynon Taff is a productive area for this scarce species - which is very encouraging. I believe that these findings provide great optimism for finding more locations for this scarce species across the south Wales valleys.

Dipteran Dichotomy

Graham Watkeys

Photo: The Medfly (*Ceratitis capitate*) © *Graham Watkeys*

You know how it is, you open your curtains on a Sunday morning, the strong sunshine streams in, you rub your eyes and notice a Mediterranean fruit fly sat on your windowsill. *Ceratitis capitata* is undoubtedly a very pretty little fly but it really doesn't belong here, in fact many countries go to great lengths to prevent people ever seeing it at all, especially if that country has a fruit growing industry. It is one of the world's biggest commercial fruit tree pests and has the unfortunate habit of hitching rides on exported fruit to other countries (this is one of the main reasons why you can't take fruit and veg into many countries when you go on holiday). This is most likely the way my example ended up on a bedroom windowsill just outside Merthyr Tydfil, fortunately our climate is still too hostile for this fly to survive in the wild but that may well change in the foreseeable future.

The arrival of another alien species with the ability to significantly damage an industry is not a pleasant thought but because it's a foreign species the thrill of finding it quietly wandering around unlooked for in my house was quite marked, and with my biological recording hat on the joy of finding a rare or very seldom recorded species is remarkable, if only because it doesn't happen very often.

The challenge is on…

Andrew Lucas, Natural Resources Wales

To try to raise the profile of biodiversity in Natural Resources Wales, and wildlife recording in particular, a group of NRW staff in south Wales have come up with the 'Biodiversity Challenge'. The premise is simple – how many species records can you generate in one year? A quick discussion in January ironed out the rules. Records are made on a 1km basis, and you have to find the species (but not necessarily identify it) yourself. And, of course, all records must be submitted to your LERC, or other national recording scheme.

We quickly realised that this would favour those who get out on field work the most, so for those who wanted the thrills and spills of competition from the comfort of their own home, we have a second competition: the garden challenge. This works in a similar way - how many species can you find in your garden, not including garden plants, other introductions, or pets?

So far Karen Wilkinson has shot into an early lead in the 'All Wales' competition with about 1800 records by the end of April. In the garden challenge, the early running was made by the botanists and mollusc specialists, but that might change as the entomologists crank into action in summer. Sue Westwood leads the garden league, with 120 records.

Although the main aim is to generate records, and have fun doing it, there is a glittering prize. A dinner in a particularly nice Cardiff vegetarian restaurant, to be paid for by the losers!

Mary Gillham Archive Project

Al Reeve, 'A Dedicated Naturalist' Project Officer

heritage treftadaeth

LOTTERY FUNDED
ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI

Mary Gillham Archive Project.

Dr Mary Gillham (MBE) was a pioneering female naturalist and prolific wildlife author, who took an active interest in the natural heritage of Wales. She lived in Gwaelod y Garth for 48 years and spent a huge amount of time documenting the wildlife she saw and the changes in landscape that took place during half a century.

After her death in 2013 her extensive archive of files, wildlife records, photographs and around 14000 slides were left to the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre with the intention that the data and cultural record could be preserved and eventually made accessible to the public.

We received Heritage Lottery funding in late 2015 and since February 2016 we have started the long, slow process of digitising her archive.

Over the next 2 years the Mary Gillham Archive Project will:

extract and unlock the data, capturing it digitally
and archive the physical documents to safeguard their future (with Glamorgan Archives).

The project will also inform local people about Dr Gillham's work and engage them with their natural heritage through:

a series of wildlife recording and outreach events,
an exhibition,
and through the creation of interactive online resources.

So far, with the assistance of many volunteers, we have documented over 5000 wildlife sightings, and scanned 2000 slides – some of which are now appearing on the Mary Gillham Archive Project Flickr page: www.flickr.com/photos/marygillhamarchiveproject/albums.

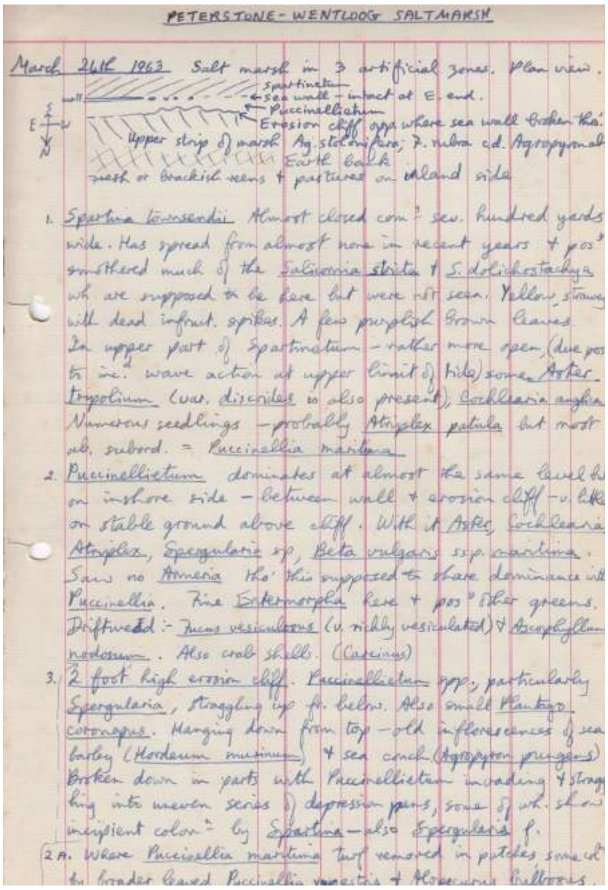
Get involved!

As we work through Dr Gillham's files and photos we are generating a fascinating picture of how the landscapes and wildlife of south Wales (and beyond) has changed. We would dearly love to get contemporary versions of the photos Mary took and so if you fancy a photo quest why not try to match some of the pictures we have on the Flickr site with modern equivalents (most images have a grid reference listed in the keywords section on the right hand side)?

We have produced our first 'Walks with Mary Gillham' where we provide a walk description as well as the species list Mary compiled whilst walking. Again, we would love to get an up to date species list so we can compare the two – will you find as much as Mary? Has the species composition changed drastically? Can you add new species to the list? Find details here http://www.sewbrec.org.uk/a-dedicated-naturalist/walks/walk-mary-gillham-may-16.page

We attended the first of our outreach events at the National Museum of Wales as part of their International Day of Biodiversity celebrations on 21st May, and on 9th June we will be doing an outdoor recording session in collaboration with the Gellideg Foundation (http://gellideg.net/), OPAL (www.opalexplorenature.org/) and Merthyr Tydfill County Borough Council. Between 15:30 and 18:00 we shall be doing natural history recording, the OPAL freshwater survey, making seedbombs and talking about ecology and diversity – it would be wonderful if some willing recorders would come down and help contribute to a species list and enthuse about natural history. There are ancient oaks, and many habitats including marshland, grassy meadow and two streams, plus when I made a site visit there was a huge chorus of birdsong. The site can be seen within the southeast quarter of this grid square: SO0207.

We still have a long, long way to go to achieve the goals of the project and volunteers are going to play an essential part in achieving our targets. If you are interested in rooting through Dr Gillham's archive and helping to mobilise the data there are opportunities to volunteer both in our office in Cardiff or from your own home! If you are interested in helping out, email the Project Officer Al Reeve (alan.reeve@sewbrec.org.uk) to find out more. Find out more about the project at www.facebook.com/MaryGillhamArchive or by following @GillhamArchives on Twitter.


PETERSTONE - WENTLOOG SALTMARSH

March 26th 1963 Salt marsh in 3 artificial zones. Plan view.

1. Spartina townsendii Almost closed com.ⁿ sev. hundred yards wide. Has spread from almost none in recent years + pos.ʸ smothered much of the Salicornia stricta + S. dolichostachya wh. are supposed to be here but were not seen. Yellow strawy with dead infruct. spikes. A few purplish brown leaves. In upper part of Spartinetum – rather more open (due pos. to incᵈ wave action at upper limit of tide) some Aster tripolium (var. discoides is also present), Cochlearia anglica. Numerous seedlings – probably Atriplex patula but most ab. subord. = Puccinellia maritima
2. Puccinellietum dominates at almost the same level but on inshore side – between wall + erosion cliff – v. little on stable ground above cliff. With it Aster, Cochlearia, Atriplex, Spergularia sp., Beta vulgaris ssp. maritima. Saw no Armeria tho' this supposed to share dominance with Puccinellia. Fine Enteromorpha here + pos.ʸ other greens. Driftweed :- Fucus vesiculosus (v. richly vesiculated) + Ascophyllum nodosum. Also crab shells (Carcinus)
3. 2 foot high erosion cliff. Puccinellietum spp., particularly Spergularia, straggling up fr. below. Also small Plantago coronopus. Hanging down from top – old inflorescences of sea barley (Hordeum murinum) + sea couch (Agropyron pungens) Broken down in parts with Puccinellietum invading + straggling into uneven series of depression pans, some of wh. show incipient colonⁿ by Spartina – also Spergularia f.

2A. Where Puccinellia maritima turf removed in patches some colᵈ by broader leaved Puccinellia distans + Alopecurus bulbosus.

Extract from Mary Gillham's notebook (1963)

Images courtesy of SEWBReC's Dr. Mary Gillham Archive Project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund

Hawfinch in the lower Wye Valley

Jerry Lewis

I've been ringing Hawfinch in the Wye Valley for over twenty years, but only catching reasonable numbers for about the last ten years, when I discovered that they could be encouraged to the ground in March/April/May to take seed (I use black sunflower). The seed is provided by Natural Resources Wales, and their Forest Rangers do the majority of the feeding.

One question which always comes up is "how many Hawfinch are there?", and the most recent estimates give about 180 - 300 pairs in the whole of Wye Valley/Forest of Dean (WV/FoD), see Birds of Gwent 2008 (30 - 100 pairs), and Birds of Gloucestershire 2013 (150 -200 pairs). The breeding population is supplemented by Scandinavian winter visitors, and birds bearing Norwegian and Swedish rings have been caught.

At one of the Wye Valley feed sites, two photographer friends (Martin Peacock and Dave Potter) had a seven hour session in hides on 2nd May to record ringed birds. I had previously had three ringing sessions at the site, and had ringed 51 birds, and recaught four that I had ringed in previous years. During their seven hour session, they recorded 20 different colour ringed birds, and two or three others that had only metal rings. Only two of these birds had been caught by me during the previous month. Martin estimated that approximately one quarter of the birds he saw had rings, while Dave thought about one third. Whichever is nearer, there will likely have been between 60 - 80 birds visiting this single site on the day, an amazing total. Hawfinch are unlike many other resident birds in that they are highly mobile throughout the WV/FoD during the year, and so it's not a simple "adding up" of the numbers visiting the different feed sites to get a better feeling for the population size. There is still work to do to try and assess the local population, but the most recent figures must surely be underestimates.

Two of the most significant birds were yellow E59 (a female ringed in Dolgellau in May 2013, and only the second movement recorded between the WV/FoD and the N Wales populations), and metal left/white right (a male ringed locally in April 2007, and at nine years, a new UK longevity record). More details of the visit, and pictures of the birds can be found on Martin's and Dave's blogs: martinsbirdingblog.blogspot.co.uk and friendsofgroyne-number4.blogspot.co.uk

Hawfinch photo © Dave Potter

Photo top left: desert locust nymph/Photo top right: desert locust adult/Photo bottom: Giant mealworm beetle © Greg Jones

Exotic Pet Food on the Loose

Greg Jones, VC 41 Recorder—Orthoptera

Exotic pet keeping has increased in popularity in recent years. Lizards, tarantulas, scorpions and centipedes are widely kept in captivity. To cater for this trend, pet shops are now stocking a wide range of live insects as pet food. Accidental escapes from shops, plus accidental escapes and deliberate releases by pet owners has resulted in these insects being increasingly encountered in the "wild".

Your local pet shop will probably stock most of the exotic insects listed below:

Orthoptera

Species	**Vernacular**	**Trade Name**
Acheta domesticus	House Cricket	brown cricket
Gryllus bimaculatus	Southern Field-cricket	black cricket
Gryllus assimilis	Jamaican Field-cricket	silent cricket
Gryllodes supplicans	Tropical House Cricket	brown cricket
Schistocera gregaria	Desert Locust	locust

Lepidoptera

Species	**Vernacular**	**Trade Name**
Galleria mellonella	Wax Moth	wax-worm

Coleoptera

Species	**Vernacular**	**Trade Name**
Tenebrio molitor	Mealworm Beetle	mealworm
Zophobus morio	Giant Mealworm Beetle	morio worm

Most of these insects are sold as nymphs or larvae. I've bought the species illustrated, grown them on to adulthood and had fun determining them. I've also collected house cricket and wax moths inside my house.

Glamorgan Bird Club Big Birding Day

John Wilson, Glamorgan Bird Club

The Glamorgan Bird Club *Big Birding Day* fund raising, awareness and participation day was held on Sunday 8th May, and was blessed with a sunny, rainless, albeit rather windy day. There were two guided walks, one to the pool via various footpaths. Small birds were difficult to see due to the strong wind but Common Whitethroats showed well, and there were 9 Whimbrel on the E pool fields. A White Wagtail was also present but only seen by one of the group. In the afternoon a group went out to Sker via Sker Farm. Several Stonechats were seen plus Sky Lark, Wheatear, and Meadow Pipits but sadly no sign of the putative American Golden Plover that had been present in the morning and the previous day. More Whimbrels were on the coastal rocks, plus Turnstone and there were distant Sanderling on Sker Beach. A total of around 55 species were seen.

Back at the reserve centre, Mrs. Wilson's cakes sold well, as did the plants. Kids could take part in a name the bird quiz kindly run by Graham Holmes, and view various skeletons and feathers in the reserve centre, kindly brought along by Amy Schwartz. Thanks also to Alan Rosney who devised the 'Choose a bird name' raffle and to Ceri Jones who ran it. The event raised £275 from sales of cakes, plants, books and teas & coffees. This money will be shared equally with the Kenfig Reserve Centre.

Portevinia maculata

Graham Watkeys

Since Ramsons was chosen as April's species of the month can I suggest another species to look for that is closely associated with this plant? The larvae of the hoverfly *Portevinia maculata* mine the stem bases and bulbs of Ramsons and the adults are seldom found far from the plant. Although the square grey abdominal markings of the adults give it a superficial resemblance to flesh flies it is generally easily recognisable by eye, other identifying features include orange antennae and a characteristic delta shape to the wings when at rest. It has a relatively short flight period peaking in May which may explain why there are only 102 records in Wales for this species according to the LERC Data Access Tool. Since this Hoverfly can be abundant when it's found please keep an eye out for it when you find a nice large patch of Ramsons. Good luck and happy hunting.

Desperately Seeking Skulls!

SEWBReC is trying to build up a small collection of artefacts for our nature table to use at events. The collection will be used to educate and inspire both children and adults.

Do you have any skulls, bones, pellets, skins, nests, feathers, fossils, shells, dried or preserved specimens, seeds, nuts, or any other field signs, that you don't want anymore? If so, we would love to hear from you. *Contact info@sewbrec.org.uk or 02920 641110.*

Photo: Blue-tailed damselfly (*Ishnura elegans*) © Dan Read

WANTED! Vice-County Recorder for Odonata (VC35, Monmouthshire)

A Vice-County Recorder is needed for Odonata (Dragonflies & Damselflies) for Vice-County 35, Monmouthshire. The main role of a VC Recorder is to collate, validate and verify records for the Vice-County, and share them with appropriate people and organisations, including the British Dragonfly Society.

You will need to:

- be skilled and confident identifying the British species;
- be able to keep accurate records;
- be prepared to field enquiries about Odonata and recording this group of species.

If you are interested in taking on this role, please get in touch with SEWBReC, and we will put you in touch with the British Dragonfly Society (BDS). *Contact: info@sewbrec.org.uk or 02920 641110.*

Gwent Fungus Group Update

Sheila Spence, Gwent Fungus Group

Gwent Fungus Group is up and out there again this year, we meet about 8 times throughout the year between April and November at different sites around Greater Gwent, VC35.

One of the many fungi to look out for during the Summer months is of course the very common *Phallus impudicus* or Stinkhorn. I am sure that most of us have either seen or smelt it as we've walked through the woods, perhaps searching for other taxa or just out walking the dog.

However, this common fungus also has some rather uncommon cousins, some of which have very occasionally been found on our patch. A few years ago one of our past members; Lee Johnson, spotted and photographed a fine specimen of *Phallus impudicus var togatus* in her local woods (see photograph top right). This species differs in having a veil that forms a lace-like skirt beneath the head of the fungus but both species emerge from a similar looking jelly-like egg found in leaf-litter on the woodland floor.

Other smelly fungi from the same family are the Dog Stinkhorn, *Mutinous caninus;* a much smaller more slender version with a red head, the Red Cage, *Clathrus ruber* with a red lattice or cage like form emerging from the usual 'egg' and Devil's Fingers, *Clathrus archeri* which emerges from its egg with starfish like arms with a green black spore-bearing material showing on the inner sides of the open arms (see photograph bottom right). These are all unusual to rare but readily identified in the field. If you see any of these weird but wonderful species, or just think you might have, please take a photograph and send it to us at Gwent Fungus Group (gwentfungusgroup@btinternet.com) for verification and of course to ensure the record is entered correctly on the SEWBReC database as well as our own Gwent Fungus Group database. Please also let us know where and when you found it.

If you would like to join our group please contact either Roger Evans, the Group Leader on (roger.evans@mypostoffice.com) or membership secretary Veronica Beynon on (vbeynon@yahoo.co.uk) for further details.

Photo top: Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus var togatus)* © Lee Johnson
Photo bottom: Devil's fingers (*Clathrus archeri*) © Sheila Spence

Helping out Hedgehogs

Andrew Parker, Carer for Hedgehog Helpline

Hedgehog Helpline offers practical advice and help across south east Wales. The helpline began in 1988 and became a registered charity in 1995. We take in sick, injured and orphaned hedgehogs with the intention of returning them to the wild once they are fully recovered and able to survive in the wild.

If you find a sick, injured or hedgehog out in the day, please call Hedgehog Helpline as soon as possible for advice and guidance: 07557 646773**.** *Please note that this is not a 24 hour service and that calls are answered by a volunteer.*

Website: hedgehoghelplinecymru.org.uk

Follow us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/hedgehoghelpline

Project update: Colliery Spoil Invertebrates

Liam Olds, Colliery Spoil Biodiversity Initiative, National Museum of Wales

Colliery spoil tips are an iconic feature in the landscape of the south Wales valleys, providing a tangible link to Wales' rich industrial history. In addition to their great historic importance, these sites are rich in flora and fauna. While the importance of these sites for particular groups (such as plants, fungi and lichens) has been partly explored, relatively little work has been done to explore the invertebrates found in these complex habitats. In January 2015, I started a rather unique project aimed at identifying the invertebrates found in these habitats. This project involved conducting invertebrate surveys on six colliery tips in Rhondda Cynon Taff between April and September 2015. A variety of different survey methods were used to target as many different taxonomic groups as possible. Throughout the winter, I have been deep in the bowels of the National Museum of Wales (Cardiff) identifying invertebrate specimens I collected last spring/summer. Having now completed these identifications, I can happily report on the results.

As of April 2016, a total of 925 invertebrate species have been identified across the six study sites. There was some variation in the total number of species per site, ranging 116 to 190 (Figure 1; Figure 2). The number of species of 'conservation importance' (i.e. localised/ scarce/ rare/ RDB-listed/ UKBAP/ Section 42 / SINC species) varied from 21 to 42 per site, or 14-26% of the total species count (Figure 1). On average, it was estimated that any given colliery tip should support approximately 30 invertebrate species of 'conservation importance' – as was roughly achieved at Clydach Vale Country Park, Coedely Colliery, Dare Valley Country Park and Gelli Tips (Figure 1). This number will perhaps be an over-estimate at some sites (such as Albion Tip), and an under-estimate at others (such as Cwm Colliery). The aculeate Hymenoptera (bees, wasps and ants) accounted for 41% of species of 'conservation interest', with Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) at 20% and Hemiptera ('true' bugs) at 17% (Figure 3). Collectively, Hymenoptera, Lepidoptera and Hemiptera account for 78% of species of 'conservation interest' on these colliery spoil tips.

Colliery Spoil Tip	Number of invertebrate species identified	Number of invertebrate species of 'conservation interest'	Number of species of 'conservation interest' as a percentage of the species total
Cwm Colliery, Beddau	190	42	~22%
Albion Tip, Cilfynydd	146	21	~14%
Clydach Vale Country Park	133	29	~22%
Coedely Colliery	168	32	~19%
Dare Valley Country Park	172	28	~16%
Gelli Tips	116	30	~26%
Total	**925**	**182**	

Figure 1: *The total number of invertebrate species identified at each of the six study sites, along with the proportion of species of 'conservation interest'*

In every study there are limitations, and this study is no different. I believe all my figures are likely to be under-estimates given the poor surveying conditions on offer last year. While March and April 2015 weren't too bad (with near-average temperatures in March and above-average temperatures in April), what followed was a cooler than average May. Summer 2015 was worst, characterised by below-average temperatures and above-average rainfall totals, conditions that are largely unfavourable to invertebrates – particularly aculeates. When you combine these rather dismal conditions last year with my (then) lack of surveying experience, it's a wonder I found as many interesting species as I did.

While it is slightly disappointing not to have had 'perfect' conditions when conducting my research last year, this leaves me with great optimism for finding more interesting invertebrates on the spoil tips of south Wales. I am therefore looking upon my results from 2015 as worst-case scenario figures. Hopefully surveying will prove more successful this year and I will be able to achieve far more impressive stats than what has been achieved currently.

While these results are likely to underestimate the 'importance' of colliery spoil tips for invertebrates, they still provide great insights into the largely unexplored world of colliery spoil invertebrates. It is clear that colliery spoil tips support a significant number of species of 'conservation interest' (see examples box), particularly amongst Hymenoptera, Lepidoptera and Hemiptera. Although ground beetles were initially one of the target groups for the study, they were severely under-recorded because of issues with pitfall trapping on these open-access sites. With an estimated 35% of our rarest ground beetles being

found on brownfield sites (Bodsworth *et al.* 2005), colliery spoil tips have great potential to support numerous ground beetle species of 'conservation interest'. This year, I plan to survey this group more thoroughly and expect to find far more species of conservation significance amongst the group and Coleoptera as a whole.

The results have clearly proved that colliery spoil tips are important habitats for invertebrates, and are not just land prime for development. Now that I have identified colliery spoil tips as important habitats for invertebrates, I must now explore what features make some spoil tips 'better' than others. Determining whether tips that have been left to naturally revegetate are 'more' or 'less' biodiverse than technically reclaimed tips will be an important part of my work. Finding-out this information will help us to better assess the 'quality' of colliery spoil tips to ensure we safeguard the future of our most biodiverse tips. Thankfully, I am continuing my project on colliery spoil tips thanks to contract work from Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. I look forward to learning more about these habitats and the invertebrates of the south Wales valleys in the coming weeks and months.

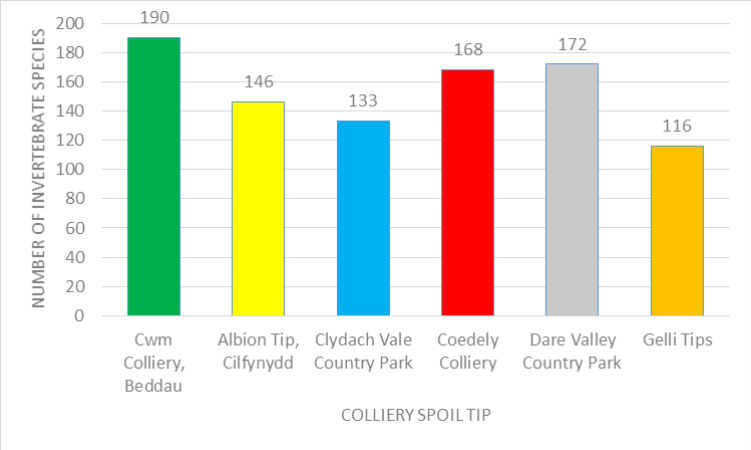


Figure 2: The total number of invertebrate species identified at each of the six study sites

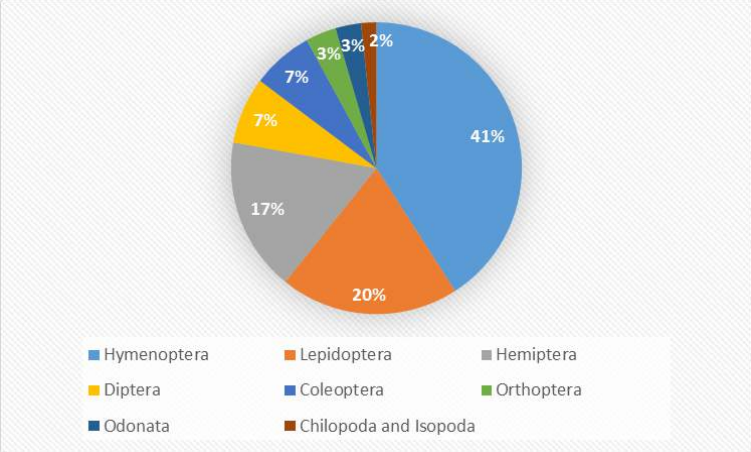


Figure 3: Taxonomic breakdown of the 182 species of 'conservation interest' identified across the six study sites

If you would like to find out more about colliery spoil tips and keep up-to-date with my work, please visit my website at www.collieryspoilbiodiversity.wordpress.com, 'like' the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/collieryspoil, or follow on Twitter at www.twitter.com/collieryspoil.

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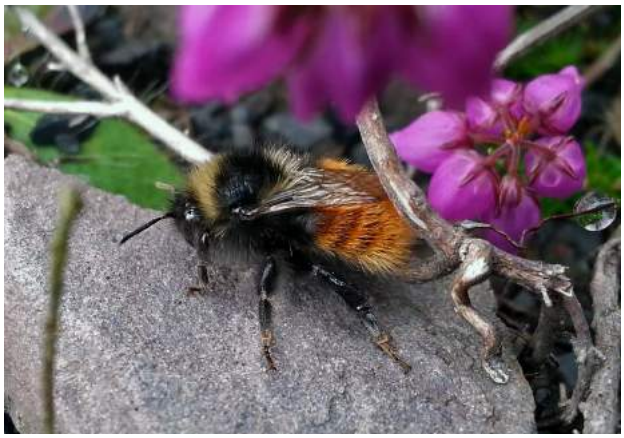


Photo: Bilberry Bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*) © Liam Olds

Examples of some of the species found on colliery spoil tips

Hymenoptera: Brown-banded carder bee (*Bombus humilis*), Barbut's Cuckoo-bee (*Bombus barbutellus*), Bilberry bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*), Small Gorse Mining Bee (*Andrena ovatula*), Short-fringed Mining Bee (*Andrena dorsata*), Red-backed Mining Bee (*Andrena similis*), Bilberry Mining Bee (*Andrena lapponica*), *Gymnomerus laevipes*

Lepidoptera: Small Blue butterfly (*Cupido minimus*), Dingy skipper (*Erynnis tages*), Grayling (*Hipparchia Semele*), Dark Green Fritillary (*Argynnis aglaja*), Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria selene*), Six-belted Clearwing (*Bembecia ichneumoniformis*)

Diptera: *Scaeva selenitica, Cheilosia lasiopa, Eristalis rupium, Pollenia amentaria, Pollenia labialis, Oxycera pygmaea, Phryxe magnicornis, Tropidia scita*

Orthoptera: Long-winged Conehead (*Conocephalus discolor*), Mottled grasshopper (*Myrmeleotettix maculatus*), Slender Groundhopper (*Tetrix subulata*)

Coleoptera: Green Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela campestris*), *Ophonus puncticeps, Notiophilus rufipes*

Hemiptera: *Agramma laetum, Anaceratagallia ribauti, Dicranotropis divergens, Chartoscirta cocksii, Himacerus boops, Stygnocoris rusticus, Sardius argus, Mocydiopsis parvicauda, Plinthisus brevipennis*, Heather Shieldbug (*Rhacognathus punctatus*)

Isopoda & Chilopoda: *Armadillidium nasatum*, Greater Lithobius (*Lithobius pilicornis*)

SEWBReC Business Update

Adam Rowe, SEWBReC Manager

In a slight departure from our regular detailed business update, we have opted just to give you a few snippets of information to give you a taste of the ongoing work at SEWBReC and of a few exciting imminent happenings. We will return to the more in-depth business update in the next edition.

As we are still at a relatively early point in the financial year, **FUNDING NEGOTIATIONS** are ongoing with several partners and users including Welsh Government (WG), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and local authorities. We hope to have some good news about the outcome of these negotiations soon. Funding is likely to lead to some exciting new outcomes including an in-depth assessment of how effectively data from the Welsh Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) is utilised in the planning process across Wales, as well as increased community engagement as we deliver more 'Introduction to Biological Recording' training events, this time as part of local authority Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

2016 will be a significant year for the Welsh LERCs due to the imminent launch, roll-out and ongoing development of **ADERYN**, the next generation of online data access for the Welsh LERCs, the development of which is being led by our colleagues in the Biodiversity Information Service for Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park (BIS). This will replace our current Data Access Tool (DAT) and will ultimately provide a host of modules to help deliver LERC services, including public data access, enhanced partner data access and ultimately data access for paying commercial customers. All data will be delivered via eMapper (developed by Cofnod in North Wales) which combines mapped data and raw data through an elegant user interface.

In addition to our own LERC Wales systems, we are also involved as core stakeholders, alongside WG, NRW and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Trust, in the development of the **ATLAS OF LIVING WALES**. This new website will ultimately replace the NBN Gateway as a source of national level data for Wales, as a fantastic resource for information on Welsh species and hopefully as a shop window for the detailed data that can be supplied via Aderyn. An insight into how it may look and feel can be gained by visiting the beta site for the Atlas of Living Scotland (www.als.scot).

At a more local level SEWBReC has developed a number of refinements to its data products and services, including **BARB+**, our new enhanced 2km bat and roof-nesting bird search, which now incorporates the requirements of the re-

Photo: Quaking grass (*Briza media*) © Dan Read

vised national bat survey guidelines. In addition, we have developed the facility for past searches to be updated with new records without repeating the whole search and we have instigated a new system whereby each search request we deal with is given a unique reference code as a means of deterring unsubstantiated claims of having conducted a SEWBReC data search.

We are pleased to announce that in response to a Key Performance Indicator in our 2015/16 Partnership Agreement with NRW, SEWBReC has now uploaded a total of just under 1.7 million biological records to the **NBN GATEWAY**. This means that our data is fully represented in all national distribution maps generated by NBN websites (and often linked to other websites), but the use of 'access controls' mean that this data is only publicly available at coarse (10km square) resolution.

SEWBReC Membership

SEWBReC is run as a not-for-profit company and is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors which is drawn from its membership. By becoming a member of SEWBReC you will be automatically invited to attend our Annual General Meetings and you will be eligible to stand for election to the Board of Directors.

Subject to Board approval, SEWBReC membership is open to anybody who:

- Has read SEWBReC's Memorandum and Articles of Association* and supports the aims of the company;
- Understands that as a Member of the Company they accept a liability not exceeding £1 if the Company should be wound up.

We are currently very keen to grow our membership and to this end we have included a copy of our membership application form with this newsletter mailing. Please consider joining and have your say in the future direction of SEWBReC – we need your expertise and enthusiasm!

** The membership form gives details of where to find the Memorandum and Articles of Association via our website. If you don't have access to the internet but are interested in joining, please get in touch and we will send you a copy.*

Photo © Dan Read

SEWBReCORD

Adam Rowe, SEWBReC Manager

SEWBReC's online data entry portal, SEWBReCORD (www.sewbrecord.org.uk), continues to prove an extremely popular tool to enable recorders to share their sightings and photos with us. The number of records has continued to grow rapidly with the current total number of records now standing at just over 78,200. As ever, we would like to pass on our great thanks to everybody who has taken the time to enter their sightings into SEWBReCORD. Your records are rapidly incorporated into our main database, where they are frequently used to inform decisions that may affect biodiversity.

If you have not yet tried using SEWBReCORD, please visit www.sewbrecord.org.uk and click on the 'Create new account' link. You will then receive an activation email. If that doesn't arrive in your email inbox, it may have been moved to your junk or spam folder. If you have any difficulties registering, or if you have registered in the past but never activated your account, please contact Dave Slade (david.slade@sewbrec.org.uk) who will issue you as new password and help you get up and running.

Inspired…

Barbara Hancock

When I attended a Biological Recording Training Day run by SEWBReC at a school near Pontyclun in early March it re-kindled my enthusiasm for recording the wildlife I see on my daily walks locally, in other parts of the SEWBReC area and also in my garden. I lived for some years in a species rich part of Powys and kept casual records of the birds, mammals and butterflies etc. that I saw in our riverside garden and the surrounding area. However, when I came to submit the records to our local Wildlife Trust for recording, the sheets of paper must have fallen down the proverbial back of a wardrobe because I couldn't find them.

At the Training Day, Adam Rowe and his colleagues explained the purpose of SEWBReC and the database. I realised how it could have helped me if I'd have been able to input my casual records to a system like that on a regular basis when I lived in Powys. It was helpful to learn on the Training Day that sightings of the commonplace, and even animals such as hedgehogs found dead on the road, were welcomed as I am certainly no expert on any species.

So, I have taken my guides to British birds, wildflowers and wildlife down off the shelf, bought a good pair of binoculars, an up to date version of the OS map of the local area, brushed up on my reading of Grid References and have started recording. I input my first casual records for March into the database and found the process simple to use. I doubt if I'll ever identify a "first" for the SEWBReC area but it will be good to know that I'm contributing.

Tell a friend?

Paul Seligman

If you are reading this newsletter, you are already interested in recording the natural world. But out there are millions of people who have never thought of doing so, and have no idea why they should.

Some of those people will be receptive to the idea if it is explained in a way they understand and if they are offered the right tool for their interests. Whenever somebody tells me about their garden birds - and particularly if they keep a list as quite a few do – I suggest they might like to share and secure that data. The same applies if I meet someone keen on butterflies, say, or fungi. You shouldn't assume that even knowledgeable people with years of, perhaps, moth trap records share their data. A polite interest in whether, or how, they share their records may reveal that they haven't thought about it, or meant to but didn't get round to it.

Whether I recommend SEWBReCORD, BirdTrack or some other way of sharing data with scientists and the wider community depends on their interest in terms of what they record and where.

Don't be afraid to start that conversation – face to face or on discussion boards. You've nothing to lose and maybe something to gain.

Local Environmental Records Centres Wales
Data Access Tool (DAT)

Adam Rowe, SEWBReC Manager

This tool, found at dat.lercwales.org.uk (please note new web address) opens up access to the combined resource of wildlife records held at the four Welsh Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs), including SEWBReC. Without the need to register, any user can access two useful functions:

See species records we hold around a given point: This gives a summary of species records we hold for the 1km grid square in which a chosen point lies. Records of sensitive species are excluded from the summary list, but the number of such records found will be shown.

See a distribution map for a species: This option will produce a 10km square Wales distribution map for a given species. Zooming in allows you to see a 1km square distribution, although sensitive records will only ever be shown at 10km square resolution.

Further functions of the DAT can be unlocked for registered users (mainly public sector customers), enabling them full access to all LERC data holdings across Wales. Work is well underway to develop the next generation of online data access to LERC Wales data, to be known as ADERYN. Look out for news on its launch and roll-out in forthcoming editions of this newsletter and via the SEWBReC website.

New records for Saltmarsh Plants inland in Monmouthshire Vice County 35

Stephanie Tyler & Elsa Wood, VC 35 Recorders — Plants

Danish Scurvy-grass *Cochlearia danica* has long been known to occur along trunk roads, its spread enabled by the salt strewn over the roads. It now occurs too along many A and B roads in the county. In April and May it is in full flower along the edges of the roadsides, appearing like a fringe of hailstones. Buckshorn Plantain *Plantago coronopus* is also becoming more frequent along the roadsides.

Trevor Evans recorded another halophyte, Lesser Sea Spurrey *Spergularia marina,* on roadsides at the M4/A449 junction in 2005 and two years later in August 2007 Stephanie Tyler found it flowering along more than 100m of road verge on the east side of the dual carriageway in Monmouth, well inland. Heather Colls also found this sea spurrey at two sites in Newport in June 2013. Last year Paul Green paused to look at a map just off the dual carriageway at Raglan on the slip road to Mitchel Troy and found Sea Fern-grass *Catapodium marinum* and the grass *Puccinellia distans,* both the first inland records for the vice-county.

Trevor Evans reported Sea Lavender *Limonium vulgare* along the M4. This still has to be confirmed but it is another halophyte occurring on our inland motorways in the UK.

On 4 May we, together with Jan Winder, were returning from a day's botanical recording in the Black Mountains and decided to stop in a couple of lay-bys along the Abergavenny to Raglan dual carriageway. We walked a little way from the first layby along the trunk road, with lorries thundering close by, and amongst the abundant Danish Scurvy-grass found a few plants of Sea Pearlwort *Sagina maritima*. This is the second inland record in Monmouthshire VC35; the first being recorded at Magor services by the recorder for West Gloucestershire, Dr Clive Lovatt.

We aim to wear hazard jackets next time and survey early in the morning before traffic builds up! Next time you are held up in traffic or have a break down, do take a look at the road edges for any halophytes. There must be many more saltmarsh plants along our roads that are being overlooked.

Three 'New' Woodlands for Gwent

Colin Titcombe

During the 1970's I wrote a booklet for my employers of the time, The Forestry Commission, on the wildlife of Wentwood Forest. In my description of the area in general I mentioned two hills to the South of the Forest, and the fact that they were both basically bereft of trees. These two hills, sometimes referred to as the 'twin hills of Southern Gwent', are Mynydd Alltir-fach and Grey Hill – both of them being commons. At this time (the 1970s) Grey Hill at least, was being grazed by commoner's sheep. On the North-East side of Grey Hill lie two more distinct and adjacent commons – the Bicca Poor Wood and the Bicca Common. Commoner's rights in the Poor Wood would be the right of *estover* (the right to gather wood). That on Bicca Common would, presumably, be the right to *graze* – the right of common pasture.

Of the three 'common pastures commons', Grey Hill is by far the largest, and the only one that I personally remember being grazed, but even here the grazing has ceased, for whatever reason, and now all three are gradually becoming wooded once more, their natural post-glacial state. Commons are of ancient lineage, their origins thought to go back before private ownership. So it is fascinating to speculate that now, in the 21st century, they may be reverting to woodland for the first time since the mid-late stone-age period. Visits to these sites made in 2015 showed that the most heavily wooded of the three was that of Mynydd Alltir-fach. It is now a woodland dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), but with a make-up tree flora of Brown Birch and Rowan.

Grey Hill is mostly wooded on its northern flank, where it lies adjacent the fields of the farmstead Casa Mia, and the Wentwood Forest in the Black Sow's Well – Bicca areas. It is also well wooded at its eastern end, between the standing stones and the fields of Penhein. The dominant tree species here at the present time is Brown Birch (*Betula pubescens*). Each of these commons lie in a different parish (see map below), and Bicca (as in Bicca Common and Bicca Poor Wood) comes from the Welsh *'bycham'* meaning *little*. Indeed, on at least one old estate map of 1763 Bicca Common is names as 'Little Common'.

For many years now Grey Hill has attracted visitors, mostly for the views afforded. To the south lie the Gwent lowlands which fill the foreground, the Severn Estuary passes through the mid-ground and in the distance can be seen the areas around Bristol. To the north the scene is filled largely by the Wentwood Forest but at some parts of the ridge, views of the Sugarloaf, Skirrid Fawr and Great Graig can be attained. Today, however, these views are gradually being hidden by the developing woodland. This change of habitat is reflected in the areas' ecology. Where

Photo left: Mynydd Alltir-fach (in open common Days)/ Photo right: Mynydd Alltir-fach (in 2015) © Colin Titcombe

once Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, Whinchats and Stonechats reigned supreme, now the likes of Common Whitethroat, Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Robin and Blackbird are the norm. There is, however, still a substantial open area of scrub-heath on the top of Grey Hill and on parts of its south-facing slope. Here, as well as the Common Whitethroats and Willow Warblers, Linnets and Yellow Buntings can still be found.

Mynydd Alltir-fach, in its 'open common' days (see photograph above left), was a mecca for Billberry pickers, one old local having memories of 365lbs of the fruit being harvested on the hill in a single season. With today's developing woodland on the hill, this is no longer possible, even if there were people in mind to do this (see photograph above right).

Of the four 'common areas' here the only one to remain a woodland since early times is the Bicca Poor Wood. This is predominantly a Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) woodland with some hybrid oak *Quercus x rosacea* and a make-up of Beech and Rowan. The under-storey is of Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The field-layer comprises some light bramble cover with equally light bracken, hard fern, bilberry, honeysuckle, common cow-wheat, tufted hair-grass, remote sedge, enchanter's-nightshade and wood-sorrel. The birds here are typical of this woodland type– jays, great spotted woodpeckers, song thrush, blackbird and chaffinch. During Spring and Summer these are augmented by chiffchaffs, wood warblers and, occasionally, pied flycatchers. The lack of suitable nest-sites limits the numbers of the latter species.

If the 'open commons' which are now reverting to woodland, are allowed to continue in similar vein then the range of bird-life referred to above will eventually become typical of them all.

List of records from the foregoing areas-

*19th May 1971 – **Common Lizards** (Lacerta vivipara) on Mynydd Alltir-fach.*
*10th July 1971 – **Nightjar** 'churring' on Bicca Common.*
*3rd June 1972 – Pair of **Redstarts** around an old ruined cottage on Grey Hill (close to the boundary with Penhein).*
*6th June 1980 – **Grasshopper Warbler** singing on Grey Hill.*
*16th April 1981 – **Pied Flycatcher** in Bicca Poor Wood.*
*13th May 1981 – 3 **Wood Warblers** singing in the Bicca Poor Wood.*
*29th May 1984 – 'Good numbers' of **Green Hairstreak** Butterflies (c. 10 seen) on Grey Hill. Also 3-4 **Stonechats** and 2 **Whinchats**.*
*3rd June 1972 – 2 **Brown Hares** on Grey Hill. This species was also seen on Grey Hill on the following dates: 26/08/1977, 21/04/1978, 06/06/1980, and 30/05/1981.*
*18th May 2003 – 3 **Adders** on Grey Hill, above Yew Tree Cottage.*
*26th March 1972 – 1 **Oak Eggar Moth** (Lasiocampa quercus) larva on Grey Hill.*
*12th May 1974 – 'Large numbers' of **Bloody nosed beetle** (Timarcha tenebricosa) on Mynydd Alttir-fach.*
*10th June 1974 – **Upland Click-beetles** (Ctenicera cuprea) and its colour variant, Var. aeruginosa on the northern slope of Grey Hill.*
*24th August 1978 – 1 **Oak Bush-cricket** (Meconema thalassinum) in the Bica poor Wood.*
*21st March 1971 – c.100 **Redpolls** in a flock over Bicca Common.*

Lemur^{+} Trainee

Laura Parry, Lemur^{+} Biodiversity Information Management Trainee, SEWBReC

On the 17th March 2016 I began my first day with SEWBReC as part of the Lemur^{+} project, aiming to provide people like me with the opportunities and resources to establish myself in the world of nature conservation. After completing my BSc in Marine Biology and MSc in Environmental Biology: Conservation and Resource Management at Swansea University and with a couple of years of volunteering as an ecologist under my belt, I was lucky enough to become a successful candidate with the Lemur^{+} Project, and with a keen interest in biodiversity management I am fortunate to be working with SEWBReC as my host organisation for the next 9 months, where I will gain experience working amongst the team and put some of my new skills and training into action.

During my first week with Lemur I found myself in the middle of Devon camping with my fellow trainees in what was to be one of the most exhausting yet enjoyable experiences I have had to date – The Team Build. A mixture of late nights in the yurt learning how to draw wildlife and landscapes to beautiful journeys down the River Dart in Canadian style canoes, some interesting team building tasks and a little taste of the training to come over the next 9 months, provided a very entertaining if not tiring week getting to know the rest of the trainees and finding myself becoming very excited to start my journey with both Lemur^{+} and SEWBReC.

Almost three short months into my placement I have already undertaken some very intense training in woodland plant identification, where I am pleased to say I can now identify many of our local flora by sight and smell. In just a few weeks I will begin my grasslands training where I hope to become familiar with our local grass and sedge species as well as entering training courses of my choice with the help of funding from the Health Lottery Fund. I have so far completed a surveying course on freshwater macroinvertebrate training, and am soon to partake in reptile and amphibian surveying and ecology. As well as this I am also looking forward to spending 4 days at Fort Dale learning about our rocky shores; their ecology and useful sampling techniques.

While working with the SEWBReC team I have been introduced to the vast amount of information and data that is processed here every day, picking up skills in data entry, information management, identification and verification skills.

During my placement I have also been given the opportunity to meet a variety of people involved with the biological recording of South East Wales that contribute to SEWBReC's ever-growing database of biological information, having become particularly familiar with the work of the Glamorgan Bat Group and the Gwent Ornithological Society.

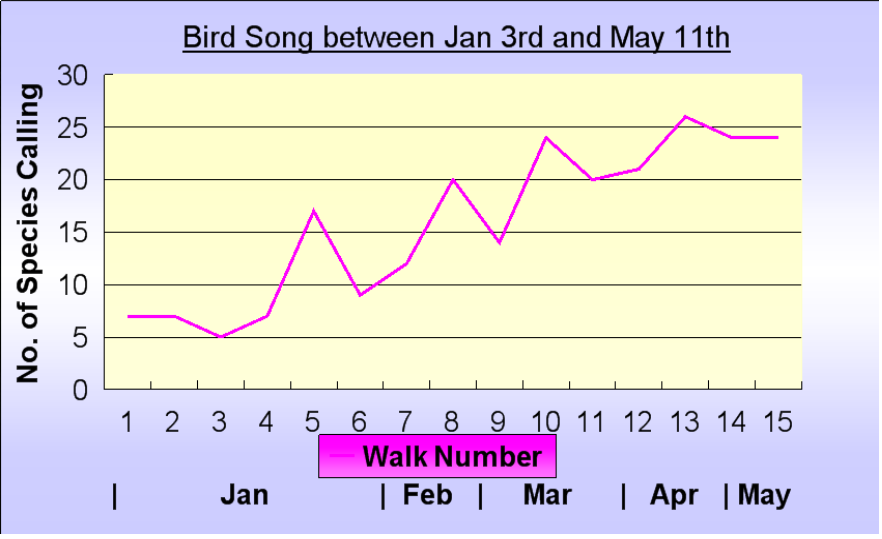
I now find myself continuously on the lookout for new species that I can record and input into SEWBReC's online database SEWBReCORD (my current goal, at least one per week). It has forced me, in the most positive way to become increasingly aware of my surroundings and the richness of wildlife and species we come into contact with on a daily basis….even on my morning commute.

The range of experiences and opportunities afforded to me through this scheme is remarkable. I am looking forward to seeing what the rest of my placement has in store for me; from the people I will have the opportunity of working with and the new skills I will have acquired by November….when I hope to start the next part of my journey into my career in nature conservation.

WBP—Book Award Fund

Sean McHugh, WBP Communications Officer, Wales Biodiversity Partnership

The Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) is offering a small grant to **all** Vice County Recorders in Wales. This can be used towards the purchase of identification books, keys, CDs, or other small equipment. A claim can be up to £25, and may only be claimed once in each financial year. The invoice date must match the financial year in which the claim is made. To make a claim, please contact: *Sean McHugh, WBP Communications Officer, Wales Biodiversity Partnership, C/O Wildlife Trusts Wales, Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff Bay, CF10 5FH. E-mail:* smchugh@wtwales.org
Phone: 02920 480 070 (direct), 07946 469875 (mobile).



Nant Llwynog Park: an initial bird survey by calls & songs

Jim Davies & Rob V. Thomas

As the future of this public park is being assessed in terms of nature conservation and increasing community management there was an urgent requirement for this bird survey. As the only available local resident birder to carry out the task I was forced by simultaneous cataract and foot injuries to rely on bird sounds to make any fist of it at all. I carried out 15 survey walks through the site between January 3rd and May 11th. On each walk I remained for 10 minutes or so at each of 10 stopping places and recorded all the bird sounds (and any sightings) in my notebook.

The number of bird species calling/singing rose rapidly following January 30th as shown in the above graph The sheer volume of sounds they produced was remarkable and I regard this as an important highlight of the park. Of the 30 hectares of the site, 20 are partially restored deep pit (closed 1926) and drift (closed 1955) coal spoil. Firstly, successive sports pitches and changing room, fixed play equipment and paths were introduced to the graded spoil. Then the countryside division of MTCBC and 'Going for Green' made significant habitat provision - ponds, copses, ground seeding and a circular path. A flowering plant and fern survey in 2015 recorded c. 250 species. Pond life is good, and small mammals too.

I believe Nant Llwynog Park could be considered within a SINC designation; certainly it is a very good wildlife resource on Bedlinog's doorstep.

Bird	No. Of Walks Bird Heard (out of 15)	Resident Breeder on Site	First Summer Calls	Bird	No. Of Walks Bird Heard (out of 15)	Resident Breeder on Site	First Summer Calls
Buzzard	10			Great Spotted Woodpecker	1		Apr 17
Curlew	5		Mar 13	Blackcap	1	+	May 11
Herring Gull	6			Chiffchaff	3	+	Apr 5
Lesser Black-backed Gull	8			Willow Warbler	3	+	Apr 17
Stock Dove	3	+	Mar 6	Goldcrest	1		May 11
Wood Pigeon	9	+	Feb 14	Long Tailed Tit	1		
Cuckoo (m)	1		Apr 30	Coal Tit	8	+	
Tawny Owl	Night only	+	Regular calls	Blue Tit	10	+	
Green Woodpecker	10	+		Great Tit	10	+	Apr 20
Swallow	1	+	May 11	Nuthatch	6	+	
Pied Wagtail	4	+		Jay	6	+	
Wren	10	+	Mar 6	Magpie	10	+	
Dunnock	7	+	Mar 6	Jackdaw	14	+	
Robin	12	+		Carrion Crow	17	+	
Blackbird	12	+	Apr 24	Raven	5		
Fieldfare	5			Starling	5	+	
Redwing	4			House Sparrow	8	+	
Song Thrush	6	+	Mar 13	Chaffinch	10	+	Feb 14
Mistle Thrush	9	+	Jan 16	Goldfinch	3	+	Apr 17

Table: Bird occurrences 3rd January to 11th May 2016 at Nant Llwynog Park

Other birds seen in 2016

Regularly: Canada Goose, Mallard, Grey Heron, Red Kite.

Once/twice only: Goosander, Kestrel, Pheasant, Treecreeper, Siskin.

Photo: Nant Llwynog Park— 250 year-old beech plantation © Jim Davies

Home is Where the Heart-rot is

Jordan Cuff, MRes Student, Cardiff University

Rot holes are windows into the hearts of trees, allowing direct observation of heart-rot communities, heart-rot being the decay of the central heartwood in trees. Rot holes are a common feature on veteran trees and are considered by many to be ecologically essential as microhabitats for a wealth of different species; among these are vertebrates such as woodpeckers and squirrels which use hollow trees as nests and refuge, various rare fungi, and a myriad of saproxylic invertebrate species.

My MRes in Biosciences at Cardiff University has culminated in a project aiming to identify the invertebrate assemblages associated with heart-rot in beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and how the succession of this decay affects community composition. Throughout this project, I have collected samples from Windsor Great Park, Epping Forest and Savernake Forest in order to characterise the relationship between community structure and the stage of decay.

To serve as an example, one particular tree I sampled from in Epping Forest (see picture, above) had a particularly high diversity. The base of the rot hole consisted of a wet, mulchy humus covered in leaves; the manner in which the lip of the rot hole hangs outward likely resulted in the collection of rain water, further enhancing the mulchy consistency. Further up from this was a soft, wet wood which came apart with relative ease. At the apex of the visible part of the hollow was a stalactite-like hanging core of dry wood. Each of these contained distinct assemblages of invertebrates. The base of the hole, containing the soil-like rot, was home to a large number of *Myathropa florea* larvae, a hoverfly, and an abundance of the earthworm *Eisenia fetida*, which is thought to have scaled the tree on a particularly wet day. Little else was obviously present at this level of the rot.

The intermediary rot, consisting of damp wooden rot, accommodated woodlice such as *Porcellio scaber*, *Porcellio dilatatus* and *Oniscus asellus*, various Dipteran and Coleopteran larvae, lace-webbed spiders (*Amaurobius similis*), a centipede (*Cryptops hortensis*), and an as-of-yet unidentified pseudoscorpion. Already, it is possible to see the shift in community composition between the two different substrates. The woody rotten core hanging from above contained a richer diversity again. Spiders present in this wood included the lace-webbed spider *Amaurobius similis*, the giant house spider *Tegenaria gigantea*, the woodlouse-hunting spider *Dysdera crocata*, *Clubiona comta*, and false crab spiders (*Thanatus spp*) among others. The woodlice, as above, consisted of *Porcellio scaber*, *Porcellio dilatatus* and *Oniscus asellus*. Many species found in the lower stages such as *Myathropa florea* and *Cryptops hortensis* were present alongside various Dipteran and Coleopteran larvae. Various beetles were found, belonging to the families Dryophthoridae and Apionidae (two weevil families), Elateridae (click beetles), and Tenebrionidae (darkling beetles). There were also Hymenopterans, Hemipterans and other Dipterans which I am waiting to identify.

I am yet to look through the smaller invertebrates captured through Tullgren funnel extraction of the rot, which will likely include many mites, springtails and pseudoscorpions, but I believe the above paints an adequate picture of the great diversity present in rot holes. Considering that this is one day in one rot hole of one tree in one site, it is impossible to comprehend the vast diversity present across the UK. When you are next out recording, do consider poking your head into a rot hole; you never know what wonders you may find!

Photo: A gaping rot hole in Epping Forest © Jordan Cuff

Habitat and species monitoring in the Living Valleys

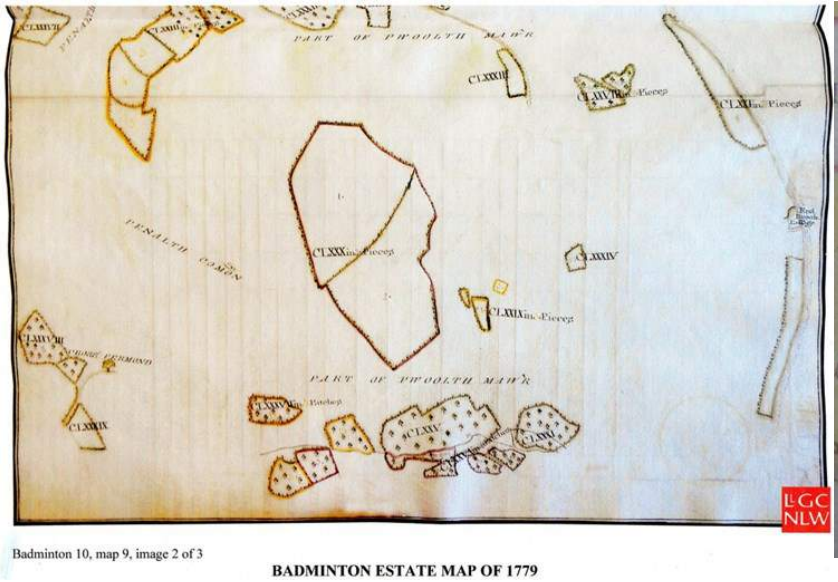
Chris Reed, Living Valleys Reserves Assistant, Gwent Wildlife Trust

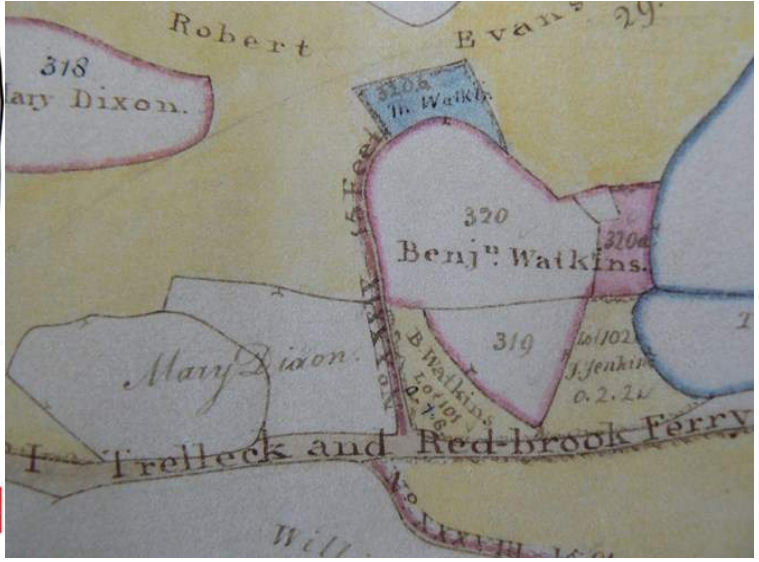
Conservation for years has been a firefighting industry – buying and managing land for rapidly declining species and habitats with limited resources, both in terms of time and financially. Science and on the ground land managers had for a while grown apart. People like myself, who manage our special nature reserves, relied upon traditional methods of management without really questioning whether these methods actually worked for nature conservation. We can guess their impact, but have had little or no data to support our continued work. With the science community now becoming closer connected to practical conservationists, the tide is turning and questions are being asked. For this we need data, but as I have said before we are short on time, we are busy throughout the year carrying out the management prescribed in the management plan. If we carry out work for (grazing, scrub management) the small-pearl bordered fritillary, how do we actually know what we are doing is effective?

This is where monitoring by volunteers is required. We need regular surveys, such as butterfly transects and habitat condition assessments. In the Living Valleys living landscape, Gwent Wildlife Trust is slowly building an army of volunteers who can help contribute towards our monitoring programme. This year is our biggest year and we are looking to lay the foundations for more in the coming years. On our sites, we carry out three butterfly transects, nest box checking, reptile surveys, dragonfly surveys, bumblebee transects, upland habitat condition assessment and botanical surveys. This is all achieved through hard working volunteers. These are people who come to us not as experts, but passionate about nature and willing to learn. We run training courses provided by a wide range of organisations and offer support throughout. We even offer work placements which specialise on monitoring; we currently have Phoebe (a graduate looking for a career in ecology) and Candice (a university student from France looking for a career in conservation). This works in two ways, firstly we can increase monitoring on our reserves, including management focussed surveys and it also offers skills and confidence to the new generation. Having work placements means we can focus on specific projects – for example Candice is looking at the populations of the small pearl-bordered fritillary and response to recent habitat management.

If you'd like to be involved in any surveys and monitoring in the Living Valleys landscape please contact me, Chris Reed on creed@gwentwildlife.org.

Photo: Calluna vulgaris on coal tips at Silent Valley nature reserve © Chris Reed





Historical Research & Management Headaches

Ian Rabjohns

When my wife Jess and I bought our smallholding in the Penallt area near Monmouth in the summer of 1998, it was with the idea of downsizing from a very large house in the middle of a village to a cottage in the middle of a few acres. No more than that; but over the years it has become very much more than that.

All of the fields have been at some stage orchard, with some very 'antique specimens' which are totally hollow but still produce fruit. This regime has been preserved and enhanced with further planting of old types which will eventually grow to be large trees all on non-dwarf stock.

My own background in recording was mainly with Lepidoptera, but which had gone into hibernation for nearly thirty years, and more recently bats. As a very indifferent botanist I had helped Trevor Evans with some square bashing in the Grosmont area having first translated his tick sheets into a language I could understand! Since arriving here, I have revitalised my interest in moths and butterflies and by 2010 had recorded 300 macro-moth species and 28 butterflies on our six acres. The advent of the micro-moth book has now got us adding species here with the current total now about 150, including several species new to the county.

In the past two years both of us have become increasingly aware of the vast array of small dark insects and other flying things that have been ignored before but that we have now been stimulated to understand and identify where possible. This was certainly kicked off by my first digital camera in the autumn of 2006. It was probably beginner's luck that almost the first picture I took proved to be a rare oil beetle (Rugged Oil Beetle, *Meloe rugosus*), apparently the first modern record in Wales. The verification finished up with Paul Whitehead, an invertebrate specialist, who has subsequently helped us to understand the complex nature of the habitat we are now caring for. Up to a point we have to say that if the insects are still there, the management cannot be far wrong, but what do you do for a rare ant that only seems to exist in one pile of rocks that was meant to be temporary! That is one of a number of species that are sea cliff or coastal specialities. It seems our stone walls are the substitute for cliffs, nicely facing south and catching the sun.

The holding is made up of a collection of ancient stone walled enclosures formed we think in the post medieval to 1700 period. It is not possible to be more accurate as documentation for such small properties does not exist. This was added to with other enclosures from 'waste' as a result of the Trellech enclosures act in 1810. Much of the land added at that time was probably also being illicitly used anyway. Because of the steep slopes and being divided by the course of the Black Brook land use has not varied much in that time.

Map evidence exists in the form of Badminton Estate records 1779, Enclosures Act 1810, and Tithe map 1847; all give the land use as orchard and grazing, as it still is, with our rare breed Balwen sheep doing the grazing bit. The Enclosure map awards land to Benjamin Watkins, John Jenkins Thomas Watkin with Mary Dixon's land pre-existing. These parcels of land now form our holding having been amalgamated during the 1800's.

When I asked Paul if he would do some invertebrate work here in 2012 his discoveries started to raise his and some other eyebrows. It was his view by the end of that season the assemblage of rare species indicated that the management regime on much of the land had probably been consistent for at least 1000 years. The collection was capped on the last afternoon of the 2012 survey by the larva of Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus)* beneath the log of an old apple tree that fell eight years before. We leave all old fruit tree timber lying when it falls for just such dead wood specialists. Mill Bank ranks 134 on Adrian Fowles national saproxilic indicator ranking lists (Ref: Adrian Fowles 2016).

Conscious as we now are of the need to maintain grass sward at the correct level, it is a juggling job to move the correct number of sheep at different times on each section of the holding. Variation in the growing stimulus of different years makes it quite hard to get it right. A bad winter such as 2012-13 can mess up plans considerably. This year (2015) we did get the best wax cap field right and consequently had a good showing.

Due to the steep slopes no machinery can be used except small scale hand tools. Hay is cut with a Trackmaster mower and then made by hand. The south facing slope left for wild flowers and butterflies is too steep in places even for this to cut in September and so more hand work required, and all the cut grass at the end of the season has to be removed by hand. But it was on this slope that we recorded a new butterfly species for the site in 2013 with the Dark Green Fritillary, and Essex Skipper in 2015. Not quite as good as the Camberwell Beauty that Jess found in our first year here though.

Cutting grass has taught me to be careful of the herpetofauna and over the years have recorded all those one would expect to find with the exception of Great Crested Newt. Common lizards are rare though, as are large adders in the kitchen thankfully! Slow-worms can be found in bundles. Beetle records have now reached about 350 species and Hemipterans 75. Bees and spiders have not seriously been tackled yet though the Hymenoptera score is 30 so far. It is in the interrelationship with mining bees that the Rugged Oil Beetle relies upon for its continuing existence at the site, so it would be interesting to find out more of the bee populations here. One day we will get round to putting together a full database of species adding in all the birds and mammals of which we have recorded quite a few including dormouse and otter.

The complex management decisions as to how much cutting or how little, what should be left and what can be used to keep warm, where to put the sheep and where best to leave a heap of vegetation to rot and so on makes for quite a complicated life. The hay field is one area of fairly simple management. As we need good hay it is cut sooner than seed fall, but patches are left to allow herbs to seed down and to provide winter cover for butterfly larvae and pupae. The sheep are allowed to graze after the cut but not until September. It will be interesting to see what happens over the next two years as we have just benefitted from a grant to remove some large overshadowing trees. This will enable far more sunlight to reach our steep south facing bank which seems to support such a diverse assemblage of insects. Every season now we look forward to more unexpected finds to counter

St Madoc Centre, Gower

Rowan Porteous, Education and Conservation Ranger, St Madoc Centre

Here at the St Madoc Centre on Gower, we have a small conservation team that is dedicated to doing as much wildlife recording as we possibly can. This supports and informs our habitat management work, as well as contributing to wider research. We are lucky in that we get to study and manage the same 76 acre site all the time, which is also used by the thousands of school children who visit our centre each year. We also run all kinds of activities with the children to help them experience the wildlife. Sometimes all these elements come full circle in a beautiful way, such as when some children on a bug hunt managed to discover the mining bee *Adriana barbilabris*, which was a first for the site, in an area that we had opened up to encourage the sand dune flowers and insects.

We have a variety of intersecting habitats here, such as woodland, dune heath, semi-mobile sand dunes and limestone grassland. We try to do the site justice by doing weekly bird surveys, butterfly transects and regular moth trapping through the spring and summer, and monitoring of vegetation in managed areas. Our site species list runs to over a thousand species, including some rare specialists such as Hutchinsia *Hornungia petraea* on our sand dunes. We are seeing changes all the time, in step with the habitat management we undertake, including a recent colonization by skylarks, and the appearance of silver washed fritillaries. We will continue to manage, study and celebrate this fascinating site on the Gower coastline!

A Recorder's Work is Never Done

Elaine Wright, SEWBReC

I'm ashamed to say that prior to the set up of SEWBReCORD in 2013, I never counted myself as a recorder – despite working at SEWBReC since 2008. I obviously approved of wildlife recording and recorders, but never managed to get properly obsessed with it myself. Two years later, and I am constantly in search of new species and spaces to record; my handbag is always half full of specimen pots, and my husband Simon dreads going for walks with me, as I shuffle along at snail's pace, poking around in the undergrowth, net in hand.

It started simply enough, with an ambition to get onto the first page of the "leader board" of the most prolific recorders on SEWBReCORD. Once this was achieved, it was too late – I was under the spell of recording, and wanted more, more, more. I crept my way up the leader board, made it into the top ten, and felt satisfied at last, for a brief period. However, there is no chance to rest on your laurels when it comes to staying top ten- the increasing popularity of SEWBReCORD (which I am professionally delighted by, *obviously*) has seen me slowly drift downwards, landing in around 13th place (not

Photo: *Tipula oleracea* © Elaine Wright

SEWBReCord SEWBReC Online Recording Database

My account Log out

Home Record Explore

Home » Explore » Recorder league table

Recorder league table

Name	No. of Species	No. of Records	No. of Taxon Groups
Sturgess, Peter	2267	19160	49
Fleming, Bob	1275	5334	43
Owen, Christian	1274	4409	55
Watkeys, Graham	1014	2584	40
Lucas, Andrew	707	1971	31
Burt, Howard	701	3829	31
Wilkinson, Karen	598	3120	28
Williams, Steve	579	1722	30
SEWBReC, Staff	509	875	30
Roome, Bob	496	2334	29
Ruthven, Holly	488	1135	31
Bright, Mike	478	988	23
Wright, Elaine	442	1176	28
Facey, Richard	385	1453	25
Botany Group, Glamorgan	382	711	10
Slade, David	362	729	25
Shaw, Rob	328	2129	17
Hicks, Amy	306	588	23
Porthkerry Wildlife Group, PWG	303	474	26
McHugh, Sean	301	580	24

13th place, woo!

first prev 1 2 3 4 5 6 next last

Showing records 1 to 20 of 265

that I obsessively check my position daily, honest).

Acknowledging that my relative inexperience in species identification means I am not likely to be able to get back in the top ten, I now use SEWBReCORD to motivate myself in new ways – concentrating on my garden species list was my 2015 task (currently at 175 species!), in 2016 I am aiming to record in more places, filling in the gaps in my recording coverage. This should have the side effect of increasing my species, as it will inevitably take me to new habitats. I am also trying to concentrate on species which are under recorded – generally invertebrates – and hope to one day acquire enough knowledge of a particular group to become one of those mysterious and all powerful Vice County Recorders.

My long-suffering other half's low point was probably recently aiding and abetting me in the capture of a Cranefly, which I spotted resting tantalisingly out of reach on the front windows of our local M&S. I eyed it up for a while, checking its location between visiting neighbouring shops, hoping it would move down to within reach. It sat there patronisingly, dangling its legs, mocking me with its identification possibilities – could it be *Tipula maxima,* the granddaddy of all daddy-long-legs? There was little to get a sense of scale from, as it rested in front of an array of sensible M&S blouses. Was it something new and exciting, something that would add to my SEWBReCORD figures? I sat in my car, glaring at it out the window, waiting for the shops to close. Once I decided the coast was clear of staff and shoppers, I attempted to stretch up with my net balanced on a brolly, feeling extra foolish as my net fell at least 3 feet short – this was going to need more radical intervention. I drove the five minute journey home, and burst into the house with "Hurry up, I need you to help me catch a cranefly!" on my lips. Simon just looked at me pityingly, and went in search of his shoes, whilst I poked about in the garden for something suitable. A 6 foot long bean pole, that should do the trick. We drove like the wind back to M&S, where the Tipulid still lounged, carefree and unsuspecting. With a stern warning to Simon to protect me from potential confused security guards, I balanced my net on the bean pole, reached upwards, and finally the prize was mine!

Cardiff Bat Group
Grwp Ystlumod Caerdydd

Bute Park Bat Meadow and Garden Bat Detecting

Alex Pollard, Cardiff Bat Group

Cardiff Bat Group are the very grateful recipients of a Tesco Bags of Help Campaign grant to fund the new Bute Park Bat Meadow. The project aims to provide several new native wildflower meadow areas to encourage an increase in insect abundance, along with kit to monitor bats and other mammals using these areas. There will be training events and conservation work parties, along with bat walks and catching evenings, and we will be working closely with Bute Park staff, Friends of Bute Park and others to make this wonderful project a success. We will publicise workdays and events via SEWBReC, along with Twitter (@cardiffbatgroup) and Facebook group. For more information please see www.cardiffbats.org.uk/bpbm/.

Another project we are running this year is to update our bat records and we need your help! We are looking for safe gardens across Cardiff to host a bat detector for a week. Anyone who can help will be rewarded with a species list of bats using their garden. If you can help – please email events@cardiffbats.org.uk

The Emperor

Chris Manley

On the 11th May last year I was moth trapping at Crymlyn Bog National Nature Reserve. One of my visitors was a fine Emperor Moth female, a member of the silk moth family, who proceeded to lay eggs inside my trap.

I released her onto a nearby alder bush, see picture, but kept the eggs to grow through, feeding some of the larvae on hawthorn and bramble and releasing some when part-grown. These duly pupated in a mass of cocoons which I kept outside under shelter, hoping that enough would overwinter and emerge next May.

On the 6th May, knowing that, in the past when rearing this species, they always seem to emerge very close to 7th May, I put them in the garden shed under netting. Sure enough, punctually next morning a male was just uncurling his wings when I looked.

Another male and a female emerged a little later and one of the males mated with the female in the late afternoon. As they locked together for about 15 minutes I was able to achieve a couple of reasonable photographs, something I'd been hoping to achieve for several years. A further 6 females and one more male emerged over the next two days which all dispersed before mating. They should boost the local population of this beautiful moth. The whole life cycle has taken almost exactly one year.

Photo top: Original Emperor moth female. / Photo bottom: Mating pair. Female is larger and grey, smaller male is more colourful. © Chris Manley

More Square-bashing Surprises

Linda Nottage

The November/December 2015 Glamorgan square of the month was ST0067 near St. Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan. It's bisected by the busy B4265 Llantwit Major to Barry road and a railway line, but a quiet lane and public farm track from north to south provide easy access and views down to the coast. There are few trees but pasture and arable fields divided by hedges offer some prospect of diversity. Winter visits were enlivened by three lapwings, a party of linnets and a few fungi – parrot & snowy waxcaps in pasture and *Volvariellas* in the plough.

By mid-April there were more finds including bloody-nosed beetles and ashy mining bee. The star plant –shepherd's needle – had ID confirmed by Julian Woodman from my photo . Returning on 8th May to view the 'needle' seedheads, we were amazed to find over 100 plants of this arable rarity along the edge of growing cereal. Other arable weeds include field pansy, swinecress & field madder. A brown hare hiding in the cereal bounded away down the track as we approached. Whitethroat, lesser whitethroat & blackcap warbled from the railway scrub and hedges. Our first silver Y moths of the year were active together with orange-tip, holly blue & peacock butterflies while *Epistrophe eligans* was a new (for me) hoverfly.

We look forward to summer visits and more surprises.

Photo: Shepherd's needle © Linds Nottage

Future Recorders' Forum Events

Adam Rowe, SEWBReC Manager

You may recall from previous newsletters that we have been experimenting with different formats for our annual Recorders' Forum events and AGMs in recent years. Following the two Recorders' Forum meetings in 2015 (at Caerleon in January and Cardiff in November) we undertook extensive consultation to determine the most popular format for future events. The decision has been made that we will continue the successful merger of the AGM into a joint Glamorgan-Gwent Recorders' Forum and that it will happen each January. This means that after two events in 2015, there will be no major meeting in 2016. There will be a small AGM in autumn 2016 (to fulfil our requirement for a general meeting to take place each calendar year), but this will be combined with a SEWBReC board meeting and will only serve to defer all major decisions until the January 2017 AGM.

Thank you very much for your invaluable useful feedback in response to our questionnaire. We really feel that we have now identified the perfect format for our big annual events and we hope to see as many of you as possible next January. We should have the date fixed before the next newsletter and full details will be emailed out and placed on our website nearer to the event, so watch this space. If you are having withdrawal symptoms from attending SEWBReC events, don't forget that we will be running our usual programme of training events, as well as encouraging you to get out and record through our square of the month, species of the month and 'Walks with Mary Gillham' initiatives. We will also be attending a number of partner outreach events throughout the coming months, so come and say hello!

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC-funded 'Capable Guardians' project

Adam Rowe, SEWBReC Manager

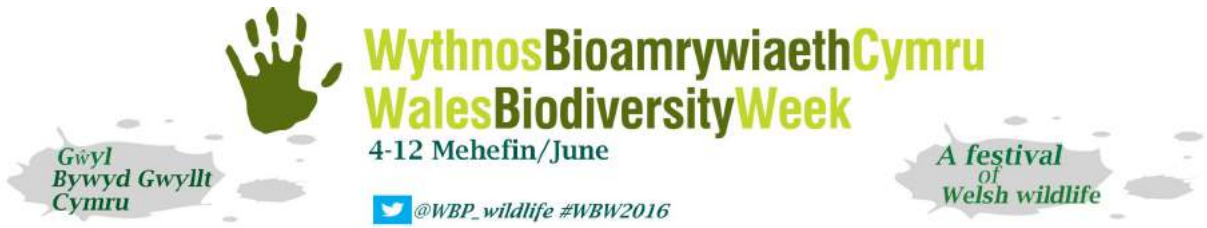
SEWBReC is very grateful to have been contracted by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to deliver a series of three 'Introduction to Biological Recording' training sessions as well as three linked field recording days as part of their 'Capable Guardians' project.

We have so far undertaken training sessions at three locations: Tynewydd (Treherbert), Cefn-yr-Hendy (Miskin) and Dare Valley Country Park (Aberdare) and have also held a very wet field day at Cwm Saerbren (Treherbert). We have tapped into a rich vein of enthusiasm for wildlife recording and we hope to have inspired many of the 45+ attendees at events so far to become recorders!

The remaining two field events are scheduled for July (when we hope the weather will be better!) and will both be weekday afternoon/evening events. Provisional details are as follows (but check the SEWBReC website events page for details nearer the time):

Friday 15th July: *Cefn-yr-Hendy, Miskin*

Thursday 21st July: *Dare Valley Country Park, Aberdare*



Join the celebrations and discover our wonderful Welsh wildlife!

Wales Biodiversity Week is an annual week of wildlife-themed events that takes place all over Wales. There are a number of events across south Wales including the flagship 'Go Wild' event at Parc Bryn Bach, Tredegar (4th June, 10.00am - 3.00pm), an event organised by Blaenau Gwent Biodiversity Partnership to celebrate 'Wales Biodiversity Week'

Here you can meet lots of wild animals from otters and owls to bats, amphibians and reptiles! Also lots of family fun including face painting, bird box making and wood working.

Website: http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Wales-Biodiversity-Week

SEWBReC

SOUTH EAST WALES BIODIVERSITY RECORDS CENTRE
CANOLFAN GOFNODION BIOAMRYWIAETH DE DDWYRAIN CYMRU

South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC)

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Greater Gwent Biodiversity Action Group

BIOAMRYWIAETH
HOLL GYFOETH BYWYD
BIODIVERSITY
THE VARIETY OF LIFE

Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group