

Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

Issue 16

Spring 2017



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Contents

Birds of Prey in Gwent (Colin Titcombe & Chris Hatch)	3
Encoelia fimbriata: a rarely recorded discomycete fungus associated with willow glue (Mark Evans)	4-5
Merthyr Tydfil Bug Hotel Upgrade (Paul Virgin)	6
Changes afoot! (Sheila Spence)	6
New national atlas of grasshoppers, crickets, earwigs and cockroaches: call for records! (Bjorn Beckmann)	7
A World First: Botanical "Doomsday Book" completed for Wales (BSBI)	8
In praise of Ivy (Graham Watkeys)	9
Living Valleys Surveying Season 2017 (Chris Reed)	9
On the origin of theses (Al Reeve)	10-11
Archival Experiences (Natalie Christie)	12
Biodiversity in Cathays Cemetery (Annie Irving)	12-13
The Maerdy Monster: a species new to science (Christian Owen)	14
The Beddau Beast: a species new to Britain (Liam Olds)	15
Glamorgan Bird Club Swift Project (Alan Rosney)	16
The Gwent Wildlife Trust nest-box monitoring scheme (Val Jackson)	17
The National Forum for Biological Recording (Elaine Wright)	17
An unusual habitat in the lower Wye Valley (Colin Titcombe)	18
Lacewing Love In (Elaine Wright)	19
SEWBRc Update (Adam Rowe)	20-21
SEWBRc 2017 Events	22-25

Front page photo: Buzzard © Chris Hatch

Welcome to the sixteenth issue of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter. Despite the roller coaster weather we've had so far this year, spring does seem to be settling in now. The lime trees outside the SEWBRc office have suddenly burst into leaf, and south Wales is busy with birds gathering nesting materials and invertebrates getting on with the important business of feeding and breeding.

This issue of the newsletter really does showcase the amazing difference that volunteer recorders can make to wildlife conservation - from discovering new species to science (Christian Owen, page 14) to building a complete picture of rare plants in Wales (BSBI, page 8). The personal joys of recording are also evident, including the thrills of finding rare fungi (Mark Evans, page 4), the opportunities to develop taxonomy skills (Elaine Wright, page 19) and the quiet satisfaction of finding new species in your local area (Annie Irving, page 12). There are also a multitude of opportunities to get involved in recording and conservation, from saving swifts (Alan Rosney, page 16) to helping build the national picture of Orthoptera (Bjorn Beckmann, page 7). There are also over a dozen SEWBRc events this year (page 22); I look forward to seeing many of you at some of these!

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to the newsletter, I hope you all enjoy reading it.

Elaine Wright, SEWBRc (Editor)



Left photo: Red Kite / Right photo: Common Buzzard. Both © Chris Hatch

Birds of Prey in Gwent

Colin Titcombe & Chris Hatch

Information based on our own observations, and those of other recorders of our acquaintance, provide the following list of birds of prey (raptors) noted in Gwent during 2016. They were Red Kite, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard (henceforth referred to as Buzzard), Osprey, Kestrel, Hobby and Peregrine Falcon.

Raptors seen and counted by myself (Colin Titcombe) during 2016 are shown in Table 1 [right]. Chris [Hatch] also made a count of Red Kites in the western part of Gwent, our collective sightings of this species amounting to c. 20.

Of the seven species in Table 1, the three most commonly seen were Goshawk, Sparrowhawk and Buzzard. As far as the two Accipters are concerned, the relatively large numbers seen reflect the area in which I live – the Wye Valley. As far as the Buzzard is concerned, the high number of sightings reflects firstly the abundance of the species, secondly its large size, and thirdly the manner in which it behaves, by perching prominently and by soaring high in the sky. In the case of the Hobby, the low number seen is partly due to the lack of crepuscular walks being made.

Species	No. of sightings
Red Kite (<i>Milvus milvus</i>)	10
Goshawk (<i>Accipter gentilis</i>)	17
Sparrowhawk (<i>Accipter nisus</i>)	28
Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo</i>)	552
Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	2
Hobby (<i>Falco subbuteo</i>)	1
Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)	11

TABLE 1

Year	No. of Kestrel Sightings
1972	28
1998	32
2001	57
2002	32
2003	31
2004	4
2011	3
2012	6
2013	1
2014	2
2015	4
2016	2

TABLE 2

Over the course of a number of years now I have kept a record of the raptors seen in various parts of Gwent, and despite the essentially casual nature of the records (1972 – 2015), they do nevertheless show a marked change in the fortunes of various species. For example, and most dramatically, the figures for the Kestrel shown in Table 2 (left).

During 2016 my recording of raptors in Gwent ceased to be casual, an effort being made to see as many as I could by scanning the skies and landscapes, actively seeking out the birds. Despite this, my total tally of just 2 Kestrel sightings plus the consistently low numbers seen since 2004 shows a very sharp decline in this species. Reports from other observers show that Kestrel breeding in 2016 took place in at least three of the following areas: Undy (on the Caldicot Level) and the two sites in the coalfield.

Areas in which the breeding of Buzzards was noted in 2016 were as follows:

Thicket Wood (ST4488)	Castle Farm, Penhow (ST4290)
Hadnock Wood (SO5415)	Llivynau Farm, Llantrisant (ST3995)
Lady Park Wood (SO5414)	Cefn Wood, Llantrisant (ST3996)
Wye Valley Woods (ST5398)	Gaerllwyd (ST4596)
Loysey Wood (SO4906)	Little Skirrid (SO3113)
Llandogo (SO5204)	Bignap Wood (SO5305)
Wye Valley Woods below Black Cliff (ST5398)	Furnace area, Angiddy (SO5105)
Trellech Common (SO5106)	Noah's Ark area, Undy (ST4486)

While the number of Kestrels has obviously fallen, the number of Red Kites has increased. Red Kites now breed over a wide area of Gwent and in 2016 we noted c.20, with the majority being present in the north and west of the old county, although they were also noted in the Wye Valley and on the Levels in the south of the area.



Hymenochaetopsis tabacina



Marasmius hudsonii

Encoelia fimbriata (Fringed Cup): a rarely recorded discomycete fungus associated with willow glue (*Hymenochaetopsis tabacina*) Mark Evans

On the 7th January this year, in my home village of Cwmbach in the Cynon Valley, I photographed one of my favourite fungi, Willow Glue *Hymenochaetopsis* (formerly *Hymenochaete* and *Pseudochaete*) *tabacina* (above left). This fantastic looking tobacco-brown crust fungus has distinctive curled up or wavy edges often extending beyond colonised twigs or branches and, as its name suggests, mainly grows on the dead twigs and branches of various willows.

Although not considered rare, it isn't too often found and is always a personal pleasure to see.

A tiny bit about the ecology of the fungus; Willow Glue is a branch/twig trapping fungus, which appears to be a "filter-feeder" as branches/twigs fall and are trapped. It can be locally abundant in wetter boggy areas.

I posted the photos on the Glamorgan Fungus Group (GFG) Facebook page, to which Dr Brian Douglas and Mark Steer responded, urging me to look out for two rare fungi associated with *H. tabacina*: *Encoelia fimbriata* (Fringed Cup) and *Hypocreopsis lichenoides* (Willow Gloves). Needless to say, the following day I revisited the *Hymenochaetopsis tabacina* patch, but despite a careful search, I found nothing.

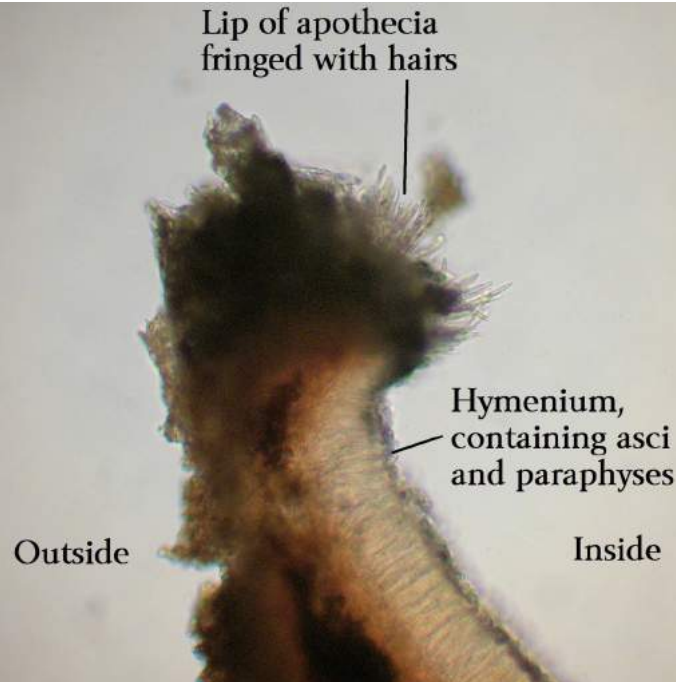
At the time I was actively searching for an apparently rare, though probably overlooked, fungus called *Marasmius hudsonii* (Holly parachute, above right) which was the GFG species challenge of the month. In pursuit of this species I headed up the valley to a site near Llwydcoed, which I knew to have lots of holly trees. Having duly found some of the fungus, thus adding another 1km square to its distribution, I spent some time generally exploring the area.

Walking a path through a bit of light woodland, I found myself looking down into an area of wet (very wet, as it turned out) woodland, dominated by alder and willow. I dropped down into what amounted to a wooded bog and began exploring. I soon found a willow which had *Hymenochaetopsis tabacina* on it, though not as striking as the one in Cwmbach. Remembering Brian and Mark's entreaties to search for the rare pair associated with this crust, I began scanning the branches and almost immediately spotted a few tiny hemispherical organisms on a low, dead branch, which also had *H. tabacina* on it. Getting closer, I was amazed to see that they were clusters of tiny, pale rimmed, brown cups and on even closer inspection, they revealed themselves to be one of the most bizarre looking fungi I had ever seen [right].

In appearance, they struck me as resembling something one might find in a rock pool, rather than on a dead willow, in a swamp. I was surprised by how small the clusters were, the largest being no larger than a 10p coin, while the individual cups were only a few millimetres across.



Encoelia fimbriata



Having seen images of *E. fimbriata* on the web, I was pretty certain of its identity, but having posted the photos I had taken on the Glamorgan Fungus Group's Facebook page www.facebook.com/groups/GlamorganFungusGroup/, the identity was confirmed by Dr Brian Douglas and in a later visit to the site, with Emma Williams (Glamorgan Fungus Group), Dr Brian Douglas (Kew), Julian Woodman (Natural Resources Wales) and Nick Sharp (Natural Resources Wales), more of it was found on a willow nearby in the same wet wood.

To be technical for a moment; *Encoelia fimbriata* is an ascomycete, the ascospores being produced in a sac-like structure called an ascus (plural: asci), the outer end (apex) of which is constricted with a narrow pore through which the ascospores are ejected. The asci are packed into the layer of tissue lining the inside of the individual cups, or apothecia, and are padded out with thin threadlike cells called paraphyses. The apothecia (cups) are arranged in a cluster, known as a fascicle and, as can be seen in the second photo (above right), the individual apothecia often develop and open independently of each other, rather than together, so that apothecia of all stages can be found in the same fascicle.

The specific name indicates that the rim or lip of the apothecia are fimbriate or fringed, and in order to examine that and other microscopic features I took a small specimen consisting of a single apothecia and sectioned it rather inexpertly. In the resulting image of a section of the apothecia wall (above left) can be seen the fringe of tiny hairs (around 0.10mm long).

Counting up previous observations of Fringed Cup in Britain in the Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland, Aderyn (SEWBRc), the NBN Atlas, and CATE2 (database of the Fungal Conservation Trust), there appears to be just six records, four of which are in Wales. It appears that there is a single previous record in Glamorgan (VC41); this record is also in SN90 but requires verification. Since I found it at Llwydcoed, Emma Williams has also found it growing in association with *Hymenochaetopsis tabacina* at a site near Llantrisant.

British records of Fringed Cup

Wales

- Radnoshire (VC43). Frank Lancaster: on willow, with *Hymenochaetopsis tabacina* and *Hypocreopsis lichenoides*.
- Llandrindod Wells: different date to the above, so possibly a different site.
- Glamorgan (VC41) SN90. Dare Valley Country Park. 25/10/2003. Teifion Davies (Via the Glamorgan Fungus Group). *Note: This record requires verification.*
- Glamorgan (VC41) SN90. Near Llwydcoed. 07/01/2017. Mark Evans: on willow, with *Hymenochaetopsis tabacina*.
- Glamorgan (VC41) ST08 Near Llantrisant. 05/04/2017. Emma Williams. On willow, with *Hymenochaetopsis tabacina*.

England

- Cumbria. Elterwater. Brian Douglas: By lake, on wet willow, with *Hymenochaetopsis tabacina*. 2016

Scotland

- Gordon Moss, Near Gordon, in the Scottish borders. Ron McBeath: On willow, with *Hymenochaetopsis tabacina*.

Hymenochaetopsis tabacina, whilst not rare, is nevertheless far less common than *H. corrugata*, which is often found on Hazel. If you do happen upon it or already know of a site for it, it would certainly be worth checking its host willow for this diminutive, but attractive fungus, which appears to be quite rare but may just be under-recorded - and *Hypocreopsis lichenoides* too, of course.

Many thanks to Dr Brian Douglas (<http://fungi.myspecies.info/content/lost-found-fungi-project>) and Dave Slade (SEWBRc) for the above information on its status and Brian for his invaluable help with the technical aspects of this species and many editorial suggestions for this article.



Left: Volunteers with bug hotel / Right: Common Lizard Both images © Gerald Lewis

Merthyr Tydfil Bug Hotel Upgrade

Paul Virgin, Taf Bargoed Park Warden

Volunteers from Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind's LEAP project, plus local volunteer Danial Lewis, came to Taf Bargoed Park to help carry out refurbishments to the park's bug hotel. The group worked with enthusiasm and humour throughout the day, installing new habitat opportunities in the bug hotel, known as Bingham Palace.

During the construction the group had the pleasure of working alongside a couple of Common Lizards *Lacerta vivipara* which decided to make an appearance, much to the delight of all the volunteers. The lizards proved to be so remarkably tame that they didn't mind being handled by some of the volunteers. This contributed to even more enjoyable memories of the day's project for the volunteers. Everyone enjoyed themselves so much that they promised to return later in the year to plant young trees on the park as part of our many ongoing conservation projects here at Taf Bargoed Park.

"The LEAP team enjoyed the whole exercise, from planning to preparation and finally building, they worked really hard. We saw and handled many small lizards that came out to bask in the sun and seemed really interested in what we were doing. The group continues to learn about respecting nature and environmental issues through these projects as well as being more physically active. The relationship we have built with Taff Bargoed continues to develop into a positive healthy outdoor experience for our disabled clients." Sheila Ebeling, Employment and Training M.T.I.B.

Changes afoot!

Sheila Spence, Gwent Fungus Group

As many of you will know, I stood down as Chairman and Secretary of Gwent Fungus Group a few years ago now, the position of Group Leader being taken on by Dr Roger Evans whilst Veronica Beynon took on the job of Secretary. I continued to be the Recorder but am now finding that my eyesight is waning and I struggle to focus on the detailed work involved in recording both thoroughly and correctly.

So, the time has come for me to pass this job on too and yet again Roger has stepped into the breach and agreed to take on the job of Recorder, at least for the time being. The present group was formed back in 2004 and is still going strong thanks to several members' efforts and enthusiasm. The group is affiliated to both the British Mycological Society to whom it sends its records, which are also sent to the Fungus Conservation Trust via their database CATE2, as well as being sent to SEWBRc of course!

I would like to thank everyone who has sent me their fungus records during my time as Recorder, both Gwent Fungus Group members and non-members who kindly send in their records too.

For further information about the group please contact either Roger Evans on roger.evans@mypostoffice.co.uk or Veronica Beynon on vbeynon@yahoo.co.uk.



Cosmeston Lakes Wildlife Recording Group

A new wildlife recording group is starting at Cosmeston Lakes Country Park in the Vale of Glamorgan. If you are interested in wildlife and conservation, joining the group will give you the opportunity to get outdoors and enjoy nature, learn new skills and make new friends

You can join the group for their first outing on the 13th May at 11:00am for a walk around the park, to find out what diverse fauna and flora needs recording at Cosmeston. Refreshments provided.

New national atlas of grasshoppers, crickets, earwigs and cockroaches: call for records!

Bjorn Beckmann, Biological Records Centre



Photo: Dark Bush Cricket © Elaine Wright

Environmental changes are affecting many grasshoppers and crickets dramatically, with two new species establishing populations in Britain last year, others extending their existing ranges, and some showing concerning declines. The Grasshoppers and Related Insects Recording Scheme of Britain and Ireland (www.orthoptera.org.uk) has been mapping the distributions of these species for nearly 50 years and is working towards a new atlas. A big thank you to all who have sent in their observations already – please continue to do so and spread the word. There is one more year to contribute sightings, up to the end of 2017, with publication of the new atlas in 2018.

Free guides to common species are available for download at www.orthoptera.org.uk/node/1035. The new mobile app [iRecord Grasshoppers](#) helps to identify species and their calls, and to log records on the go. The app has just had an exciting update giving it a "bat detector" function which can be useful for making quiet and high-pitched chirps easier to hear. It also allows making sound recordings and attaching them to records to help confirm species identifications (currently Apple only, Android to follow shortly). You can also enter records online via iRecord (www.brc.ac.uk/irecord) or the recording scheme website (www.orthoptera.org.uk/survey - which feeds into iRecord), or send them by email or post (contact details below).

[Editor: You can also send your records to [SEWBRc](#) via the usual channels, these will be passed onto the recording scheme.]

The recording scheme newsletters (www.orthoptera.org.uk/newsletters) illustrate some of the key findings each year. The Scheme is on Twitter as [@GrasshopperSpot](#) and there is a Facebook group [UK Orthoptera - Grasshoppers, Crickets & Allied Insects](#). Identification courses for 2017 will be listed at www.orthoptera.org.uk/content/grasshopper-and-cricket-identification-courses-2017 as they are announced - please email Bjorn if you know of any additional ones (orthoptera@ceh.ac.uk).

Bjorn Beckmann and Peter Sutton, Biological Records Centre, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Wallingford, OX10 8BB.

Email: orthoptera@ceh.ac.uk

Telephone: 01491 692564



A World First: Botanical “Doomsday Book” completed for Wales

British Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI)

Wales has become the first country in the world to have a complete record of its rare flowering plants and ferns. The project, which started almost 40 years ago, has painstakingly compiled a county-by-county register of every single rare plant in the country.

No such detailed account of a nation's flora exists in any other country in the world.

The project was started by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) and had been supported by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and its predecessor bodies.

Dr Polly Spencer-Vellacott, BSBI Welsh Officer, said: *"Wales came up with the idea of County Rare Plant Registers in Cardiganshire in 1978, and it has now spread to all parts of Britain and Ireland. But this is the first time that any country has achieved this kind of complete coverage and it's wonderful that volunteers across Wales have done all this work."*

People working in plant conservation can now identify sites for rare plants in all the counties in Wales.

The register confirms that Wales has an extraordinary diversity of natural features. It shows that it's possible, in plant terms, to walk from the Mediterranean to the Arctic - from golden samphire at Newborough on Anglesey to purple saxifrage on the Carneddau mountains in Snowdonia.

Over the years the register has progressed from hand-written lists through typescripts and spreadsheets to databases on home computers to, finally, a web-based picture of the rare plants for the whole of Wales. During this time, the work of BSBI volunteers has been supported by grants and staff support from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and its predecessor organisations.

Emyr Roberts, Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales, said: *"NRW is proud to support such a monumental project. Over the years, we have provided funding for BSBI to continue this important work. While many of these rare plants are in decline, every single species plays an important role in the fabric of our natural environment - they are an important part of our environment, our identity and our economy. It is vital that we work to protect our wildlife and halt these declines. The register gives us comprehensive and accurate evidence, which in turn means that NRW can provide the best possible advice on rare plants and the issues that could affect them."*

Dr John Faulkner, BSBI President, said: *"Completing the full set of county Rare Plant Registers for Wales is an important landmark. No other country has such a complete assessment of the state of its wild flowers. The authors and contributors are to be congratulated on this magnificent achievement."*

The county Rare Plant Registers are online and can be viewed at <http://bsbi.org/rare-plant-registers>.

Locally, the Gwent and Glamorgan Rare Plant Registers are currently both being updated, and the 2017 versions will be online shortly. In the meantime you can contact the relevant Vice County Recorder (contact details on [BSBI website](#)) for updated information.

You can also watch Dr Polly Spencer-Vellacott, BSBI Welsh Officer, speaking about the project on S4C (English subtitles available): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p04ycbzy/heno-tue-11-apr-2017> (relevant discussion begins at 11 minutes in).

In praise of Ivy

Graham Watkeys, Taf Fechan Volunteer Warden

On my recent wanderings around both Taf Fechan and other local areas I've noticed several mature Ivy plants that have had their stems deliberately severed. Ivy is such an important plant for the biodiversity of our woodlands removing mature plants could have a noticeable and real detrimental effect. It may look like Ivy is strangling or damaging trees but it isn't; healthy trees will suffer no ill effects from carrying Ivy. It only becomes an issue on old or dying trees when it can act as a "sail" catching the wind, possibly causing the tree to fall, although even this will only cause problems if these trees are in an area where people or property might be put at risk.

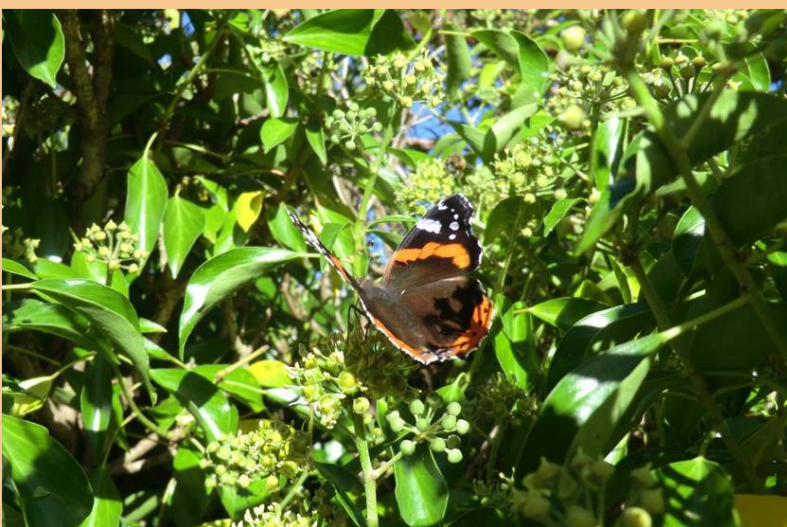
Ivy has two major benefits for wildlife: it provides both somewhere to live and something to eat. Firstly somewhere to live; mature Ivy's dense evergreen canopy and climbing habit provides structural diversity, a complex mesh of tangled stems provides excellent nesting opportunities for birds, and for bats it provides somewhere to wait out the day. Arguably this plant becomes even more important over winter as it provides safe places to hibernate; Comma, Brimstone, Red Admiral, and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies all use Ivy, as well as a whole range of other insects including hoverflies, moths and ladybirds.

Ivy flowers late in the year; in fact it's often the last source of nectar before the long dark and cold of winter. If you want to find high densities and diversity of insects in late summer and well into autumn, look for flowering Ivy; over just a few hours in mid-October last year I recorded 16 species of hoverfly feeding on Ivy, plus several other species of flies, butterflies, bees, bugs and wasps. It's so intensely attractive you can often hear the hum and drone of insects from several metres away, and this attraction continues into the night as many moths also feed on Ivy. After it finishes flowering it still provides food for birds in the form of berries, these often last longer into the winter than other food sources, providing a stopgap when things get tough.

Ivy is such an important plant, it in no way deserves the bad reputation it has, and its unwarranted persecution threatens to make our woodlands less biodiverse places.



The Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederae*): a recent arrival to the UK and an Ivy specialist found in my local cemetery.



Red Admiral feeding on Ivy at Taf Fechan in late October



Mature flowering Ivy at Taf Fechan

Living Valleys Surveying Season 2017

Chris Reed (Gwent Wildlife Trust)

In the Living Valleys living landscape, Gwent Wildlife Trust run extensive surveying and monitoring on our nature reserves and local wildlife hotspots across Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen. We run butterfly transects (three), grassland surveys, bee transects, bird nest box rounds and more.

We are looking for volunteers to assist us in completing these surveys – particularly on the bird nest box rounds (*Ed: see page 17*). We can provide training and we run courses throughout the year to help develop the knowledge and confidence of our volunteers. All abilities are welcome; all that is required is a willingness to learn and enthusiasm for wildlife.

For more information please contact Living Valleys Reserves Assistant Chris Reed at creed@gwentwildlife.org.



On the origin of theses...

Al Reeve, Project Officer - Mary Gillham Archive Project

By working with Mary Gillham's archive it has taken on some of the characteristics of a giant planet whose irresistible gravitational pull seems to be pulling other parts of her archive off from shelves and out from filing cabinets and into our office.

Over the past few months we've collected Mary's shell collection from the Extramural Department at Cardiff University, four more files of notes (including remnant mouse nest) from a filing cabinet in Merthyr, copies of her books and reports, 15,000 more

slides plus notes from her god-daughter and her PhD thesis from the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales.

For her PhD, Mary studied the vegetation of the South Pembrokeshire islands Skokholm, Skomer, Grassholm and Middleholm. Between 1948 and 1953 Mary spent many months on the islands recording the vegetation and investigating the effects of substrate, environmental conditions, grazing and birds on the observed differences. Using quadrats, transects and exclusion pens, Mary mapped the species found on each island and attempted to explain the impact each factor had on the flora present.

The facilities on Skokholm are delightfully rudimentary today, but in the late 1940s when Mary first started to work on

A bootful of archive additions Photo © Al Reeve

the island, there were not the solar powered lights, refrigerators or hot, running water found there today. Mary and other female inhabitants would have to carry their washing water up a ship's ladder to the 'Angel Loft' - the room above the common room where women were quartered - while the men would periodically have to move their beds in the Bunk House, depending on where the leaks were dripping from that particular evening.

Despite their remoteness there was an active set of students, researchers and conservationists spending time on the islands whose work overlapped, informing each other's research. This may have been the origin of Mary's 'landscape-wide' approach to nature which incorporated geology, chemistry and fauna into her assessment and description of habitats. Indeed, Mary quotes Peter Conder (Skokholm Warden during the 1940s and 50s) as saying "*If it is on the island, we are interested: be it rocks, weeds or insects*".

The camaraderie forged by the adventurous souls who worked on the islands, combined with a sense of space and wilderness, resulted in a lifelong affection for islands. And this affection, founded on the interactions between birds, mammals and plants, set Mary on the path of her international endeavours to the islands of the Bass Strait, the Langebaan Islands, South Africa, the Aldabra atolls and, of course, Macquarie Island in the Subantarctic. Great scientists from tiny islands grow.



Island inhabitants Photo © Mary Gillham Archive Project

Mary
Gillham
Archive
Project.

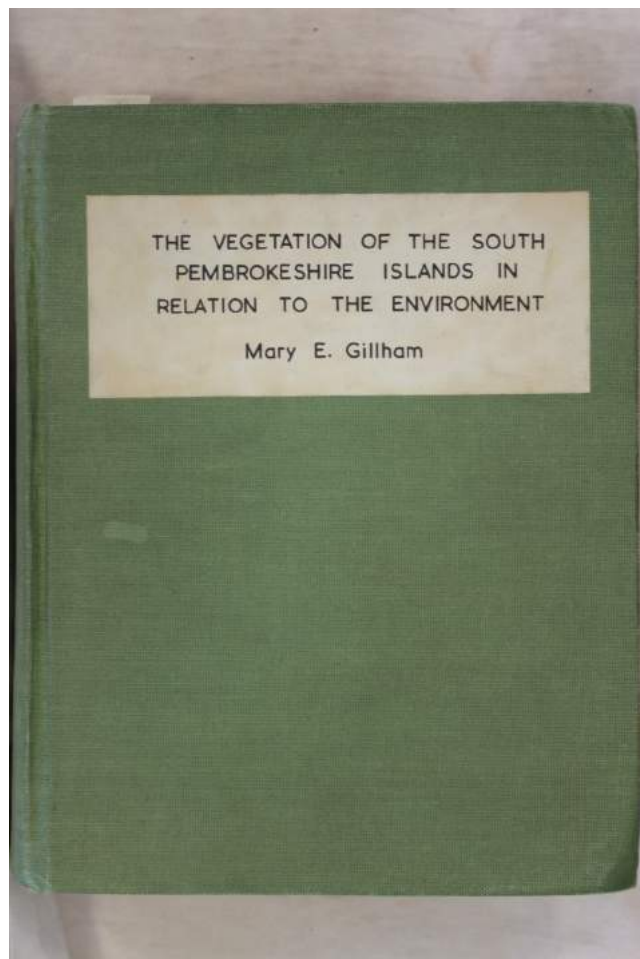
The travails of the thesis

Mary gave her PhD thesis to the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (WTSWW) around 2003, along with some original (large) drawings that were reproduced in the thesis itself. The drawings were stored in the office which was really badly damaged by a fire in December 2003 (very unlucky timing). As the office had to be completely refurbished, and staff were working out of portakabins for some time, the salvageable materials from storage had to be shipped out. The drawings survived - with a little smoke damage - and were moved out to Skokholm, to ensure they were based in a team and library that would fully appreciate their value. The thesis itself rather disappeared from collective staff memory in the movement and re-organisation of the huge volumes of Trust papers in the aftermath of the fire. It stayed relatively unnoticed in the back of the hanging files until a chance conversation with the Mary Gillham Archive Project team.

Making the thesis more widely available wasn't all that simple, however. Due to the hard binding we couldn't place it on the flatbed scanner and so one of our (very kind) volunteers (Annie – see overleaf) took a digital photograph of each page (620 of them!) which we could then turn into an electronic representation of her thesis. You can browse Mary's thesis here: https://issuu.com/sewbrec/docs/mary_scombinedthesis.

Since being digitised a bound printed copy of the thesis has been added to the Skokholm library, so that staff and visitors can still view the original version but also have a copy to handle and use without fear of causing damage.

Thanks to Lizzie Wilberforce from WTSWW for the information on Mary's thesis and for sending a copy out to Skokholm. Thanks also to Annie for photographing each page so cheerfully.



Original copy of Mary's thesis Photo © Al Reeve

Project Progress Update

We have passed the halfway point in the Project and the volunteer team continues to be as committed and hardworking as ever. We have now entered over 90,000 records and transcribed 10,000 of Mary's slides and we have a number of exciting things in the pipeline to do with a website and exhibition which we can tell you about next issue! Sadly Nat is in the final few months of her placement with us (see overleaf); she has been a wonderful member of the team and we'll be sad to say goodbye. However we are happy to announce that we will be taking on another placement student, Cathie, who will be starting in September.

We always have tasks for volunteers, and would not be able to complete the project without the sterling work of our excellent volunteer team. If you would be interested in volunteering for the project, or would like more information, please contact Al Reeve (alan.reeve@sewbrec.org.uk, 07961 516 587).

You can find the project team on Twitter ([@GillhamArchive](https://twitter.com/GillhamArchive)), Facebook (www.facebook.com/MaryGillhamArchive), Flickr ([Dr Mary Gillham Archive Project](https://www.flickr.com/photos/drmarygillhamarchiveproject/)) and Instagram ([@marygillhamarchiveproject](https://www.instagram.com/marygillhamarchiveproject)).

Archival Experiences

Natalie Christie, PTY Student for Mary Gillham Archive Project

Since starting my Professional Training Year (PTY) with the Mary Gillham Archive Project in September 2016, I have gained a whole new range of skills and experiences which I would never have achieved during my time at university without this placement. I have been able to take part in and help prepare resources for many exciting outreach events, including a fungi foray at Draethen woodland, the 'Wonder Women' event at National Museum Cardiff, and a British Science Week event at Llanwonno. I have met a wide variety of interesting people and broadened my knowledge of our local wildlife and environment – outside of a lecture theatre. The opportunity to give a presentation at the Gwent Glamorgan Recorder's Forum in January 2017, as well as writing numerous blogs for the project, has greatly improved my confidence and developed my oral and written communication skills.

During my time on the project I have also had the opportunity to pursue a scientific project on a research question of my choice. I have decided to use SEWBRc's enormous database of biological records as my dataset and using this I am investigating how the number of biological records submitted to SEWBRc for each taxon has changed over time, since SEWBRc's opening in 2004. I am also comparing the differences in recording trends between Glamorgan and Gwent. Once all of my results have been analysed I will be writing up my findings and conclusions in the form of a scientific paper.

Thanks to SEWBRc and the project I now have experience in many different areas including biological data entry, taxonomic identification, oral history and slide transcription, managing social media platforms (including setting up an Instagram page for the project!), science communication, volunteer supervision and recruitment and GIS mapping. These valuable skills and experiences that I've gained throughout the placement have definitely encouraged me to more actively record our local wildlife, which I did not feel so confident doing before. I also now feel more prepared for my future; I have a much better idea of what working in the biological recording/environmental sector involves, and I am certain that I would enjoy working in this field after finishing university.



Pond dipping at Llanwonno Photo © Al Reeve

Biodiversity in Cathays Cemetary

Annie Irving

I had only been in Cardiff a few weeks when I discovered Cathays Cemetery but it very quickly became my favourite go-to place to discover the biological wonders my new city had to offer.

Although Cathays Cemetery first opened in 1859, its 110-acre grounds have remained largely undisturbed since the cemetery closed to new burials about 35 years ago so it has a near-perfect environment for native plants to thrive, and that means it also provides a rich habitat for the birds, animals and insects that live in, amongst and on those plants. The cemetery also contains an arboretum of trees, both native and exotic, and some remnants of shrubs and flowers planted in Victorian times. No wonder this place has been classified by Cardiff Council as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), and has continuously held the Green Flag Award since 2009.

One of the main reasons the cemetery has been designated a SINC is because of the importance of its fungi. With low pollution levels and limited use of chemical fertilisers, the cemetery's urban meadows are ideal for waxcaps, and at least fourteen species of waxcaps have been found within the grounds. Many are common species but *Hygrocybe punicea*, *H. aurantiosplendens*, *H. calyptriformis* var. *calyptriformis*, *H. intermedia* and *H. citrinovirens* are all significant finds within the county of Glamorgan.

Of course, the cemetery doesn't just have waxcaps. Other species that favour its unimproved soil are the Earth-tongues (both *Geoglossum* and *Microglossum* sp.), the Clubs (*Clavulinopsis* sp.) and Spindles (*Clavaria* sp.), and the Pinkgills (*Entoloma* sp.) – all CHEGD species. And I could hardly believe my luck when I discovered my very first Collared Earthstars (*Geastrum triplex*) in Cathays, not just one but a total of fourteen growing in close proximity.

Cathays Cemetery is not just about fungi, of course. In the spring and summer months, especially in the conservation areas where the grass and wildflowers are left to grow undisturbed by mower and strimmer, the cemetery is abuzz with insects. Though the only local water source appears to be the rain water that accumulates in containers and urns of grave memorials, the older parts of the cemetery are sprinkled with Common Blue (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) and Azure (*Coenagrion puella*) damselflies.

Butterflies and moths enjoy the sheltered conservation areas too and, on a sunny day, the flowers are speckled with Ringlets (*Aphantopus hyperantus*), Meadow Browns (*Maniola jurtina*), Large Skippers (*Ochlodes sylvanus*) and Small (*Thymelicus sylvestris*), as well as most of the other common British butterflies.

Day-flying moths are also numerous. Plentiful quantities of Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) provide nourishment for scores of Five- (*Zygaena trifolii*) and Six-spot Burnet (*Zygaena filipendulae*) moths, and the Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) crawls with the bright orange-and-black caterpillars of the Cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) which bumbles about overhead. Other species I've seen include Brimstone (*Opisthoptis luteolata*), Burnet Companion (*Euclidia glyphica*) and the pretty little Latticed Heath (*Chiasmia clathrata*).

Bees and hoverflies, bugs and beetles abound. I recall a sunny day last summer when the bright yellow flowers of one particular shrub, a *Santolina* species, were positively seething with Common Red Soldier beetles (*Rhagonycha fulva*). There must've been hundreds of them, scurrying from flower to flower, feasting on the obviously delicious pollen and nectar, and working hard to create more soldier beetles. And Cathays Cemetery is where I was very proud to make a first recorded sighting for Wales, of the tiny but not insignificant leafhopper *Zyginella pulchra*.

In springtime and summer, large swathes of the cemetery are carpeted with wildflowers, some planted, others native. As well as those I've already mentioned, the Wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) and Fox-and-Cubs (*Pilosella aurantiaca*) are particular favourites of mine, and there are many more besides. I was also delighted to discover, last August, a few lovely flowering Broad-leaved Helleborines, later identified as *Epipactis helleborine* var *viridiflora*.

Slow-worms live quietly in an undisturbed corner of the cemetery, and I was thrilled to catch a brief sighting of a Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) out and about one chilly autumn day. Green woodpeckers (*Picus viridis*) can frequently be seen digging for snacks in the numerous ant hills, Goldcrests (*Regulus regulus*) enjoy dotting about for insects in the many large conifers, and Redwings (*Turdus iliacus*) graze in large flocks on the grassy areas between the headstones.

I think you can see why I'm so enthusiastic about the incredible diversity of flora and fauna at this wonderful old cemetery. Who would've thought a place associated with death could be so full of life? And, of course, it's not only Cathays Cemetery that is home to such diverse flora and fauna; there are probably hundreds of ancient churchyards and burial grounds throughout the country with similar biodiversity.

The non-religious charity Caring for God's Acre (www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/) has recently launched a project to encourage biological recording in burial grounds and they are seeking volunteer recorders to help with this. I encourage you to check out your local old churches and cemeteries; you may be very pleasantly surprised by what you discover.



Photos 1-r from top: 5-spot Burnet / Parrot Waxcap / Cathays Cemetery / Fox and Cubs / Small Skipper / Collared Earthstar / Common Blue Damselfly / Latticed Heath / Broad-leaved Helleborine. All © Annie Irving

The Maerdy Monster: a species new to Science

Christian Owen

An informal BioBlitz held at a former colliery site near Maerdy (SS970992) in December 2016 has turned up a millipede new to science. The outing was organised by Emma Williams and attended by myself, George Tordoff, Karen Wilkinson, Peter Sturgess and Rei Brown. The day's Myriapoda discovery is the fifth new British millipede species to be found in the South Wales valleys since September 2014, and the second of these to be declared as new to science. Others are *Ceratosphys amoena form confusa* (Telfer's Millipede), *Hylebainosoma nontronensis*, *Typhlopsychrosoma sp. Nov* (new to science) and the Beddau Beast [see next page]. More information on these is available on the BMIG website: www.bmig.org.uk/checklist/millipede-checklist.



The Maerdy Monster Photo © Paul Richards www.flickr.com/photos/invertimages/

We met with Emma around 10.30 am on 5th Dec 2016 at the main entrance. Initial plans were to drive up to the top of site near the reservoir for a look around, but after some discussion we decided to walk the lower path from site entrance and record as we went. The group immediately got to work in the small wooded area to the left of the path. Lichens and bryophytes seemed to be the main theme here, so much so that I think it took everyone well over an hour to go no more than 50 yards. There was very little to turn over, so I got out the sieve and proceeded to check the leaf litter. Three species, which were all millipedes dominated my tray, *Chordeuma proximum*, *Melogona scutellaris* and *Lep-toiulus belgicus*. All are common enough in South East Wales, the latter being nationally scarce.

Further into the site (not much further) I managed to find some stones and the odd sleeper to turn over. It was under some of these stones that I noticed a millipede that looked a little different from what I'm used to finding. In the field they looked similar to *C. amoena f. confusa* but more uniformly coloured. *C. amoena f. confusa* are usually an orange brown with a darker brown line down centre of back... an odd colour form perhaps? These were a different shade of brown, reminiscent of *Anamastigona pulchella*. I gathered six specimens in all, hoping that one would be a male, usually crucial to help with millipede identification. All the while I was thinking they could just be another colour "form" of *Ceratosphys*?

Back home I got straight down to checking my specimens, luckily two of which were male. Under the microscope you could see they looked different from *C. amoena f. confusa* on a few characters, mostly less prominent lobes on its back and the structure of its gonopods (genitalia). It didn't look like anything currently known on the British list. I then contacted [national expert] Steve Gregory for his opinion and emailed some microscope photos to him. He also didn't recognise the species as anything on the British list, but needed to examine one close up to be sure.

It didn't take long for Steve to get back to me in regard to the male I posted to him. He agreed and confirmed that we were definitely looking at another new millipede for Britain. Steve produced some extra photos of the gonopods along with some excellent line drawings. These together with my photos were emailed to Jörg Spelda at the The Bavarian State Collection of Zoology (ZMS) to see if he recognised the millipede. Jörg promptly replied with a provisional identification of *Turdulisoma (aff. helenreadae)*. More specimens needed to be checked to be certain, as the gonopods of the Maerdy millipedes were slightly different from those known for this species. Fresh specimens were sent for checking and DNA sequencing, and the species was subsequently confirmed by Jörg as being new to science!

It was a very enjoyable field trip all round and many thanks to Emma for organising the day. Despite it being a foggy December day with the ground still hard from frost, some 377 species were recorded covering a variety of taxa - many more than the 250 species total we set ourselves before we headed off. In all we recorded 126 higher plants, 96 bryophytes, 59 Fungi, 53 invertebrates, 35 lichens and 8 birds. Other records of note included three nationally rare and scarce centipedes, *Lithobius tricuspis*, *Lithobius pilicornis* and *Lithobius piceus*, the latter being a new VC41 record. *Stenus nigrifolius* was also found, a rare camphor beetle seemingly new for VC41. Of the bryophytes, nothing especially rare but a few species were new for the 10km square SS99 including *Bryoerythrophyllum ferruginascens*. Some of the interesting fungi finds included the new to Wales *Chlorenchocelia torta* found by Emma (now awaiting DNA sequencing for Myco-Bank), abundant *Hygrophorus hypothejus* (Herald of Winter) plus *Russula queletii* (Fruity Brittlegill) which smells of sharp fresh gooseberries.

The Beddau Beast: a species new to Britain

Liam Olds

(Colliery Spoil Biodiversity Initiative)

Colliery spoil tips are an iconic feature in the landscape of the south Wales valleys, yet they continue to be overlooked and under-appreciated as 'biologically interesting' places. As our countryside becomes increasingly degraded, colliery spoil tips – once barren, industrial wastelands – are becoming increasingly important wildlife habitats. As has become apparent in recent years, these tips are acting as an important refuge for a range of scarce and rare invertebrates rapidly declining in the wider countryside, including species unknown to Britain (and even science!).

During the winter of 2016, I was fortunate to spend some time with Christian 'Sparrow' Owen – our resident myriapod expert. Sparrow introduced me to the fascinating world of centipedes and millipedes, and kindly offered to survey some of my coal tips in Rhondda Cynon Taf – sites that I have been studying for several years. I was particularly eager to show him Cwm Coal Tips, one of the most biodiverse coal tips in the south Wales coalfield (in my opinion). Cwm Coal Tips are located within the Taff Ely district of Rhondda Cynon Taf, lying to the west of Upper Church Village and north-east of Beddau. Associated with the former Cwm Colliery and coking works, the tips have been left to naturally re-vegetate following the closure of the colliery in 1986 and coke works in 2002. Covering an area of 8.016ha, the site now supports an interesting mix of habitats including bare ground, flower-rich grassland, scrub, secondary woodland, calcareous flushes, a lake, and secondary wetland.

On 22nd December, I met Sparrow and local wildlife photographer Chris Lawrence at Cwm Coal Tips. After changing into our walking boots, we walked from our cars onto the tips. After walking for no more than a couple of minutes, and within a stone's throw of our cars, we came across a piece of deadwood. Not resisting the opportunity to discover what lies beneath, Sparrow decided to overturn the deadwood. Upon turning it, Sparrow noticed a small white millipede no more than 5mm in length. He initially assumed this to be one of the three *Brachychaeteuma* species, all of which are Nationally Scarce. These three species are separated on the number of ocelli making up the eyes, although they are best identified by dissection of male gonopods. A small number of specimens were collected for closer examination under the microscope later that evening. We subsequently found the millipede to be widespread and rather abundant under rocks and deadwood across Cwm Coal Tips. We didn't think much more about it for the rest of the day and continued with our invertebrate hunting, adding some interesting species to the site species list including the nationally rare *Ceratosphys amoena form confusa*.

Later that evening, Sparrow took a closer look at the specimens he had collected. Although superficially similar to *Brachychaeteuma melanops*, the specimens from Cwm Coal Tips differed in having eyes comprising 7-8 ocelli (instead of 6) and the body bearing long stout curved setae. It therefore appeared that this was a new species for Britain, and Sparrow contacted me with the exciting news. Further specimens were sent off to the national expert Steve Gregory, who confirmed the species as 'new to Britain'. The identity of this millipede, however, remained a mystery. In the meantime, it was referred to as the 'Beddau Beast', being found just a week or two after the 'Maerdy Monster'. After several months of anxious waiting, the identity of this mysterious millipede was confirmed as *Cranogona dalensi*. Sparrow had once again worked his magic, and the south Wales coal tips had yielded yet another species new to Britain. This discovery, together with that of the Maerdy Monster, highlights the importance of colliery spoil tips and our urgent need to protect these sites from development and inappropriate restoration. Who knows what other interesting species are awaiting discovery on our spoil tips?

For further information on the Beddau Beast, please visit the British Myriapod and Isopod Group website:

www.bmig.org.uk/species/Cranogona-dalensi.

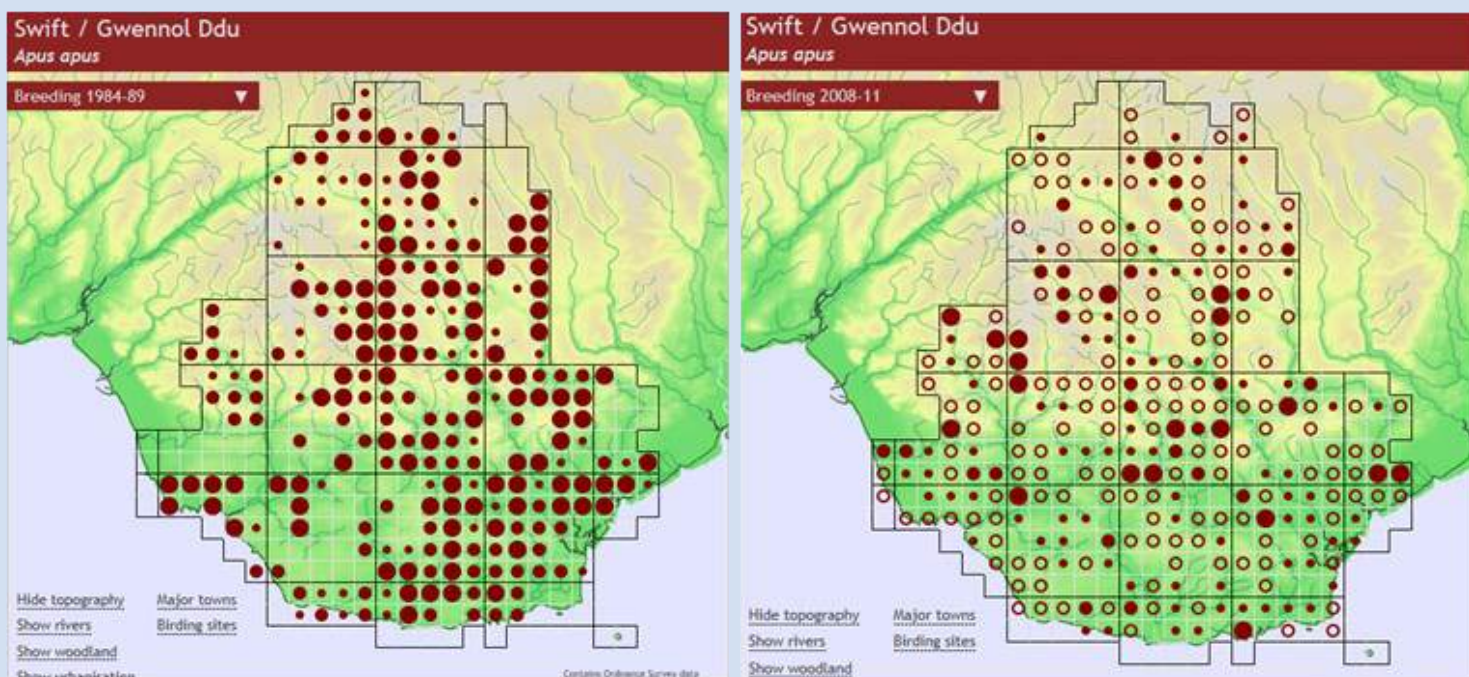


The Beddau Beast *Cranogona dalensi* Photo © Chris Lawrence

Glamorgan Bird Club Swift Project

Alan Rosney (Glamorgan Bird Club)

The BTO national bird survey (2007 – 11) highlighted the decline in many of our familiar bird species. (www.eastglamorganbirdatlas.org.uk). The Glamorgan Bird Club decided that it would take some action to help conserve one particular bird species – the Common Swift (*Apus apus*). The following maps highlight the alarming decline in the species in eastern Glamorgan.



The large dots show confirmed breeding sites, which have dropped from 98 sites in the 1980's to only 20 today. The reasons for the decline are not fully understood but a major factor is likely to be the loss of nest sites following re-roofing. Swifts like open sites, usually at least 5 metres above ground level. They are site loyal and nest in loose knit colonies, often in urban areas.

It has been suggested that climate change might be a factor in their decline but the return date to the UK (first week in May) has not altered, unlike other migrant species, such as Swallows. The use of geo-locators has given us much more information about wintering grounds and migration routes.



In autumn 2015 the Glamorgan Bird Club put in a bid for funding from the Welsh Ornithological Society. We were successful in obtaining funds for our Swift project. This is a two year project. The first year involved monitoring Swift nest sites (not an easy task as Swifts tend to fly rapidly in to their nests). During the winter months we erected Swift boxes at three or four sites, alongside existing colonies. Call systems, similar to an MP3 player, may be necessary to alert the Swifts to these "new" sites. One of the boxes built by GBC members at Kenfig is shown on the left. Students at Pencoed College have also built a number of boxes.

Swifts really need our help. If you can contribute to our Swift project, please get in touch with the Glamorgan Bird Club. For further information take a look at our website www.glamorganbirds.org.uk or see our dedicated Glamorgan Swift Champions blog <http://glamorganswiftchampions.blogspot.co.uk/>.

The Gwent Wildlife Trust nest-box monitoring scheme

Val Jackson

In the years leading up to 2009, one of the most stalwart volunteers of Gwent Wildlife Trust, Rodney Morris (alas no longer with us) installed and then regularly monitored about 300 nest-boxes in several of the Trust reserves.

In 2009, a team of Trust volunteers took over the nest-box monitoring, the scheme was officially adopted by the British Trust for Ornithology, and has been growing ever since. Now over 70 volunteers monitor 834 boxes across 38 routes, mostly in GWT reserves, but also including cemeteries, hospital grounds, abbey grounds and local farms.

Monitors go out in pairs, and walk round their route each week from mid-April to mid-June, check each box and record progress with nest making, eggs or young birds. This information is eventually sent to the British Trust for Ornithology where it is invaluable for research. In addition, if a monitor is suitably qualified, the added benefit of the monitoring scheme can be the opportunity to ring the chicks in the nest-box.

Although so many of our nest-box occupants are Blue Tits or Great Tits, Nuthatches, Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts are found on some sites.

Despite the extent of the scheme so far, we do always need more monitors, as some occasionally have to drop out for various reasons, and we are always expanding or adding routes.

If you are interested in taking on a monitoring route, please contact Val Jackson on vjackson@gwentwildlife.org and let her know where you live, so we could consider a site near to your home which would not involve too much travelling.

The National Forum for Biological Recording (NFBR)

Elaine Wright

I was delighted to recently join the Board of Trustees for NFBR (National Forum for Biological Recording), and thought I would take this opportunity to encourage recorders in Gwent and Glamorgan to consider becoming members of this excellent organisation.

NFBR is the independent voice of Biological Recording in the UK, and aims to:

- bring together suppliers, managers, and users of information about species, habitats and wildlife sites;
- provide a forum for discussion and sharing of knowledge and experience;
- promote the importance of biodiversity information in nature conservation, planning, research, education and public participation;
- represent the biological recording community.

Membership costs just [£10 for a year](#) (£6 for students), for which you receive two newsletters per year, plus a discount to the annual conference. Plus the glowing satisfaction of supporting a biological recording charity, which is run entirely by volunteers!

There is an excellent Facebook Group open to anyone who is interesting in discussing matters pertinent to biological recording: www.facebook.com/groups/NatForumBioRecording.

I have also volunteered to take on the newsletter editor position for NFBR, so if you have any recording related news items that you feel will be of national interest, please get in touch (elfw@aol.com) - the deadline for the next newsletter is 29th August.

To learn more about the NFBR, take a look at their website (www.nfbr.org.uk) and feel free to contact me with any questions.



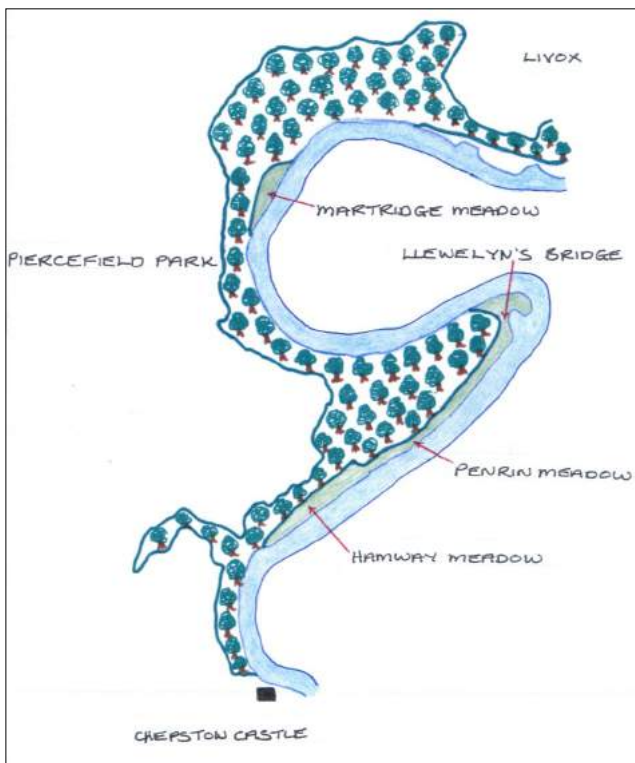
NATIONAL FORUM
FOR
BIOLOGICAL RECORDING

An unusual habitat in the Lower Wye Valley

Colin Titcombe

Along the edge of the River Wye, just upstream from Chepstow, and on the Gwent side of the river lie a series of grasslands which are described on old maps as "meadows". They would not fit most people's perception of a meadow today, though maybe at one time they did. They are now a little difficult to ascribe to any distinct habitat type, though that known as Martridge Meadow (see map on left) could be described as a salt marsh since, during the winter period at least, it is very wet; water-logged, in fact. The others are best described as "salt-meadows" or "salt-grasslands".

Historically these lower meadows, comprising Hamway Meadow, Penrin Meadow and Llewellyn's Bridge, were all connected in one long strip with no apparent separation boundaries. Now, however, a Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) thicket has, at one point, spread from the woodland edge across to the top of the riverbank, and this now forms an obvious division between Hamway Meadow and Penrin Meadow.



1980s Photo © Colin Titcombe



2016 Photo © Colin Titcombe

Tidal erosion of the "spur" has also divided up what is known as Llewellyn's Bridge. The spur itself is also being encroached upon by Blackthorn thicket, the photographs above having been taken in the 1980s (left) and 2016 (right).

The rather special plant here, mostly on the spur as indicated by the red arrow in the 2016 photo, is Salsify (*Tragopogon porrifolius*). In the Summer of 2016 Chris Hatch and I located eight flowering / seeding plants of this species here.



Salsify *Tragopogon porrifolius* Photo © Colin Titcombe

It has been suggested that the ancient origin of the Salsify plants here may have been the gardens of Tintern Abbey where they might have been cultivated by Cistercian monks, and from this source spread on down the Wye in the alluvial habitat which seems to suit it. I have also found a plant of this species behind the sea-wall on the Caldicot Level.

The little disturbed area is also home to both Fallow and Roe Deer, a large population of Large Skipper butterflies and a similarly large population of Grass-twist Spiders (*Clubonia* sp.).

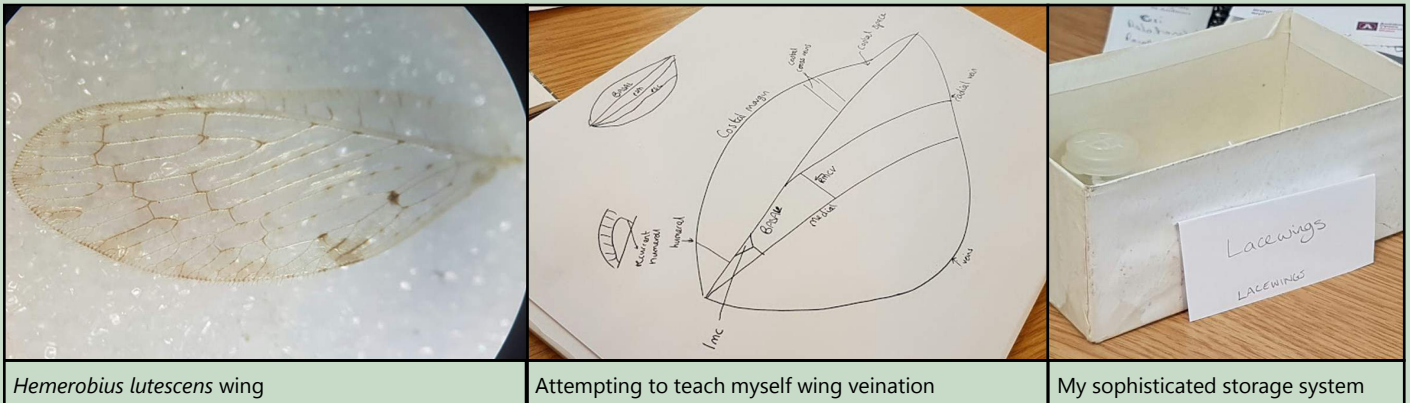
Lacewing Love In

Elaine Wright

I've been collecting Lacewing specimens for the past year or so, after hearing a rumour that they were a reasonably easy group (aka my colleague Dave Slade told me so). After my struggles with Craneflies, a group with no definitive key and over 300 species, it was a relief to try a group with an excellent key in the form of a Field Studies Council AIDGAP guide ([A key to the adults of British lacewings and their allies by Colin Plant](#)) and a mere 40 or so British species.

I started working on my boxful of Lacewing carcasses at a SEWBRc Identification Day in February - making use of the office microscope & Dave's copy of the AIDGAP key. After five hours, I had managed to identify seven specimens - it doesn't sound much, but much quicker and less frustrating than my attempts at Craneflies. I am a novice at wing vein-ation, so it was good to practice those skills and actually get to a species.

Photos © Elaine Wright



A second Saturday afternoon of microscopy at home, and I actually cleared my whole Lacewing backlog - fifteen specimens of eight different species. I had assumed I would only have 2 or 3 species, so was delighted to key out several different ones. My specimens came from a variety of habitats in south Wales, plus a couple from a holiday in Cumbria last summer.

There were a couple of pitfalls - I spent quite some time poking at abdomens, trying to work out if my specimens were male or female (the difference was obvious once I saw the backend of a male, shown in final photo below). I also got over confident on my first ID session, keying out *Chrysoperla lucasina* a couple of times. After reading a bit more about the group, I reduced all the *Chrysoperla* specimens to "*Chrysoperla carnea* group", as they are notoriously difficult to identify to species level, and *C. lucasina* can only be reliably identified by analysing the song.



Overall it was a very enjoyable group to tackle, and one I would recommend to entomology newbies like me. I've added all my records to SEWBRcORD (the Cumbrian ones to iRecord), with photos which hopefully show the relevant ID features. Apologies for my rubbish microscopy photos - anyone with more Lacewing experience than me, do let me know if you think any of my identifications are wrong!

Now for those craneflies...

Taken from my very occasional blog site: <https://elaineepoos.blogspot.co.uk/>.



SEWBRc Update

Adam Rowe - SEWBRc Manager

In the last newsletter we reported on a range of challenges that were facing SEWBRc including securing funding from the public sector, Brexit, the possible impacts on the SEWBRc business model of the 'open data' agenda and the NBN Atlases. Perhaps unsurprisingly, things have progressed slowly in the all of these topics, with the exception of the final one – the NBN Atlas, where things have moved incredibly quickly!

Due to the necessity to urgently replace the functionality of the NBN Gateway before it was switched off on 31st March 2017, work progressed at great speed to get the new NBN Atlas websites up and running before they needed to go live on 1st April. Both the UK level NBN Atlas (<https://nbnatlas.org/>) and the NBN Atlas Wales (<https://wales.nbnatlas.org/>) are now available for testing and use. Please note however that both are openly recognised as 'works in progress' at present. Currently the Atlas websites aim to replicate the functionality of the outgoing NBN Gateway, but there are still significant developments to be undertaken for the sites to reach their potential. Adam Rowe remains on the Steering Groups for both the UK and Wales Atlases to input views from the Welsh Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) and the network of data suppliers and users they represent.

The impact of national austerity measures have been felt by LERCs in recent years through slowly declining public sector funding. However, during 2017/18 we are very positive that we can reverse the recent trend and increase SEWBRc's income from public sector sources. We are currently at an advanced point in discussions with Welsh Government (WG) as they plan to take over the core funding element of our previous partnership agreement with Natural Resources Wales (NRW). As part of this new agreement with WG, we are aiming to provide access to our data for those that require it within WG, as well as continuing data access arrangements for NRW staff. If negotiations go well, this will result in a net increase in SEWBRc's combined income from the two organisations.

In addition, we are meeting with representatives from as many local authorities as possible during spring 2017 to discuss how well they are assessing the possible biodiversity impacts of projects and plans against biodiversity data. Our negotiating position is strengthened by the need for all public bodies in Wales to comply with the enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty established by the Environment Act (Wales) 2016. Section 6 of the Act places a duty on public authorities to 'seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity' and to 'promote the resilience of ecosystems'. We are using evidence from our records of commercial data enquiries in each local authority area to argue the case that without access to data from SEWBRc, it is hard to prove that biodiversity is being fully considered and protected. On the back of this round of meetings we are hopeful that we will secure between one and three additional service level agreements with local authorities in our region.



SEWBReC Governance

At SEWBReC Limited's AGM on 21st January 2017, there were a number of changes to the board of Directors. Colin Cheesman stepped down as Chair and was succeeded by Steve Bolchover. He is replaced as Vice Chair by Alison Jones. Colin has taken on Alison's former role as Company Secretary. We're sad to say that Mike Wilson has stepped down from the Board after 14 years (leaving Alison as our only remaining founding member). The Treasurer position Mike vacated has been filled by Sinead Lynch.

We are fortunate that we received several applications for membership of SEWBReC following our AGM and recent pleas in newsletters and emails. Ten new applications for membership were approved at the recent SEWBReC board meeting. We hope that some of these new members, as well as existing members, will go on to become increasingly involved in the running of the company, possibly even by joining the board of directors. We currently have up to three vacancies on the SEWBReC board. We are actively seeking new directors to fill these vacancies and currently have a particular emphasis on finding directors who are employed by or are representative of the interests of public or private sector stakeholders.

The current Board members are:

Steve Bolchover (Chair)

Alison Jones (Vice Chair)

Colin Cheesman (Company Secretary)

Sinead Lynch (Treasurer)

Martin Anthoney

Roger James

Paul Seligman

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 always keen to grow our membership; you can download a copy of the application form from [our website](#). 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 of these along with an application form.*

SEWBReC 2017 Events

As usual we have a busy schedule of summer events that we are running / supporting. We look forward to seeing many of you at these events.

Saturday 27th May 2017: Forest Farm Summer Wildlife Festival

Mary Gillham Archive Project will have a stall at this event. Please contact Al for more information (alan.reeve@sewbrec.org.uk, 07961 516587).

Saturday 10th June 2017: Wales Wide Wildlife Watch

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the completion of the network of [Local Ecological Records Centres of Wales](#), the four Welsh LERCs ([BIS](#), [Cofnod](#), [SEWBReC](#) & [WWBIC](#)) have joined together to run a Wales Wide Wildlife Watch on Saturday 10th June 2017. We will be asking everyone across Wales to head outside to record the wildlife in their local nature reserve, park or garden. More information will be available shortly.

Sunday 11th June 2017: Llys Nini BioBlitz

We are supporting RSPCA and Swansea Council at this BioBlitz, please see further details opposite.

Sunday 11th June 2017: Go Wild

We will have a stall at the annual Go Wild event, this year being organised by Caerphilly Council at Parc Penallta.

Thursday 29th June: Sedge ID Course

One of SEWBReC's free training courses funded by Wales Biodiversity Partnership. Please see page 25 for further details, and complete the attached application form if you would like to apply for a space.

Saturday 8th & Sunday 9th July: Cefn Ila Wildlife Recording Weekend

We are running this recording event with Woodland Trust Wales, please see further details opposite.

Friday 14th July: Welsh LERC Tenth Anniversary Event

2017 marks the tenth anniversary of the completion of the network of Local Ecological Records Centres of Wales, with the 2007 opening of WWBIC. The four Welsh LERCs are organising a day of talks and displays to showcase and celebrate our work so far. The event will be in St David's College, Carmarthen and includes talks from Jane Davidson (former Welsh Assembly Minister for the Environment and current director of [INSPIRE](#)) and Ray Woods (Lower Plants expert).

Saturday 15th July: Walking in the Footsteps of Mary at Cardiff Docks

Mary Gillham Archive Project event; please contact Al for more information (alan.reeve@sewbrec.org.uk, 07961 516587).

Saturday 22nd July: Millipedes & Centipedes ID Course

One of SEWBReC's free training courses funded by Wales Biodiversity Partnership. Please see page 25 for further details, and complete the attached application form if you would like to apply for a space.

Friday 11th - Sunday 13th August: Flat Holm Wildlife Recording Weekend

A unique and exciting opportunity to spend the weekend recording on Flat Holm Island, please see full details on page 24 and complete the attached form if you are interested in attending.

Saturday 19th - Sunday 20th August: Newport Wetlands BioBlitz

We are supporting RSPB at this BioBlitz, please see further details on page 24.

Saturday 26th August: Solitary Bees ID Course

One of SEWBReC's free training courses funded by Wales Biodiversity Partnership. Please see page 25 for further details, and complete the attached application form if you would like to apply for a space.

Saturday 9th September: Walking in the Footsteps of Mary at Coed y Bedw

Mary Gillham Archive Project event; please contact Al for more information (alan.reeve@sewbrec.org.uk, 07961 516587).

Saturday 16th September: Introduction to Wildlife Recording Course

One of SEWBReC's free training courses funded by Wales Biodiversity Partnership. Please see page 25 for further details, and complete the attached application form if you would like to apply for a space.

Saturday 18th November: Bryophytes Identification Walk

A walk at Wern Ddu, Caerphilly led by local expert George Tordoff, this event is for beginners who are interested in learning more about Bryophytes. Please email Elaine Wright to book a place (Elaine.wright@sewbrec.org.uk).

BioBlitz at RSPCA Llys Nini, Penllergaer, Swansea



Photo © Elanor Alun

Sunday 11th June 10am - 4pm

Although primarily an animal rehoming centre, Llys Nini sits on 78 acres of land including meadows, wetlands, and ancient woodland. Its last major surveys were in 2009, and so need updating. June 2017 will see its first ever BioBlitz to try to get an idea of what species are now on site and thriving. Suitable for beginners and experienced wildlife recorders.

For further details, please contact the Llys Nini Conservation Manager Elanor Alun on 07432 548074.

Wildlife Recording Weekend at Cefn Ila, Usk, Monmouthshire

Saturday 8th July 11am - 11pm and Sunday 9th July 9am - 3pm

This summer SEWBRc are partnering with The Woodland Trust in Wales to organise a BioBlitz at Cefn Ila Woodland near Usk, Monmouthshire. The event will be taking place on Saturday 8th July and Sunday 9th July, and will include a BBQ and a moth trapping session on the Saturday evening. Vincent Wildlife Trust are also helping during the weekend, with their bat expert Dai Jermyn leading a bat walk and inspecting the bat roost.

Cefn Ila is a peaceful place to discover and is not heavily used. It has stunning views of the surrounding countryside and is well suited for informal exploration via the way-marked footpath network with a car park, and is becoming a popular new destination for local people to enjoy. It sits in a rolling landscape that is an intimate mixture of small woodlands and farmed pastures in a wider area that has a concentration of ancient woodlands. Cefn Ila itself is very much a contrast of old and new, with the main portion being comprised of young native broadleaved woodland, planted on former farmland during 2007 to 2009. The older section comprises of a number of unique, mostly Victorian, landscape features that centre on the now demolished Cefn Ila House. The house was originally a private home; it subsequently became a women's convalescence home and then a maternity hospital. The building mysteriously burnt down and was demolished in 1973. The surrounding landscape features include a walled garden, an old orchard and unimproved grassland (now a Gwent Wildlife Trust SINC), and an arboretum. The arboretum has many fine mature specimen conifers and some surviving ornamental shrubs, with a mix of native and non-native broadleaved trees. These give a natural woodland feel which masks a once manicured terraced garden complete with water features, originally laid out in the mid-19th century.

There are also some ancient woodland and aquatic habitats on the site. There will be a variety of habitats to explore, plus (hopefully!) an interesting range of species to see - the site's fauna includes the Wasp Spider (*Argiope bruennichi*, photographed below), a species only known at 3 sites within Wales. Many of the features have been sensitively restored by the volunteer group, with removal of the rather invasive laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) revealing interesting species like the earthstar *Geastrum quadrifidum*, associated with *Sequoiadendron giganteum*. The repointing of the walled garden had to be carefully done so as not to impact on *Licranum rupicola*, a Nationally Notable B spider. This species was identified by volunteer invertebrate expert Mike Kilner, who has done sterling work building a species list for the site since its acquisition by Woodland Trust.



Photos © Barry Embling



We hope to get some good quality recording done for the site, so the public engagement aspect of the day will be fairly low key. However we do hope that members of the public who attend will have the opportunity to see specimens and discover wildlife with help from some of the experts in attendance. To this end we plan to run a few walks / engagement sessions during the day.

If you feel like this event would be something you would like to be involved with, please contact Elaine Wright (Elaine.wright@sewbrec.org.uk) to discuss the finer details of the day. For further details about visiting the site, and volunteering opportunities, please contact Barry Embling of the Woodland Trust (barryembling@woodlandtrust.org.uk).



Wildlife Recording Weekend on Flat Holm Island, Cardiff

Overnight Trip: Fri 11th August (evening boat crossing from Cardiff Bay, time TBC) to Sun 13th August (morning boat crossing, time TBC)

Day Trip: Saturday 12th August (morning and evening boat crossing times to/from Cardiff Bay TBC)

We're thrilled to announce a unique opportunity to stay and record on Flat Holm Island, situated in the Bristol Channel off Cardiff. We will be running a two night recording trip from the evening of 11th to the morning of 13th August 2017, with a day trip available on the 12th August. Both options will offer plenty of time to explore the island and record your own groups of interest as well as to enjoy the sea views and the feeling of being on a remote island without leaving sight of Cardiff. You can even pay a visit to the most southerly pub in Wales! Overnighters will get the chance to help run a moth trap and check for the presence of bats.

As well as its interesting history (find out [more here](#)), Flat Holm is known for Welsh leeks, gulls, bunnies and slow worms. The island is a Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, designated for its maritime plant communities and rare plant species, as well as for the large number of gulls which breed there every year. There is rocky sea shore to explore as well as maritime and semi-improved grasslands and areas of tall ruderal herbs, bracken and scrub (but no full size trees!). The farmhouse has a native flower garden which on a sunny day is usually audibly buzzing with insects. There are several other buildings on the island, including a light house, fog horn, and of course the Gull and Leek pub. There are also ruined buildings and disused military structures (not all accessible) which provide potential habitat for all sorts of wildlife from bats to cave spiders. The majority of the records held by SEWBRc for Flat Holm are over 10 years old. Can you help us to get an up to date picture of the wildlife of this wonderful island?

Important information

This event is weather dependant. Back-up trips are planned for the weekend of 1st - 3rd September if the original date is cancelled due to bad weather.

Booking is essential as spaces on boats are limited. Overnight accommodation on the island will be in dormitories in the farm house, or camping can be arranged in advance.

Travel to the island will be by fast rib which is not suitable for pregnant ladies, people under 1.1m tall or people with some health conditions. From the landing place the island is only accessible via several steps. If you have any questions about whether the trip is suitable for you don't hesitate to get in touch on 029 2064 1110 or email info@sewbrec.org.uk.

We would be grateful for voluntary contributions towards the cost of travel to the island of £10 per person.

Please register your interest by Friday 26th May by returning the enclosed form to info@sewbrec.org.uk or by post to SEWBRc, 13 St Andrew's Crescent, Cardiff, CF10 3DB

BioBlitz at Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve

Midday Saturday 19th August - Midday Sunday 20th August

Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve was created as part of a compensation package for wildlife habitats lost when the Cardiff Bay barrage was built in 2000, and is now recognised as a nationally important haven. Since its creation the varied habitats have developed and matured, providing over 400 hectares of reedbed, saltmarsh, reens and grasslands which provide a home for a range of wildlife.

To celebrate the sometimes hidden diversity of this special place we would like to invite beginners and experts alike to join us for a race against time to identify and record as many species as possible over the two days. The BioBlitz will start at midday on Saturday 19 August, and will run for 24 hours.

If you would like to be involved please contact RSPB Newport Wetlands on 01633 636363 or email newport-wetlands@rspb.org.uk for more information.



Species Identification Training Workshops 2017

The aim of these workshops is to stimulate recording interest and generate biological records. Help improve our knowledge of local species and habitats by learning how to identify species with local experts, and then submitting your records to SEWBRc. These events are **free** but **booking is essential** as spaces are limited. Please complete the application form, and return it to SEWBRc (details below) by **Friday 26th May 2017**.



Sedges

Date: Thursday 29th June 2017, 10am - 4pm

Available places: 10

Location: Cefn Cribwr Meadows

Trainers: Julian Woodman

Level: Beginner

Join botany expert Julian Woodman to learn about the identification of South Wales's sedges. This field day will involve a trip to Cefn Cribwr meadows SSSI with the possibility of a trip to a nearby woodland.



Millipedes and Centipedes

Date: Saturday 22nd July 2017, 10am - 4pm

Available places: 10

Location: TBC

Trainers: Greg Jones

Level: Beginner

Invertebrate expert Greg Jones will introduce the many legged world of Myriapoda. This group is extremely under recorded; in fact, two new-to-science species have recently been discovered in south Wales, showing just how overlooked Myriapoda are. The course will be both field and classroom based.



Solitary Bees

Date: Saturday 26th August 2017, 10am-4pm

Available places: 10

Location: National Museum Wales [NMW], Cardiff

Trainer: Mark Pavett (NMW)

Level: Beginner

Join entomologist Mark Pavett to learn about the identification of the UK's large number of solitary bee species. The day will involve studying the NMW's collection using microscopes. Please note that ongoing recording of some species will involve taking specimens.



Introduction to Wildlife Recording

Date: Saturday 16th September 2017, 10am - 4pm

Available places: 15

Location: Llandegfedd Reservoir

Trainer: Adam Rowe & David Slade

Level: Beginner

Join SEWBRc to learn about why recording wildlife is important, and how your sightings can be used to aid conservation work; how you can easily turn your sightings into useful biological records; and how to store and share your wildlife records. The day will be both classroom and field based.

SEWBRc, 13 St Andrew's Crescent, Cardiff, CF10 3DB

Tel: 02920 641110

Email: info@sewbrec.org.uk Website: www.sewbrec.org.uk



South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc)

13 St. Andrew's Crescent,
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Telephone: 029 20 64 1110

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