



## MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No 72

October to December 2010.

*A monthly newsletter covering  
Gwent and Monmouthshire Vice County 35*

*Editor: Martin Anthoney*

### **Review of the year 2010**

2010 entered with cold and snow and finished even colder with even more snow. In between, spring and early summer produced a good quota of warm sunny days, but the accompanying clear, cool nights were not good for moths. For the fourth year in a row, the second half of summer and autumn were predominantly cloudy and wet: how much longer will we have to survive on the memories of the brilliant July/August of 2006?

### **Butterflies**

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly the addition of a new breeding butterfly species to the county list when a singleton Small Blue at Newport Wetlands Reserve on 28<sup>th</sup> June was followed by the discovery (12<sup>th</sup> August) of its kidney vetch foodplant and more butterflies at Newport Docks. We hope to investigate further during 2011.

In view of the cold weather, it was no surprise that the first butterflies were not recorded until 5<sup>th</sup> March, when a short warm spell produced Comma, Red Admiral and several Small Tortoiseshells. In years gone by this would have been quite typical, but a succession of mild winters has lulled us into expecting to see butterflies in January and February. Warm days in April and May saw numbers increase; a memorable day (9<sup>th</sup> April) produced 26 individuals at Blackrock Quarry (Clydach), and Dingy Skipper first appeared at the same site on 27<sup>th</sup> April. This species had one of its best seasons ever: several new colonies were found and good numbers recorded at many sites, with over 150 counted at Blaenserchan. Blackrock Quarry is a sheltered sun-trap which is acquiring a reputation as the best spot in the county to see butterflies. A personal record was set there on 26<sup>th</sup> July when we recorded twenty butterfly species in one hour, including White-letter Hairstreak for the first time.

Marsh Fritillary had a good year at Aberbargoed, its sole remaining VC35 colony, with ~ 130 adults recorded and an autumn web count of 217, both the highest numbers for several years. In contrast, very few White Admirals appeared in the Wye Valley or Slade Wood in July – they could definitely do with a good summer to build up numbers. Similarly, second generation Holly Blues were almost non-existent. Silver-washed Fritillary fared rather better and a few new sites were found for this species.

2010 was a poor year for immigrant butterflies. After the extravaganza of 2009, Painted Lady numbers barely reached double figures and for the first time since 2001 no records of Clouded Yellow sightings in the county have been received.

### **Moths**

As expected in view of the cold, snowy weather, the number of moths reported for the first three months was well down on the previous few years, though the first dates for each species fitted in well with those of recent years, so perhaps the weather affected flight opportunities rather than emergence dates. A select group of hardy volunteers went climbing to 500m on the evenings of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> April to search for larvae of the Silurian moth in its known locality and were rewarded with a total of 40 larvae.

Two new macromoth species were added to the VC35 list in 2010, both trapped on the same night (12<sup>th</sup> July at Newport Wetlands Reserve). Brown-tail has been predicted to arrive in the county for several years from existing colonies just over the estuary, but Reddish Light Arches was more of a surprise. Other records worthy of note included Lappet (7<sup>th</sup> July), which continues to occur at very low density along the

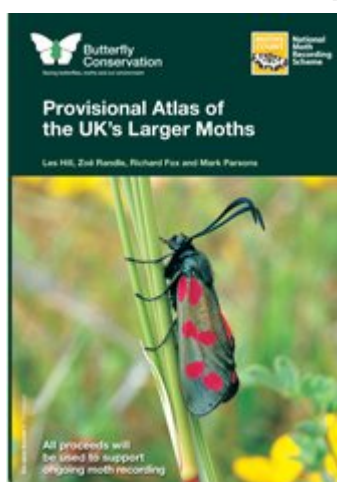
coast, and the second VC35 record for Red-tipped Clearwing which flew into a car through an open window (1<sup>st</sup> August). The sunny spring ensured day-flying species generally fared better than those recorded by light trapping: 65 Drab Looper were recorded at Hendre Wood though, worryingly, searches at several other known sites were unsuccessful. Little Thorn and Burnet Companion both occurred in good numbers in the east and west of the county respectively.

2010 was not a good year for immigrants. A Humming-bird Hawk on 17<sup>th</sup> April was the first of 10 records this year, slightly up on recent years but way below the exceptional 2006 numbers. Late August through to October produced Vestal, Small Mottled Willow, Pearly Underwing, White-point and several Dark Sword-grass, but most intriguing was the third VC35 record in four years for Four-spotted Footman. Unrecorded in Gwent before 2006, this is a species which is spreading and may well become established.

The total number of micromoth records for 2010 was probably below average, but three new species were added to the county list: *Caloptilia Populetorum* (31<sup>st</sup> March, Llandogo), *Mompha terminella* (25<sup>th</sup> June, Newbridge) and *Orthotelia sparganella* (21<sup>st</sup> July, Newport). Also worthy of mention was the second VC35 record of *Mompha sturnipennella* (25<sup>th</sup> March, Llandogo).

Martin Anthony

## Moths Count Update Provisional Moth Atlas published



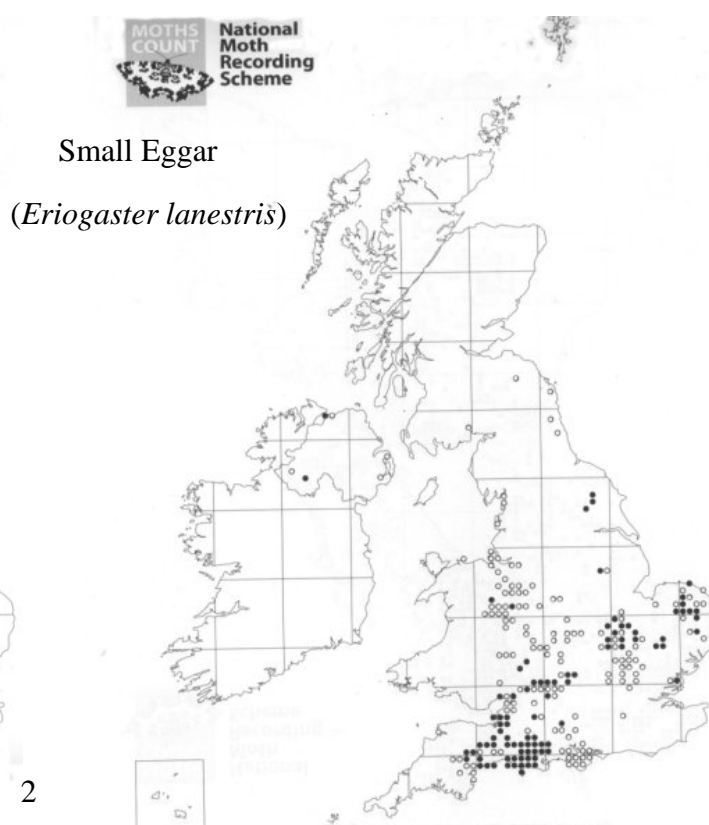
Two days before Xmas I received an advance copy of the moth atlas produced by the national recording scheme. A4 and paperback, the publication features more than 400 pages of moth maps, showing both historical (pre 2000) and current (2000 onwards) records from the NMRS database, with up-to-date (April 2010) distribution maps for 868 macro-moth species.

The atlas will be available from 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011: to order a copy now at the special reduced rate of £12.50 (rrp £20) plus £5 p&p, go to the website

[http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/product/5146/moth\\_atlas.html](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/product/5146/moth_atlas.html).

All proceeds will be used to support ongoing moth recording.

Sample maps for two important Gwent species are shown below. To save space, the maps are shown here at about 70% of their actual size and at greatly reduced resolution. In the atlas, there are two maps per side of A4, with excellent clarity and very easy to read.



## National Moth Recorders' Meeting 2011

MothsCount, the national moth recording scheme, is holding its first UK-wide Moth Recorders' Meeting on Saturday 22nd January 2011, at the Birmingham and Midlands Institute.

It will include a variety of talks from amateur moth recorders and researchers and is open to everyone with an interest in moths, moth recording and conservation. Several trade stands will be present. The programme and more information are available on the MothsCount website:

[http://www.mothscount.org/text/54/national\\_conferences.html](http://www.mothscount.org/text/54/national_conferences.html)

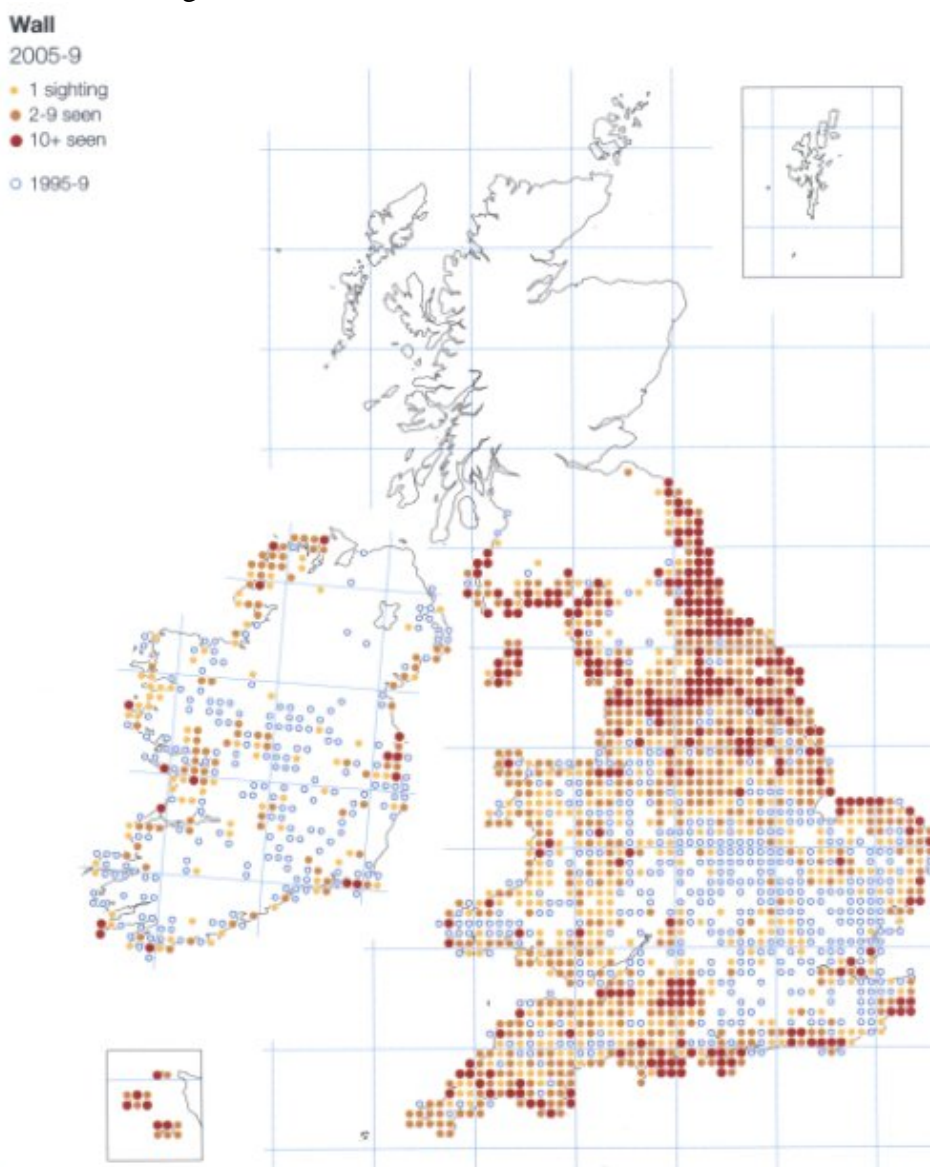
This is a free event (including buffet lunch and refreshments), though advance booking is essential. To secure a place contact [info@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:info@butterfly-conservation.org) or phone 01929 400209.

Martin Anthony

## Butterflies For the New Millenium

Reports always seem to come in clusters, and in December as well as the provisional moth atlas I received the first butterfly distribution maps derived from the Butterflies for the New Millenium scheme covering the 2005-2009 five-year period. These will not be published as a new atlas, but will be used to produce another "State of the UK's Butterflies" report in the next few months, comparing the most recent survey with the Millennium Atlas survey (1995-99).

As an example, the map below is of the distribution for Wall Brown, clearly showing its disappearance from middle England as it moves northwards.



Martin Anthony

## Newport Report

First Newport moth records for 2010 seen during October were

- 4<sup>th</sup> Oct Four-spotted Footman (Melbourne Way). First Newport record.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Oct Brindled Green, Pink-barred Sallow (Bettws Comprehensive School)
- 6<sup>th</sup> Oct Merveille du Jour, Yellow-line Quaker, Green-brindled Crescent (Melbourne Way)  
Red-line Quaker (Newport Wetlands Reserve, Goldcliff)
- 8<sup>th</sup> Oct Pearly Underwing, Golden-rod Pug (Melbourne Way)
- 10<sup>th</sup> Oct Brick, Epirrita agg. (one of the November Moth family) (Melbourne Way)
- 27<sup>th</sup> Oct Feathered Thorn (Melbourne Way)
- Recorders:  
Haisbro Avenue – Sheila Dupé Melbourne Way – Roger James Goldcliff & Uskmouth – Kevin Dupé  
Roger James

## Recent Highlights

A disappointing end to 2010 as the weather deteriorated from poor to unspeakable. Does anyone else, like me, loathe snow?

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. Four-spotted Footman to light at Melbourne Way, Newport. Only the third county record.  
(Roger James)
- 6<sup>th</sup> Oct Cypress Pug to light at Melbourne Way, Newport. (Roger James)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Oct Autumn Green Carpet to light at Rassau. Further individuals on 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Oct.  
Also an immigrant Pearly Underwing. (Rodney Morris)
- 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. Another Pearly Underwing, Large Ranunculus and a late Golden-rod Pug, to light at  
Melbourne Way, Newport. (Roger James)
- 10<sup>th</sup> Oct Deep-brown Dart to light at Pentrepiod. Follows the first VC35 record on the same  
site last year. (Rupert Perkins)
- 11<sup>th</sup> Oct A dead Convolvulus Hawk moth found at Orb Electrical Steels (just up-stream from  
Newport Transporter Bridge on east bank of River Usk). (Mark and Niki Smith)



- 15<sup>th</sup> Oct A light trap at Beacon Hill, Trellech, produced Satellite and a very early December Moth. This date is only one day later than the earliest ever VC35 record for December Moth – did they know bad weather was on its way?  
(Ray Armstrong).

- 19<sup>th</sup> Oct. Cypress Carpet and Cypress Pug to light at Melbourne Way, Newport. (Roger James).

*December Moth*  
(Ray Armstrong)

- 29<sup>th</sup> Oct Another Cypress Carpet at Melbourne Way, Newport. (Roger James)  
 Vapourer to light at Risca – by two weeks the latest date recorded for this species in the county. (Martin Anthony)
- 19<sup>th</sup> Nov Red Sword-grass to light at Rassau. (Rodney Morris)
- 11<sup>th</sup> Dec A remarkable 32 December moths to light at Beacon Hill, presumably taking advantage of a short break in the cold weather. (Ray Armstrong)

### **Next Silurian Newsletter**

The next issue of this newsletter will be March 2011. We can only hope the weather has improved by then! Best wishes and good recording for 2011.

### **Dates for your Diary 2011**

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> January

Work task at Blackrock Quarry, Clydach, clearing cotoneaster from this important lepidoptera site with superb views. Tools provided, but bring lunch, drinks etc. Meet at 10am at the old lime kilns (SO215125).  
 [Head eastwards along the A465 Heads of the Valleys road from the Brynmawr roundabout. After 1½ miles take the left turn for Clydach Village. Continue along Main Road through Clydach village and the kilns are then on your right].

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> January

Gwent Recorders' Forum 2011, organized by SEWBRcC, 9.45am to 16.00pm at Greenmeadow Community Farm, Cwmbran. This year's theme is "Woodland", and speakers lined up include George Peterken, Clare Williams (BC Wales), Kevin Izzard, (FERA) and Ben Rowson (Nat Mus Wales).  
 If you have not received an invite and would like to attend, please phone SEWBRcC, 029 20 641110, before 14<sup>th</sup> January.

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October

Butterfly Conservation (South Wales Branch) Members' Day and AGM.

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