Monmouthshire Microlepidoptera - Changes to the county list since 1994  
Sam Bosanquet

It is likely that the recently-published, affordable, illustrated guide (Sterling & Parsons, 2012) to some two-thirds of the British microlepidoptera will prompt many moth recorders to get deeper into micromoth recording. It is important that people know whether the records they make of initially unfamiliar species are significant, or even plausible, and a review of Monmouthshire’s microlepidoptera is therefore timely.

When Dr Neil Horton published his *Monmouthshire Lepidoptera* in 1994, the county microlepidoptera list stood at 576 species, an impressive total, but one which was slightly below the 588 species of macrolepidoptera (macromoths and butterflies). The vast majority of the micro records were made by Dr Horton himself, usually with specimens as vouchers and often with the help of other experts, especially John Bradley. The larger micros in the families *Tortricidae* and *Pyralidae* were relatively well recorded, but most of the remainder were represented by just one or two records, presumably resulting from Dr Horton keeping a specimen of something that looked clearly different and then identifying it later. Identification was highly problematic, because many families lacked up-to-date literature, and what existed was often scattered around in various journals. Reaching 576 was indeed impressive.

In the intervening years, the county macro list has climbed to 622 (576 moths and 46 butterflies), but the micro list has outstripped it considerably and now stands at 749. This is a bit closer to the national ratio of 7 micros to every 4 macros, but Monmouthshire micros are still rather under-recorded. The significant increase has resulted from three interconnected factors: improved literature in the form of the *Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland (MBGBI)* series, which was sufficiently complete by 2000 to allow identification of all British microlepidoptera using a small number of (expensive) books; an increased number of recorders in south Wales, especially for the *Pyralidae*; and specific diurnal microlepidoptera recording in a range of habitats. Recent recording has produced records of 633 species, 57 higher than were published in 1994; not only have there been 181 additions, there have also been recent records of nearly 80% of Horton’s species. The additions have been made by 23 recorders, most of who are, or were, resident in Monmouthshire or Glamorgan. A notable exception is national microlepidoptera recorder John Langmaid, who has recorded seven new micro moths during visits to Monmouthshire since 1994, along with a good number that appear in Dr Horton’s book. Newport moth-er Kevin Dupé is particularly well-placed for catching wetland species and wanderers from the south and has scored 5 additions, as has David Slade on visits from Cardiff. Jake Gilmore, Dave Green and Jon Baker have all reported 3 new species, whilst there have been 2 apiece for locals Bob Roome and Martin Anthoney and visitors Roger Gaunt, Robert Homan, Norman Lowe, Barry Stewart, Martin White, some of whom are vice-county moth recorders for adjacent counties. Most of my 128 additions were made in a busy period between 1999 and 2005, before family commitments in Carmarthenshire began to significantly limit my Monmouthshire mothing. There is still immense scope for further additions, especially in under-studied species-rich habitats such as limestone grassland and saltmarsh, and particularly if recorders are good at genitalia dissections.
Most families of microlepidoptera recorded in Monmouthshire have seen additions, apart from small families such as Micropterigidae, Tischeriidae, Glyphipterigidae, Schreckensteiniidae, Ethmiidae, Autostichidae and Alucitidae. The exact delimitation of families has changed between Horton’s time and Sterling & Parsons (2012), and the latter include a large number of new families split from formerly larger ones, as well as moving some species away from their familiar positions (e.g. Agonopterix from Oecophoridae to Elachistidae). Of the larger families with more than 15 Monmouthshire representatives, it is little surprise that the Tineidae, Coleophoridae, Gelechiidae, Elachistidae and Yponomeutidae (the last three in their old, broader sense) all have more than a third of their Monmouthshire species recorded new to the county since 1994. With the exception of the Tineidae (Clothes Moths), the MBGBI volumes covering these families were published since Dr Horton’s main collecting period, whilst all but the Yponomeutidae are dominated by sombre species that are unlikely to be kept as something different by a recorder unfamiliar with the family. The Pterophoridae (Plumes) lacked a good British book until Hart (2011), and further additions to the county list are expected. The leaf-mining Gracillariidae and Nepticulidae were well-recorded by visitors, especially Maitland Emmet, whilst members of the Oecophoridae (in its old, broad sense) are relatively large moths and clearly caught Dr Horton’s eye. The two families that provide the main entry into micro recording for most moth-ers have the lowest percentages of additions, with just 14 % of Tortricidae and Pyralidae (now split into Pyralidae & Crambidae) being new. Both were covered by readily available books, and it is clear that Dr Horton recorded them very thoroughly.

The Pyralidae/Crambidae are almost honorary macros, and the 14 additions include a number of species that are likely to be genuine new arrivals in Monmouthshire or casual wanderers, such as the increasing Rhodophaea (Pempelia) formosa and Nephopterix angustella, the wandering Oncocera semirubella and three wetland species that may be beneficiaries of the Newport Wetlands Reserve. With very few exceptions, the other new Monmouthshire microlepidoptera are just overlooked local residents. The Pyralidae and Crambidae also account for 12 of the top 20 most-recorded microlepidoptera in the last 18 years (table below), reflecting their general popularity among moth-ers.

| 1  | Pleuroptya ruralis | Crambidae | 295 |
| 2  | Celypha lacunana | Tortricidae | 264 |
| 3  | Scoparia ambigualis | Crambidae | 222 |
| 4  | Chrysoteuchia culmella | Crambidae | 221 |
| 5  | Agriphila straminella | Crambidae | 211 |
| 6  | Eudonia mercurella | Crambidae | 201 |
| 7  | Anania (Eurrhypara) hortulata | Crambidae | 199 |
| 8  | Udea olivalis | Crambidae | 173 |
| 9  | Agriphila tristella | Crambidae | 170 |
| 10 | Eudonia (Dipleurina) lacustrata | Crambidae | 156 |
| 11 | Alucita hexadactyla | Alucitidae | 142 |
| 12 | Aphomia sociella | Pyralidae | 140 |
| 13 | Agapeta hamana | Tortricidae | 135 |
| 14 | Nomophila noctuella | Crambidae | 129 |
| 15 | Anthophila fabriciana | Choreutidae | 111 |
| 16 | Hoffmannophila pseudospretella | Oecophoridae | 97 |
| 17 | Epiphyas postvittana | Tortricidae | 93 |
| 18 | Carcina quercana | Peleopodidae | 91 |
| 19 | Pseudargyrotoza conwagana | Tortricidae | 91 |
| 20 | Hypsopygia costalis | Pyralidae | 91 |
The national status of British microlepidoptera has been reviewed recently by Tony Davis (2012) and it is therefore possible to see how the Monmouthshire list compares to the national picture.

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<th>Status</th>
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<th>Mons number</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Common</td>
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<td>372</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>Doubtfully British</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local</td>
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<td>254</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationally Scarce B</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Impressively, only 7 of the 379 species considered ‘Common’ in Britain remain unknown in Monmouthshire: 0073 *Stigmella trimaculella* (Nepticulidae), 0086 *Stigmella roborella* (Nepticulidae), 0089 *Stigmella basigutella* (Nepticulidae), 0175 *Narycia duplicella* (Psychidae), 0358 *Phyllonorycter froelichella* (Gracillariidae), 0974 *Argyrotaenia ljungiana* (Tortricidae) and 1380 *Anania perlucidalis* (Crambidae).

*Stigmella trimaculella* feeds on Black Poplar, which is a rare tree in the county, and the other two *Stigmella* have probably just been missed. *Narycia* larval cases have perhaps been overlooked as those of other *Psychidae*, there is no logical reason for *P. froelichella* to have been missed, the *Argyrotaenia* is apparently common on moorlands, but is rather easily misidentified, whilst the *Anania* is a south-eastern English moth that may well spread into eastern Monmouthshire before too long.

We also have more than 70% of the 359 ‘Local’ British species, and many of the remaining 102 are likely to be found in the county in the future. Most of the Common and Local species recorded in the past in Monmouthshire have also been seen here since 1994, with just 10% not recorded recently, most of them Local. The picture is a little less rosy for Nationally Scarce B species (found in fewer than 100 British hectads), as 36% of our 84 Nationally Scarce B species have not been seen recently, whilst the figure for the 27 rarest Monmouthshire moths (categories Nationally Scarce A, RDB3, RDB2 & RDB1) is an alarming 67% without recent records. Of course, the recording period since 1994 is far shorter than that leading up to 1994, with most records of Nationally Scarce A and Nationally Scarce B species coming from the 1960s to 1980s when Dr Horton was at his most active. Nevertheless, it is important that some of the species that have not been seen for 20 or more years in the county are subject to targeted diurnal or nocturnal searching.

The last 18 years have seen a dramatic change in the recording of microlepidoptera in Monmouthshire, and the future seems likely to include an ever greater incidence of recording of distinctive and common species. The risk is that the obscure and rare will be forgotten in this newly democratic micro recording, as has already been suggested by hoverfly recorders who have seen a vast upsurge in the number of records submitted coupled with a decline in the number of species noted per year. Please take up the rich and diverse micro challenge!

References:


Monmouthshire micro-moth list:
A full list of Monmouthshire micromoths, including changes since 1994, is attached as a separate file accompanying this newsletter.

The following pictures show eight species recorded new to the county since 1994, each one illustrating a different family:

- **Monopis obviella**
- **Choreutis pariana**
- **Phyllonorycter platanoidella** leaf mine
- **Sophronia semicostella**
- **Yponomeuta rorella**
- **Ochsenheimeria vaculella**
A Gwent Moth Blog?

Richard Clarke has suggested the idea of establishing a blog that Gwent moth recorders might like to use to help share their records. It would provide a space to record sightings and perhaps help encourage further recording locally. Richard has made a start which can be viewed at [http://gwentmothing.blogspot.co.uk/](http://gwentmothing.blogspot.co.uk/)

If you would be interested in using such a blog, please contact Richard at chykembro2@aol.com for further details and so that he can gauge the interest there would be in such a blog.

Recent Highlights

The poor weather of April continued into May, which started cool and wet, with limited sunshine. The few decent sunny days were inevitably followed by clear cold nights. Unsurprisingly, there was a hiatus in the emergence of new species, which had to await the onset of warmer weather from 18th May onwards. In typical British fashion, the weather pendulum swung from one extreme to the other, and the last ten days produced a sunny heatwave with temperatures up to 29°C. At long last, butterflies such as Dingy Skipper and Common Blue appeared in reasonable numbers, though fewer in number and much later than in the past few years. Despite many clear nights, the high daytime temperatures ensured warm nights and the nightly species lists for moth traps suddenly became much longer.

6th May   Burnet Companion at Solutia, Newport. (Roger James)
After several years of plenty, this species has been very scarce this May.

8th – 11th May   Three days at MoD Training Area, Caerwent, produced 6 Drab Looper, 12 Grizzled Skipper, 4 Dingy Skipper and Speckled Yellow despite a cool wind much of the time.
(Martin Anthoney, Roger James, Norman Lowe and George Tordoff)

11th May   Dingy Skipper at Bedwas Tip. (Richard Clarke)

12th May   A single Dingy Skipper at Rogiet Country Park, with another on 22nd May, well down on last year’s numbers.
(Martin Anthoney and Roger James)

13th May   A few *Eucosma aspidiscana* micro moths flying in the small quarry area with plenty of goldenrod (*Solidago*) at Slade Wood. A new species for VC35. (George Tordoff)
18th May Mullein Shark to light at Risca. (Martin Anthony)

20th May Dog’s Tooth at St Brides (John Morgan and Diane Westmoreland)

22nd May 3 Dingy Skipper at Ben Ward fields near Brynmawr (SO199121) (Darryl Spittle). Little Thorn flying by day at St Pierre’s Great Wood. (Martin Anthony)

Beautiful Carpet and Fox Moth at ERC, Ebbw Vale. (Tom Eyles)

23rd May Dingy Skipper at Danycoed (SO228125) (1), Llanelly Quarry (14), Blackrock Quarry (5), all in the Clydach area, and 3 next to Whistle Road Car Park (Blaenavon). (Darryl Spittle, Martin Anthony)

Mother Shipton and Speckled Yellow at Blackrock Quarry, Clydach. (Martin Anthony)

Glaucous Shears to light at Rassau. (Rodney Morris)

24th May Little Thorn, Orange Footman, Figure of Eighty among 44 species to light at Ochrwyth. (Richard Clarke)

A single Drab Looper flying at Angidy Valley (Lower Hale Wood). (Martin Anthony)

25th May Dingy Skipper at Aberbargoed (3), adjacent to Penllwyn Grasslands (4) and at Wyllie (5), all in the west of the county. (Martin Anthony, Dave Slade)

~20 Marsh Fritillaries flying at Aberbargoed NNR, rising to 120 by 27th (Bill Jones) and 284 by 28th May (Mark Allen)

Lesser Treble-bar at Aberbargoed. An under-recorded species. (Dave Slade)

Grass Rivulet, Eyed Hawk and Oak-tree Pug amongst 24 species to light at Penallt. (Stephanie Tyler)

12 Silky Wainscot at Newport Wetlands Reserve (Uskmouth) (Kevin Dupé)

26th May Painted Lady at Goldcliff. (Rupert Perkins)

Chocolate Tip, Little Thorn and Sallow Kitten to light at Risca. (Martin Anthony)

Alder Kitten and Alder Moth to light at Ochrwyth. (Richard Clarke)

Small Waved Umber at Haisboro Avenue, Newport (Sheila Dupé)

27th May Maiden’s Blush to light at Risca. (Martin Anthony)

28th May Small Seraphim and Cream-spot Tiger amongst 29 species to light at Rogiet Country Park. (Martin Anthony and Roger James)

Dingy Shell and Maiden’s Blush at Risca. (Martin Anthony)

Cypress Carpet, Alder Kitten and Seraphim at Melbourne Way, Newport. (Roger James)

29th May Pretty Chalk Carpet at Ochrwyth. (Richard Clarke)

Lobster Moth at Risca. (Martin Anthony)
Newport Report

After the disastrous month of April normal service was resumed in May with above average numbers of macro moths being recorded. The same cannot be said of butterflies, however, which have not been seen in any numbers or species. June is starting off with autummal weather and no prospect of a fine settled period.

First Newport 2012 records during May have been:

1st May Melbourne Way Lunar Marbled Brown, Pale Pinion
4th May Melbourne Way Garden Carpet, Scalloped Hazel, Flame Shoulder, Nut-tree Tussock
5th May Melbourne Way Shuttle-shaped Dart
6th May Solutia Burnet Companion
Haisboro Avenue Silver Y
8th May St Brides. Red Twin-spot Carpet
9th May Goldcliff Spectacle, Poplar Hawk
12th May Penhow Woodlands Silver-ground Carpet
Haisboro Avenue Common Marbled Carpet
15th May Melbourne Way Treble Lines, Common Swift (the latter having a good year at this site with 20 recorded some nights)
16th May Haisboro Avenue Knot Grass
18th May Melbourne Way Waved Umber, White-spotted Pug, Small Phoenix
Uskmouth Scarlet Tiger larva
Goldcliff Chinese Character, Pebble Prominent, Ruby Tiger, Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet, Eyed Hawk
20th May St Brides Dog’s Tooth
21st May Haisboro Avenue Common Wave, Yellow-barred Brindle, Bright-line Brown-eye, Cabbage Moth
Goldcliff Limespeck Pug, White Ermine, Green Carpet
24th May Uskmouth Marbled Minor, Pale-shouldered Brocade, Treble-bar, Figure of Eighty, Turnip Moth, Sallow Kitten, Flame Carpet
Gaer Park Lane
Haisboro Avenue
St Brides
Goldcliff
Drinker larva, Burnished Brass, Straw Dot, Pine Carpet,
Pale Mottled Willow, Large Yellow Underwing, Small Square-spot. Silky Wainscot (12)

Uskmouth: Grey /Dark Dagger, Mottled Pug, Lime Hawk, Small Dusty Wave, Lychnis, Mottled Beauty, Small Yellow Wave, Grey Pine Carpet, Square Spot


26th May Haisboro Avenue: Small Waved Umber, Treble Brown Spot

27th May Goldcliff: Buff Ermine

28th May Haisboro Avenue: Peppered Moth, Orange Footman, Ingrailed Clay


30th May Goldcliff: Elephant Hawk, Tawny Marbled Minor, Brown Silver-line

Small Eggar Web (Saltmarsh Lane)

My thanks as always to the recorders:
Gaer Park Lane, Goldcliff and Uskmouth Kevin Dupé
Haisboro Avenue Sheila Dupé
Melbourne Way Roger James
St Brides John Morgan and Diane Westmoreland

Roger James

**Dates for your Diary 2011/2012**

**Saturday 16th June**

*Go Wild* show, this year in Blaenau Gwent at Bryn Bach Park, Tredegar.

**Thurs. 21st to Sat. 23rd June**

National Moth Night. After a year’s absence, a new incarnation of National Moth Night to cover three days and nights! Events include:

(i) **Friday 22nd June 9pm - 11.30pm**

CCW and MMBG. Newport Wetlands Reserve, Uskmouth.

Take part in Britain’s largest annual moth survey, trapping and identifying moths near the Visitor Centre after dusk. We will also be using detectors to identify bats. Please bring a torch and warm clothes.

Leader: Kevin Dupé, Reserve Manager

Meet: Reserve car park, Uskmouth

(ii) **Saturday 23rd June. Start 10am.**

Free day-time event (joint BC, CCW and MMBG).

A morning of talks and live moths at the Newport Wetlands NNR Visitor Centre, ST334834.

This year’s theme for National Moth Night is *Moths of Brownfield Sites* of which Uskmouth is an excellent example.

The indoor session will finish at noon and will be followed by a walk to search for day-flying moths.

Program:

10-10.30am Display of moths from the night before

Kevin Dupé, Reserve Manager, Newport Wetlands.

10.30-11am Talk - Brownfield Moths and Butterflies

Martin Anthoney, County Lepidoptera Recorder

11-11.30am Talk - George Tordoff (BC Wales)

11.30-12am Refreshments (provided)

12 - ca. 2pm Optional guided walk / individual recording around
Wednesday 27th June

Bat and Moth Walk at GWT Silent Valley Nature Reserve, near Ebbw Vale. 9pm onwards, leader Tom Eyles.
An evening walk around the nature reserve. There will be an opportunity to see any moths caught that evening and to learn how to use bat detectors.
BOOKING ESSENTIAL Contact: ERC, 01495 307525.
Cost: £3 GWT members, £6 non members.

Saturday 14th July

Trapping and Identifying Moths  GWT Course
Tutor: Val Jackson, 9.30am – 12.30pm Tidenham Chase, near Chepstow
Have you wanted to learn more about moths but are not sure how to start?
BOOKING ESSENTIAL Contact: GWT, 01600 740600
Cost: £4 members, £7 non members.

Wednesday 25th July

9.45am to 12noon  Mon Moth & Butterfly Group and CCW.
Moths in the morning. Come to the Newport Wetlands Reserve Visitor Centre and see the moths that came to a moth trap put out the previous night. Then go on a leisurely walk to see day-flying moths.
Leader: Kevin Dupé, Reserve Manager Newport Wetlands
Catch the 9am, No 63 bus from Newport Bus Station.

Saturday 20th October

Butterfly Conservation (S.Wales branch) Members Day and AGM
Kenfig Visitors’ Centre, 10am to 4pm.

MMBG – Contact Names and Addresses.

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