



MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No 93 July 2013.

A monthly newsletter covering

Gwent and Monmouthshire Vice County 35

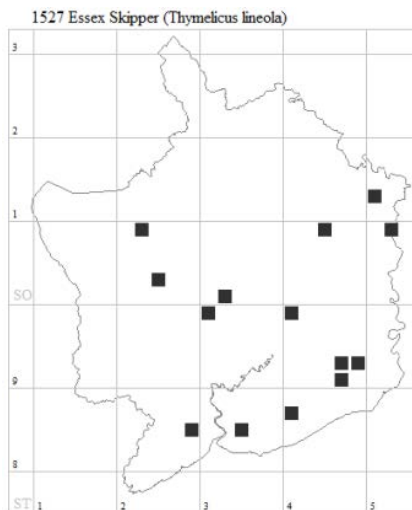
Editor: Martin Anthony

Some Good News Species

With much of the UK publicity about butterflies and moths surrounding their serious decline, it is worthwhile spotlighting a few species which are bucking the trend and expanding their range and increasing in numbers in Gwent.

Essex Skipper butterfly (*Thymelicus lineola*)

Since the first confirmed Welsh record of Essex Skipper at MoD Caerwent in 2000 (see newsletter 1, the very first issue of the Silurian), this species' range has continued to expand north and west, spreading over most of Gwent. This fits in with an 8% increase in range over the UK as a whole during the past ten years. With practice (and a magnifying glass!) the characteristic black tip to the underside of each antenna (one-third of the "club" length) on the Essex Skipper can quickly be distinguished from the all-brown undersides of the antennae of its close relative, the more widespread Small Skipper. In both species the upper sides of the antennae are black.



Essex Skipper
(Steve Williams)



Blomer's Rivulet (*Discoloxia blomeri*) and Clouded Magpie (*Abraxas sylvata*)

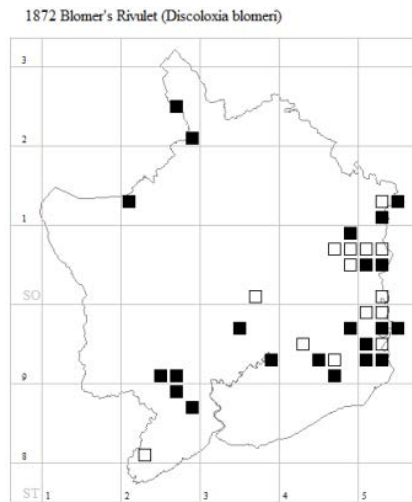
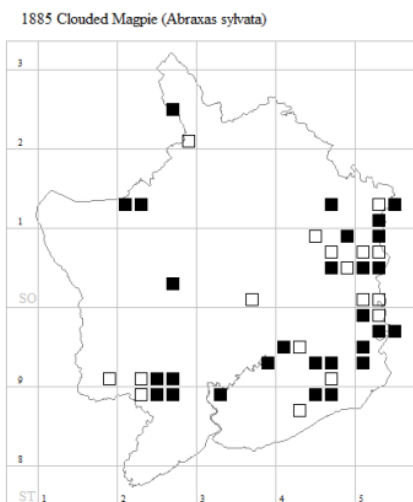
Two delightful geometer moths, whose caterpillars both use Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) as their main food plant. Though Dutch Elm disease took its toll, in his 2007 book *Flora of Monmouthshire* Trevor Evans stated "no undamaged mature trees remain in the vice-county, but immature trees, many with dead or dying parts, may still be found in woods and hedgerows in all but upland parts of the west."

Blomer's Rivulet is a nationally notable (Nb) species, whilst Clouded Magpie has "local" status. In the past ten years in Gwent, not only have they recovered their (mainly eastern) distribution and population prior to the ravages of Dutch Elm, they are now expanding to other parts of the county. In 2013 alone, both species

have been recorded from four new sites. It is remarkable that forty years ago when I moved to Gwent, the Magpie moth (*Abraxas grossulariata*) was widespread and common whilst Clouded Magpie was its scarce relative. Today, the roles have reversed, with Clouded Magpie a familiar moth and Magpie so scarce it generates excitement whenever it appears!



Clouded Magpie
(Ray Armstrong)

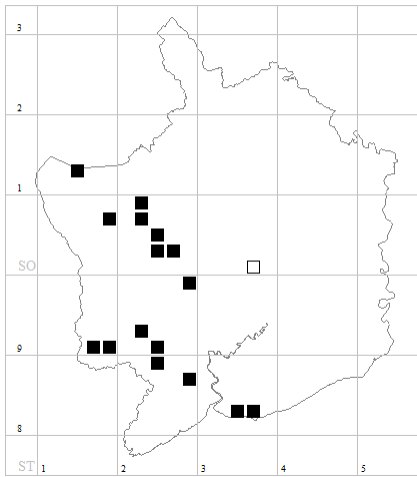


Blomer's Rivulet

Double Line (*Mythimna turca*)

Prior to 1999, this large noctuid was represented on the Gwent list by a single 1969 specimen at Usk. Nationally notable (Nb), it was a UK Priority species, but lost this status in the 2007 revision as more sites were found for it. It is associated with wet rough grassland, such as rhos pasture, where the larvae feed on grasses.

Glamorgan was always a stronghold for this species, but whereas the previous three species are spreading westwards, in this century Double Line is spreading eastwards from Glamorgan to become firmly established in the west of Gwent.

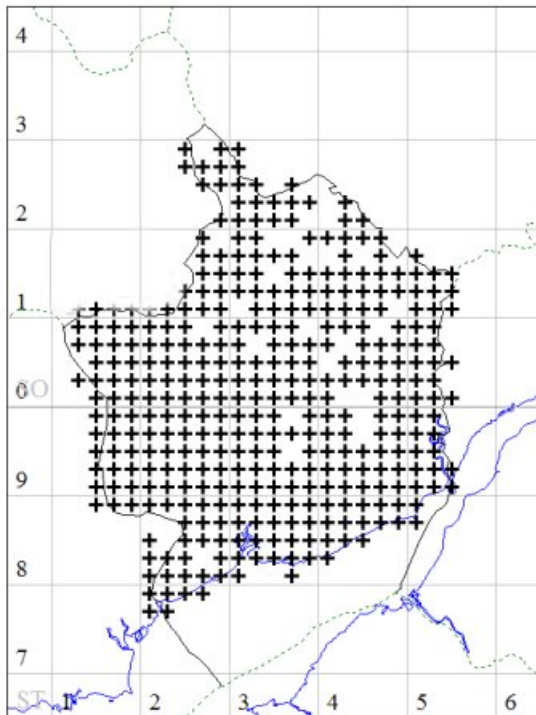


Double Line

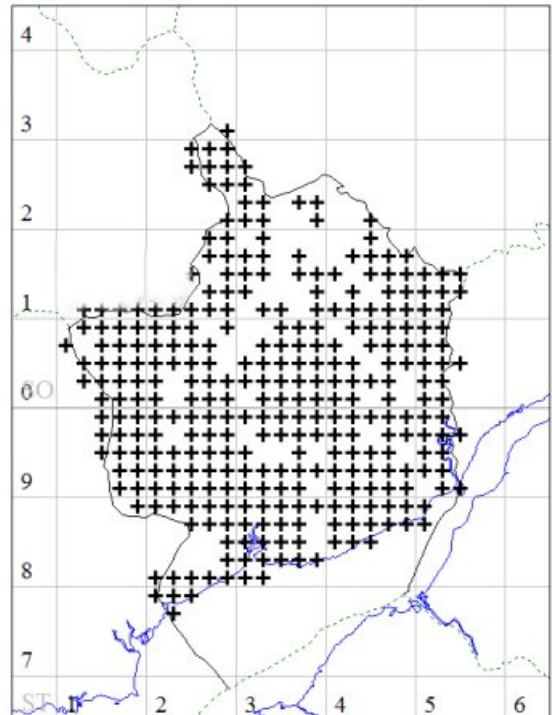
Gwent Recorded Sites

The following two maps show the progress that has been made in covering the county recording butterflies and macromoths. Each cross shows a 2km square from which records have been received. What the maps do not show, of course, is how many (or how few!) records there are for each square, so keep the records coming in please!

VC35 Butterflies Recorded 2km Sites



VC35 Macro-moths recorded 2km sites



Recent Highlights

At last! To great relief, July produced the longest spell of hot summer weather for seven years, with an increasing range of butterfly and moth species taking to the wing as a result. Unless August produces surprises, the improvement may well have come too late for some butterflies, such as Common Blue, which is still disappointingly uncommon. The number of moth species coming to light has also recovered well, but overall the number of individuals remains low, with some normally-abundant species such as Heart and Dart turning up in very low numbers, though some might argue this is a good thing!

- 1st July 20 Scarce Hook-tip, Waved Carpet, Pauper Pug and the spectacular micro *Oecophora bractella* at St Pierre's Great Wood. (Dave Grundy)
- 5th July 16 Scarlet Tiger and 15 Marbled White at Llanmelin Hill Fort, Caerwent. (Martin Anthony)
- 8th July 38 Dark Green Fritillary at Blaenserchan (Rupert Perkins)
Double Line to light at Lower Ochryth (Richard Clarke)
5 Orange Moth and 44 other species to light at The Cwm, Caerwent. (Martin Anthony)
- 9th July White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary at Slade Wood (Nick Felstead)
Smoky Wave at Ebbw Vale ERC (Tom Eyles)
- 10th July Double Line at Cwmcarn Scenic Drive (Rob Coles & Anna Gambarini)
Orange Moth at Chepstow (Nick Felstead)
Red-necked Footman to light at Risca. May well be part of the wave of immigration to southern UK of this species. (Martin Anthony)
- 11th July White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary at Ravensnest Wood, Angidy Valley. (Nick Felstead)
Cypress Carpet to light at Risca. First site record. (Martin Anthony)
Sharp-angled Peacock at Lower Ochryth. (Richard Clarke)
- 12th July Dark Green Fritillary at Slade Wood (a new site record). Also White Admiral and Scarlet Tiger. (Martin Anthony & Roger James)
White Admiral at Bishop's Barnets Wood. (Nick Felstead)
Scarce Silver Y and Double Line among 76 macro moth species to light at Blaenserchan. (Martin Anthony & Roger James)
- 13th July Wood Tiger flying during the day on the west side of the Ebbw Vale valley- the first county record for seven years. (Luke Phillips)
Leopard Moth to light at Risca. (Martin Anthony)
Cypress Carpet to light at Undy (Keith Jones)
- 14th July Crescent Dart at Newport Wetlands Reserve. First county record for six years. (Kevin Dupé)
Silver-washed Fritillary at Bishop's Barnets Wood. (Nick Felstead)
Confused and July Belle to light at Llanelly Quarry. (Martin Anthony & Roger James)
- 15th July Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Grayling on the west side of the Ebbw Vale valley. Also Dark Green Fritillary and Dingy Skipper at Ebbw Vale Cemetery. (Luke Phillips)
Five White Admiral at Slade Wood and three at St Pierre's Great Wood (Richard Smith)



Crescent Dart
(Kevin Dupé)

- 16th July Silver-washed Fritillary in my Risca Garden. The first site record for eighteen years.
(Martin Anthony)
Light Knot Grass and Oak Eggar to light on the Blorenge. (Martin Anthony & Roger James)
- 17th July Double Line, Scarce Silver Y and Grass Emerald among 64 species to light at The British
(Martin Anthony & Roger James)
- 18th July Devon Carpet, Slender Brindle and Grass Emerald among 70 species to light at
Graigwith Farm, near Usk. (Martin Anthony & Roger James)
White-speck to light at Risca. (Martin Anthony)
- 19th July Privet Hawk to light at Risca. A caterpillar found on the ground at Ty Mawr Convent, Lydart
in September last year was the first county record for forty years. For an adult to turn up the next
year, on the opposite side of the county, perhaps raises hopes that the species may become
established in Gwent. (Martin Anthony)

*Privet
Hawk*



- 20th July Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and several Marbled White butterflies at Castle Wood, near The British. (Steve Williams)
 Grayling butterflies at Blaenserchan. (Rupert Perkins)
 Double Line, Beautiful Carpet and Scallop Shell to light at Ynys Hywel, Cwmfelinfach. (Martin Anthony)
 Rosy Footman to light at Risca. Now firmly established at this site where it was first recorded in 2009. (Martin Anthony)
- 21st July Sampling from a large population of skippers near the A4042, Cwmbran, produced positive identification of 15 Essex Skipper and 20 Small Skippers. Also 6 Marbled White (a new site). Two Essex Skippers also found at a new site at the southern end of Garn Lakes, Blaenavon. (Rupert Perkins)
 Five Dark Green Fritillary at Waunafon Bog (Rupert Perkins)
 Welsh Wave, Scarce Silver Y and Muslin Footman among 46 species to light at Grwynne Fawr car park. (Martin Anthony & Roger James)
 Rosy Footman to light at Llandogo (Gail Reynolds)
 8 Small Ranunculus larvae on prickly lettuce on Southern Distributor Road verge near Newport Velodrome. (Kevin Dupé)
- 22nd July Fourteen Silver-washed Fritillary at Hendre Wood. Also, one of the few Painted Lady records this year. (Nick Felstead)
 Two Dark Green Fritillary at Branches Fork Meadows, Pontypool. (Rupert Perkins)
 Round-winged Muslin Footman, Lunar-spotted Pinion and Dog's Tooth at St Brides. (Diana Westmoreland & John Morgan)
 Double Line at Rassau. A new site. (Rodney Morris)
 Crescent Striped to light at Goldcliff. (Kevin Dupé)
- 24th July White Admiral at Buckle Wood, Angidy Valley. (Nick Felstead)
 Five Essex Skipper at The British (a new site). (Steve Williams)
 Another new site for Essex Skipper at Celtic Way, Newport (Roger James)
 Dark Green Fritillary at Penallt, again a first site record. (Ian Rabjohns)
- 25th July Small Ranunculus in Newport: 39 larvae north of City Bridge, 10 eggs on plant just south of Riverside Theatre and 18 larvae adjacent to Newport Railway Station. (Kevin Dupé)
- 26th July Silver-washed Fritillary and Grayling at Blackrock Quarry, Clydach.
 Grayling also found at Llanelly Quarry and the Bloreng. (Martin Anthony and Roger James)
- 27th July Brown Argus, Essex Skipper, Silver-washed Fritillary and six individuals of an unusual second generation of Drab Looper moth at Llanmelin Hill Fort. (Martin Anthony & Roger James)
 Third county record of the micro Monopis obviella at Undy. (Keith Jones)

Gwent Distribution Maps

Accompanying this newsletter is a file containing the fifth batch of distribution maps for Gwent macro moths. Plotted on a 2km basis, black squares indicate records for 2000 to 2012, whereas open squares indicate sites where pre-2000 records exist but no post-2000 records. Historical records which were too vague to be assigned at the 2km level have been omitted.

Martin Anthony

Dates for your Diary 2013

Thursday 8th Aug to Sat 10th Aug
Thursday 8th August

National Moth Night 2013. Two events are planned:
Moth trapping session at Aberbargoed NNR Education Centre.
9pm onwards. Meet at the car park on Bedwellty Road
(grid ref ST166996 post code NP12 0BE)

Saturday 10th August

Moth trapping session at GWT Magor Marsh Reserve.
9pm onwards. Meet at the car park, Derek Upton Centre ST425867
An appropriate venue since Gwent Wildlife Trust is celebrating its fiftieth birthday this year and Magor Marsh was its first reserve.

Saturday 19th October

Butterfly Conservation (S Wales Branch) AGM and Members' Day.
Kenfig NNR Visitor Centre.

MMBG – Contact Names and Addresses.

Secretary: Kevin Dupé
44 Gaer Park Lane
Newport
NP20 3NE

Phone 01633 216599
e-mail the.dupes@virginmedia.com

Chairman: Roger James
44 Melbourne Way
Newport
NP20 3RF

Phone 01633 263374
e-mail smallranunculus@btinternet.com
or in case of problems
julia.james@btinternet.com

Treasurer: Sheila Dupé
18 Haisbro Avenue
Newport
NP19 7HY
Phone 01633 256475

Newsletter Editor & Recorder for
Butterflies & Macro Moths
Martin Anthony
23 Malvern Close
Risca
Newport
NP11 6QY

Phone 01633 612272
e-mail martin@chemlep.demon.co.uk

Recorder for Micro Moths
Sam Bosanquet
c/o Dingestow Court
Monmouth
Monmouthshire
NP25 4DY

e-mail sam.bosanquet@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk