



## MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No 94 August 2013.

*A monthly newsletter covering*

*Gwent and Monmouthshire Vice County 35*

*Editor: Martin Anthony*

### **New Species for the County**

On 30<sup>th</sup> June, as part of a survey for the Silurian moth, Dave Grundy, George Tordoff and Ian Draycott were light-trapping at Bal-Bach (SO2726) on the western slopes of the Llanthony valley. Whilst the lights were running, inspection of the surrounding vegetation produced several caterpillars, including one of the Golden-rod Brindle moth, *Lithomoia solidaginis*, a species new to VC35, Gwent. This is a moorland species which, despite its name, feeds on a range of plants such as heather and bilberry. The adult flies in August and September.

The previous evening, five of the larvae were found on Hatterall Ridge (SO3026), just the Herefordshire side of Offa's Dyke path, so the species is obviously breeding in the Black Mountains. It is mainly a northern moth, and as the map shows, these records extend its UK breeding range southwards. The old records from southern England are assumed to be one-off immigrants.



*Golden-rod Brindle Caterpillar (Dave Grundy)*



*UK Distribution (NMRS 2010)*

A new micromoth was added to the VC35 list during the same session on 30<sup>th</sup> June when *Pleurota bicostella* came to light at Bal-Bach. This very distinctive white and brown moth is another moorland species, whose larvae feed on heather.

Another new micromoth was added to the VC35 list on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, when, whilst running a light on the coast at Black Rock, Portskewett, Richard Clarke and Kevin Dupé caught a specimen of *Tachystola acroxantha*. First imported into south-west England in the early 1900s, its larvae feed on withered leaves. In recent years the species has spread rapidly northwards.

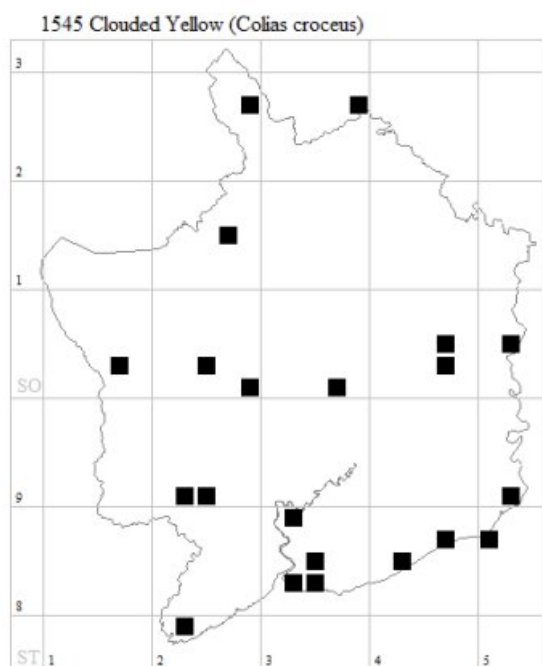


*Tachystola acroxantha*  
(Richard Clarke)

### **Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady Bonanza**

Two immigrant butterflies, Clouded Yellow (*Colias croceus*) and Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*), are perhaps the species by which many lepidopterists remember “good butterfly years”. Up until the end of July, lest we forget the wretched start to the year, only one singleton Painted Lady was recorded in Gwent in 2013 and Clouded Yellow had not been seen for two years. Then on 1<sup>st</sup> August one individual of each species appeared in Newport, the start of an influx which was to make August 2013 a truly memorable month and establish 2013 as one of the good butterfly years.

Within a month, 27 reports of Clouded Yellow in Gwent were received, covering the whole of the county. Too many to list individually, the map below shows the sightings. The highest count was seven at Rogiet Country Park on 9<sup>th</sup> August. The best year for Clouded Yellow was 2006, when 33 records were submitted for the period 26<sup>th</sup> June onwards. The maximum count then was 27 at Newport Wetlands Reserve on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, and the butterfly continued to be seen until early November. With reasonable weather in September and October, this year may yet beat the record counts of 2006.



*Clouded Yellow Records In August 2013*

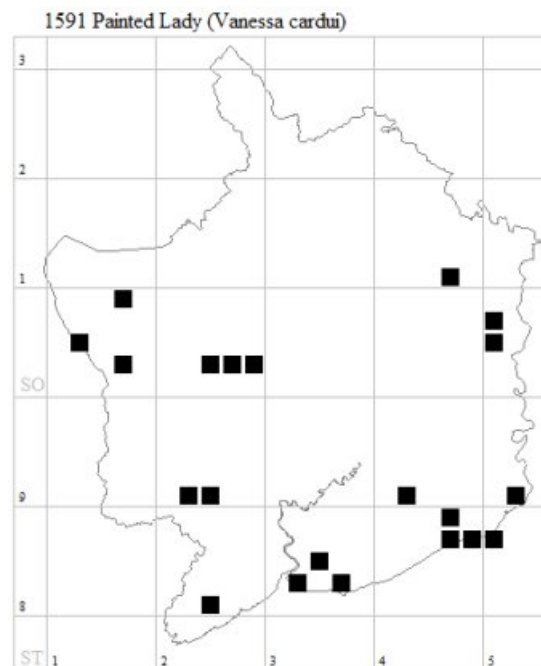


*Clouded Yellow* (Nick Felstead)

27 records of Painted Lady were also received in August this year, a figure well below that of 2009, which saw hundreds of adults and thousands of larvae covering the county following the remarkable mass migration of millions of butterflies into Britain over the Spring Bank Holiday. Nevertheless, August 2013 has shown a welcome and healthy increase compared to the very poor numbers seen in the years since 2009.



*Painted Lady*



*Painted Lady Records In August 2013*

### **Other Recent Highlights**

A warm and sunny August, building on a good July, has given butterflies in particular an opportunity to compensate for the disastrous first half of the year. Comments such as “I counted at least 30 Small Tortoiseshells, a splendid sight..... I don't recall seeing as many in one place since the 90's..... amazing number of butterflies we have on our allotment site” have been typical. Small Tortoiseshell, Small White, Common Blue and Speckled Wood have been the main beneficiaries of a good summer, with double-figure counts common and several into the hundreds. It has been a sight for sore eyes to see so many butterflies across the countryside and in gardens; even when working indoors one day, looking through the window I counted fourteen species in my garden.

The species count for moths has also been good, with many reports of 60+ macro species to light in an evening. Apart from Yellow Underwing species, whose numbers built up to typically large values during the second half of the month, few species reached “pest proportions”. Catches dropped off towards the end of August as high humidity during warm days led to very early and very heavy dews as evening temperatures fell.

1<sup>st</sup> Aug            Scarce Hook-tip among 65 species to light at Wyndcliff. The latest date this rare species has been recorded in Gwent. Barred Hook-tip, Oak Hook-tip, Pebble Hook-tip and Beautiful Hook-tip the same evening made a nice set! Also recorded were Hoary Footman, Red-necked Footman and Chocolate Tip. (Martin Anthony and Roger James)

Twin-spotted Wainscot, Brown-veined Wainscot, Obscure Wainscot, Silky Wainscot and Southern Wainscot at Newport Wetlands NNR. Also Crescent, Saltern Ear and Double Kidney. (Kevin Dupé)

|                      |   |                                 |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|                      | Silky Wainscot and Marbled Green at Haisbro Avenue, Newport.  | (Sheila Dupé)                   |
|                      | Purple Hairstreak butterfly at Hendre Lake Park, Cardiff.   | (Rupert Perkins)                |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Aug  | Lunar-spotted Pinion and Beautiful Hook-tip at Llandogo.  | (Gail Reynolds)                 |
|                      | Brown Argus at Ifton Quarry.  | (Nick Felstead)                 |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Aug  | Broom-tip to light at Risca. The first record for seventeen years at a site where it was previously obtained regularly  | (Martin Anthoney)               |
|                      | Purple Hairstreak at St Julians, Newport.   | (Martin Anthoney and Bob Roome) |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Aug  | Bordered Beauty, Dog's Tooth, Marbled Green and Small Waved Umber at Chepstow   | (Nick Felstead)                 |
|                      | Chocolate Tip to light at Haisbro Ave, Newport  | (Sheila Dupé)                   |
|                      | Four-spotted Footman (fourth county record) and Chocolate Tip at Redhouse Farm, Newport Wetlands NNR. A fifth county record on 21 <sup>st</sup> August at the same site suggests that Four-spotted Footman may be establishing itself in the county since its first appearance in 2006. | (Kevin Dupé)                    |
|                      | Dusky Sallow, Brown-veined Wainscot, Silky Wainscot, Southern Wainscot at Uskmouth, Newport Wetlands NNR.   | (Kevin Dupé)                    |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> Aug  | Bulrush Wainscot and Sharp-angled Peacock at The Cross, Newport Wetlands NNR.   | (Kevin Dupé)                    |
|                      | Maiden's Blush, Oak Nycteoline, Cypress Pug and Bordered Pug at Melbourne Way, Newport  | (Roger James)                   |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Aug  | Oak Eggar among 42 species at the National Moth Night event at Aberbargoed NNR. (MMBG)  |                                 |
|                      | Brown Argus butterfly at Penhow Quarry  | (Nick Felstead)                 |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> Aug  | Three Small Ranunculus larvae adjacent to Caldicot Station; prickly lettuce is much reduced at this site compared to last year due to "tidying up" scrub clearance.   | (Roger James)                   |
|                      | Old Lady among 51 species to light at Skenfrith.  | (Richard Clarke and Kevin Dupé) |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> Aug | Small Seraphim, Double Lobed and Double Kidney among 42 species at the National Moth Night event at Magor Marsh   | (MMBG)                          |
|                      | Bulrush Wainscot and Oak Eggar to light at Undy   | (Keith Jones)                   |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> Aug | Cypress Pug at Caerleon.  | (Fiona Illing)                  |

- 13<sup>th</sup> Aug Square-spotted Clay to light at Grwynne Fawr car park. Only the second county site.  
(Martin Anthony & Roger James)
- Small Ranunculus, Marbled Green , Scorched Carpet and Vapourer to light at Chepstow.  
(Nick Felstead)
- Bordered Beauty and Saltern Ear to light at St Brides. (Diana Westmoreland & John Morgan)
- 15<sup>th</sup> Aug Neglected Rustic to light at Rassau (Rodney Morris)
- Immigrant Humming-bird Hawk at the Dell, Chepstow. Only the second record so far this year.  
(Nick Felstead)
- Three Grayling at Blaenserchan (Rupert Perkins)
- 16<sup>th</sup> Aug Old Lady, Red Underwing and Latticed Heath among 36 species to light at Llantarnam Abbey.  
(SEWBRc bioblitz)
- Purple Hairstreak at Clytha. (Allan Hopkins)
- 18<sup>th</sup> Aug A Tissue, 30 Herald moths and 17 Small Tortoiseshell found in an outhouse at Trellech,  
already hibernating despite the warm weather. (Ray Armstrong)
- Welsh Wave and Anomalous to light at Llanelly Quarry, Clydach. A new site for both species.  
(Martin Anthony & Roger James)
- Small Purple-barred to light at Risca. First site record. (Martin Anthony)



*Tissue Moth*  
(Ray Armstrong)

- 19<sup>th</sup> Aug Neglected Rustic, Grass Emerald and Oak Nycteoline at Blaenserchan. (Martin Anthoney)  
Old Lady at Gaer Pond, Newport. This species is having a good year. (Kevin Dupé)
- 20<sup>th</sup> Aug Mocha, Old Lady and Devon Carpet at The Cwm, Caerwent. Also Feathered Gothic, which has had a remarkable year and is turning up everywhere, with numerous first site records. (Martin Anthoney)
- 21<sup>st</sup> Aug Oblique Carpet and Sharp-angled Peacock at Newport Wetlands Reserve. (Kevin Dupé)
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug Two Wall Brown butterflies at Bishop's Barnets Wood, near Chepstow. (Nick Felstead)  
Essex Skipper at Rogiet Country Park. A new site. (Martin Anthoney and Roger James)
- 26<sup>th</sup> Aug Lesser Treble-bar at Penallt. (Ian Rabjohns)  
Grey Chi at Rassau (Rodney Morris)  
Five Grayling at Aberbargoed. Three more Grayling and 123 Common Blue at Markham Tip. (Nick Felstead)  
Hedge Rustic and Red Underwing to light at Risca (Martin Anthoney)
- 27<sup>th</sup> Aug 264 Small White and 53 Speckled Wood at Newport Wetlands NNR. (Sheila Dupé and Rhys Price)
- 30<sup>th</sup> Aug Two Wall Brown and five Grayling butterflies at Cwm Du, Pontypool. Also 311 Common Blue and 53 Small Tortoiseshell. (Nick Felstead)  
Three Sharp-angled Carpet and Frosted Orange at Penallt. (Stephanie Tyler)
- 31<sup>st</sup> Aug Three Grayling at each of Pant-glas slip and The British, Abersychan. Also 118 Small Tortoiseshell and 36 Common Blue at The British. (Nick Felstead)

## **Gwent Distribution Maps**

Accompanying this newsletter is a file containing the sixth 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 Anthoney

## **Dates for your Diary 2013**

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October

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

Speakers will include:

Tony Davis (Butterfly Conservation) and  
Kelly Thomas (RSPB)

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