



Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

Issue 4—Spring
May 2011

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter.

Summer is fast approaching and the sun is (for the moment) shining. I hope you all made the most of the exceptionally hot April and went out recording the new arrivals and emergents of Spring. It will be interesting to see what effect (if any) the early hot weather has had on our local wildlife.

This summer, there are plenty of biodiversity blitzes (p11&12) taking place across the region, so if you fancy sharing your recording expertise, make sure you join in with at least one of them! If you feel like brushing up on your identification skills of shield bugs, leaf mining lepidoptera, or rocky shore species, please sign up for the training courses on p13.

I hope you have a successful recording season; and I look forward to seeing the results in a few months.

Rebecca Davies (Editor)

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A Monmouthshire Meadow

Nearly three decades of managing a species-rich pasture.

Buying a 6 acre species-rich pasture on two sides of our cottage back in the early 1980s was one of the most rewarding things we have done. The pasture is on a steep south-facing slope extending down to a lane in a side valley of the Wye, south of Monmouth. It is divided by several internal hedges which we have added to and extended, and which have Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), Spindle (*Euonymus europaea*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). It has some huge veteran Small-leaved Limes (*Tilia cordata*) around the edge as well as Sycamores (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), two Oaks (*Quercus* sp.), Field Maples (*Acer campestre*) and Hollies. It was owned by a local farmer who grazed young cattle on it and who each year harrowed the pasture. Since buying it we have tried to maintain grazing by cattle after mid July, and are lucky in that we have a neighbour prepared to graze stock on it when we deem fit. We have also made use of two Exmoor Ponies owned by the Monmouthshire Meadows Group in recent autumns. We renovated the old stone



Tortoise beetle © Matt Shardlow

wall along the lane with the help of Usk College and Cardiff Conservation Volunteers; and thanks to the old National Rivers Authority dug a small pond in the valley bottom which is fed by spring water.

The pasture is almost contiguous with the Gwent Wildlife Trust's Pentwyn Farm hay meadows and our northern boundary was adjacent to a former arable and dairy farm. This 'exported' fertiliser and soil onto our land; so to try to control the unwanted enrichment we planted a small copse and fringe of trees on the boundary. We put in Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Cherry (*Prunus* sp.), Small-leaved Lime, Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Field Maple, Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Aspen (*Populus tremula*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*). The new copse and a fringe of trees

are thriving although Birch and Oak have been severely damaged by Grey Squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*). Already there is canopy cover with Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*) and Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) expanding across the woodland floor and we are earmarking Ashes to remove. The dairy farm is now a Gwent Wildlife Trust reserve (Wyeswood), and so the fertiliser problem is no longer an issue.

The pasture supports most of the plant species found at Pentwyn Farm, albeit much smaller numbers of Spotted (*Dactylorhiza* sp.) and Green-veined Orchids (*Orchis morio*) and as yet no Greater Butterfly Orchids (*Platanthera chlorantha*). The Green-veined Orchids only arrived in 2007 and Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) has also become well established in recent

A Monmouthshire Meadow (cont...)

years. In addition, the pasture has at least five species not found on the GWT reserve – abundant Spring Sedge (*Carex caryophylla*), Creeping Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), Burnet Saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), Wild Basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*) and Ladies Mantle (*Alchemilla vestita*). It also has an increasing population of Cowslips (*Primula veris*) spread over the field. The pasture is of particular value in that when the hay has been cut on the GWT reserve there is still cover and there are still Knapweed (*Centaurea sp.*) flowers and other nectar sources on our pasture for butterflies, bumble-bees and other insects. There is a good population of Meadow Browns (*Maniola jurtina*), Gatekeepers (*Pyronia tithonus*), Ringlets (*Aphantopus hyperantus*), Marbled Whites (*Melanargia galathea*), Small Coppers (*Lycaena phlaeas*), Common Blues (*Polyommatus icarus*), Large Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanus*) and Small Skippers (*Thymelicus sylvestris*) and best of all, a small remnant population of Dingy Skippers (*Erynnis tages*). Bumble-bees include the scarce Brown-banded Carder-bee (*Bombus humilis*) and Red-shanked Bumble-bee (*Bombus ruderarius*); in 2010 the recent colonist the Tree Bumble-bee (*Bombus hypnorum*) was also found. Hornets nested in 2010 at the base of a veteran Small-leaved Lime and made moth-trapping somewhat difficult in September and early October as hordes of workers were attracted to the trap. Although we only

started moth-trapping in 2009 spurred on by Martin Anthony who did some sessions here in 2007, we have so far recorded 244 species of macros plus a smattering of micros – we are working on the latter.

Fungi in the pasture are



False oxlip © Stephanie & Lindsay Tyler

excellent with amongst many others, Common puffball *Lycoperdon perlatum*, Giant Puffballs, Shaggy Parasols, Blushers and numerous waxcaps. Sheila and George Spence identified six species of waxcap in 2006 - *Hygrocybe chlorophana* (Golden Waxcap), *H. citrinovirens* (Citrine Waxcap), *H. conica* (Witch's Hat), *H. pratensis* (Meadow Waxcap), *H. punicea* (Crimson Waxcap) and *H. virginea var. virginea* (Snowy Waxcap). In September 2010 we found Pink Waxcaps (*H. calyptraeformis*) for the first time in two different areas of the pasture.

Birds and mammals include the usual suspects with highlights being Hawfinch (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*) and Water Shrew

(*Neomys fodiens*). The pond has attracted Common Frogs (*Rana temporaria*), Grass Snakes (*Natrix natrix*), Palmate (*Lissotriton helveticus*) and Smooth Newts (*Lissotriton vulgaris*). Common Toads (*Bufo bufo*) are also present, a healthy population of Slow Worms

(*Anguis fragilis*) and the occasional Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*).

The pasture has developed some fine Meadow Ant (*Lasius flavus*) mounds and in 2008 John Harper visited our pasture and found an uncommon Brown Ant (*Myrmica sulcinoides*). He also found eight species of slug, six species of snail, two species of centipedes and one millipede, three species of harvestmen and no fewer than 21 species of spider including the scarce *Lepthyphantes cristatus*.

Buglife then held a meeting in the pasture in May 2009 and added several new species to our invertebrate list including a Tortoise beetle *Cassida vibex*. Other invertebrates captured on 30 May 2009 included

(*Ceriagrion tenellum*), White-legged Damselfly (*Platycnemis pennipes*), the Cuckoo-Bee (*Psithyrus campestris*) that parasitizes the Common Carder Bee (*Bombus pascuorum*), interesting flies such as the Picture-wing fly, Notch-horned Cleg fly and Snipe fly; many beetles - sailor beetles, cardinal beetles, a Variable Longhorn Beetle (*Stenocorus meridianus*), Garden Chafers, Bracken Chafers, various leaf beetles, a lovely green weevil *Phyllobius pomaceus*, a nettle weevil, an Assassin Bug, Common Crab Spiders (*Xysticus cristatus*) and three other spiders including the scarce *X. acerbus*. All that in just an hour or two in one afternoon! It shows just how many invertebrates may live in our pasture through the year. We have now started on hoverflies spurred on by a visit from John Phillips. Our list of plants, invertebrates and other taxa is growing each year. However, we have a very long way to go before we reach the amazing 2,673 species found in a Leicestershire garden by Jennifer Owen over a 30 year period.

Stephanie & Lindsay Tyler

Sunday 12th June - Monmouthshire Meadows Group Open Day. 11am - 5pm. For further details go to www.monmouthshiremeadows.co.uk

SEWBRc News

Funding

The recession has inevitably affected our income from the public sector in recent months, but thankfully we continue to receive strong support from a broad range of funders. At present, work is underway on a Pan-Wales public sector funding package for the four Welsh LRCs. This will hopefully put us all in a stronger financial position from April 2012.

At the local level, we recently signed a new 12 month Data Supply Agreement for the supply of GIS alert layers to Newport City Council.

Joint LRC Wales Database Project

The four Welsh LRCs have always had a close working relationship, and for

the past year we have been working towards the creation of a combined database for all of the records we hold. The intention is for each of the four LRCs to update their own records in the master copy and these changes will then be 'replicated' across to the other three copies in the network. Not only will this enable a more seamless service for our data users (by having access to the most up-to-date records around our borders), it will help us answer questions on the national status of the plants and animals in Wales - is that moth really new to Wales?

Staff, Directors & Volunteers

There have been a number of staff changes since

the last newsletter in October. At the end of March we sadly said goodbye to Alice Britt (Biodiversity Information Assistant). Alice undertook the digitisation of many valuable data sets, and organised a variety of events during her time at SEWBRc. You may still bump into Alice through her role as *Gwent Orchard Project Officer* at Gwent Wildlife Trust.

We also wave a fond farewell to Lindsay Bamforth (Data & Enquiries Officer) who will be leaving us to move to Scotland. Lindsay has played an integral role within the SEWBRc team in running the planning list searches, coordinating volunteers, organising events, and updating news and events on the website.

We would like to thank

both Alice and Lindsay for all their hard work at SEWBRc and wish them every success for the future.

In November 2010, we welcomed three new directors to the SEWBRc family: Dr Bob Roome, Roger James, and Richard May.

We also have a regular band of volunteers that undertake invaluable data entry work (currently Richard Carpenter, Louise Bebb, and Helen Jenkins). We would like to say a big thank you to the current volunteers and to anyone else who has volunteered their time in the past. Our database (of almost 1.9 million records) wouldn't be nearly as impressive without their help!

SEWBRc Team

Recorders' Fora 2011 (Theme: Woodland)

Both Recorders' Fora had excellent turn outs this year, with close to 50 eager attendees at each event. Numbers are increasing every year, which is brilliant to see, showing how vibrant and enthusiastic the ecological recording community is in South East Wales. This year the theme was woodland, to tie in with the 'International Year of Forests 2011'.

A couple of well known names helped to pull in the crowds. We were delighted that both **Dr George Peterken OBE**, a highly respected woodland ecologist and **Dr Mary E Gillham MBE**, a prolific writer and well known ecological

recorder, were in the position to speak at the 2011 Recorders' Fora. There were also a selection of talks from local recorders and societies including: **Clare Williams** (*Butterfly Conservation Wales*), **Dr Ben Rowson** (*National Museum Wales*), **Barry Thomas** (*Glamorgan Fungus Group*), and **Steve Bolchover** (*VC35 Recorder - Coleoptera*).

Of particular interest was an informative update from **Kevin Izzard** (*Food and Environment Research Agency - FERA*), regarding the threat posed by *Phytophthora* pathogens (formerly known as Sudden Oak Death) to our native trees and shrubs.

Both days concluded with an update on SEWBRc from **Adam Rowe**; and an interesting discussion on the relationship between Local Records Centres (such as SEWBRc), local recorders and the NBN Gateway. This was followed by a slightly muddy walk, around Dare Valley Country Park at the Glamorgan Recorders' Forum, and Church Wood & Springvale Ponds LNR at the Gwent Recorders' Forum.

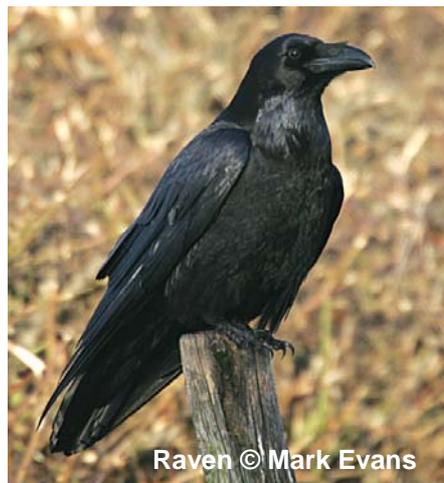
These events are organised by SEWBRc to enable the local recording community to stay up to date on current issues, inform and educate

through the showcasing of local recording efforts and encourage networking (hopefully whilst having an enjoyable time!). If you would like any further information on any of the talks given, or would like to give a presentation at the 2012 fora, please contact SEWBRc.

A big thank you to all the speakers and attendees who made the two Recorders' Meetings the most successful yet!

Elaine Wright & Rebecca Davies (SEWBRc)

Counting Crows



Raven © Mark Evans

A Study of Wales' Second Largest Known Raven Roost.

One morning, back in 2000, while walking, through the forestry to the west of Merthyr, I stopped to take stock of the bird species around me, when suddenly around fifty Ravens (*Corvus corax*) flew from one of the conifer blocks. Suspecting that these may have roosted there, I decided to return at dawn, to check and possibly count them. A few days later I did just that, though the count was secondary to the excitement and awe of watching these magnificent crows flying out in the pre dawn twilight. Since that time I have been counting them monthly, for my own satisfaction, though the records are also submitted to the

local biodiversity records centre.

The reason for the existence of the roost is Bryn Pica refuse tip, in RCT, at which most of them forage and the counts follow a broad pattern, but vary considerably, depending on weather conditions. The Ravens start flying from 30 to 45 minutes before dawn, so visibility, during the early stages of the count is usually extremely tricky. They often start calling around ten minutes before starting to fly out, then, when the time arrives, they leave in groups of various sizes. It can take anything up to an hour for them all to leave, during which the excitement of individual groups leaving the roost is usually punctuated by long periods of inactivity and silence.

The roost seems to be more prone to low cloud and hill fog than most of the taller hills around it, which makes carrying out a successful count a bit hit or miss. Many is the morning I've travelled to the roost in the dark, only to find it clamped down with fog or cloud or had cloud descend while counting and had to give up and go home. So returning home after a successful count, the feeling is both of pleasure at the experience and relief at having completed it successfully.

Over the years the patterns of behaviour have changed a little. The

calling is fascinating to listen to, there being so many subtleties to the vocalisation. I've heard it said that the various calls can convey real meaning to other members of the roost and I can certainly believe that.

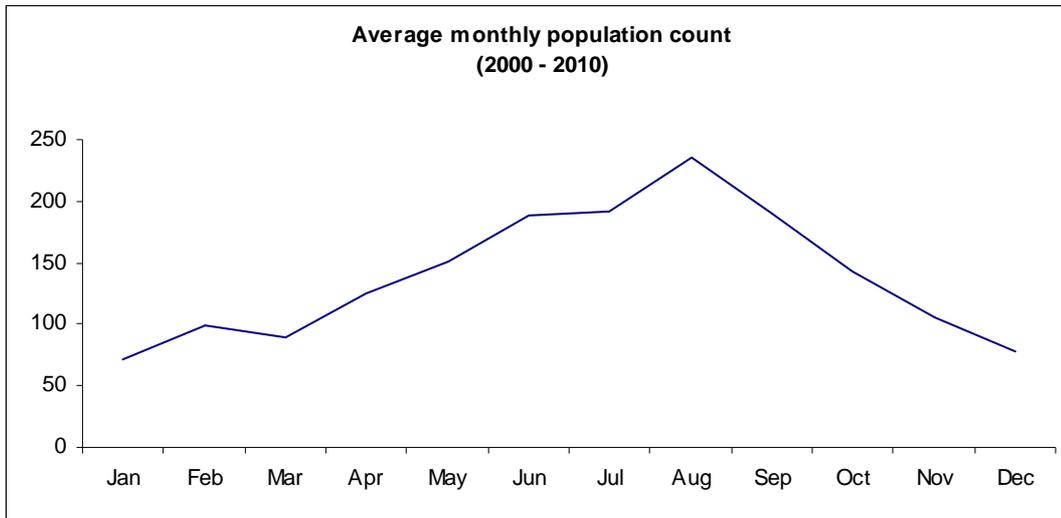
What is the purpose of all those counts? Are there any patterns or trends to be gleaned from the data? This isn't really my field, though a glance at the count totals for the past ten years reveals an annual pattern and a broad trend.

Each year the numbers of birds using the roost are at their lowest in the winter months, increasing gradually in the spring and early summer, rapidly increasing in the later summer period, before dropping away less steeply in the autumn. The late summer peak is caused by breeding pairs and their young joining the roost, though why the numbers then drop again so rapidly is a bit of a mystery. Why a peak not a plateau?

The trend in the number of birds using the roost over the ten years of the counts is generally a downward one, though whether this is a reflection of a similar downward trend in the local population of Ravens is

Blaencanoid Raven Roost. Monthly Counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	274	265	215
2001	119	218	No Access. Foot & Mouth Restrictions								146	89
2002	126	132	142	166	325	333	379	310	312	147	105	56
2003	108	102	128	158	199	208	175	199	57	38	51	44
2004	20	72	81	184	192	N/A	179	173	N/A	88	16	23
2005	54	42	62	121	117	170	175	N/A	201	137	105	129
2006	50	N/A	67	74	52	114	203	149	130	143	60	100
2007	58	42	90	74	92	170	N/A	163	158	104	79	46
2008	72	86	84	50	59	139	185	278	368	163	N/A	38
2009	32	79	65	102	97	N/A	88	344	103	162	72	76
2010	N/A	119	87	199	219	188	152	261	196	177	157	50

Counting Crows (...cont)



unknown. I am aware that locally, the brood size of Ravens has decreased and this does seem to be reflected in my own observations of family groups in the late summer peak. Typically there will be two adults and one juvenile,

whereas there would once have been two or three juveniles.

I've always had a soft spot for Ravens. However the experience of counting them monthly for ten years has turned

that into a love. Even having to get up at two thirty in the morning, in the summer months, to get to the roost in time, or sitting in sub zero conditions in the depths of winter cannot take away the thrill and sense of awe I

feel every time I count 'my Ravens'.

Mark Evans

(Article originally published in the Merthyr LBAP Newsletter 'Action for Wildlife', Winter 2011)

Cardiff Ringers



It almost goes without saying that birds are beautiful and interesting creatures and it is not surprising that they attract a great deal of fascination among people

wanting to learn more about the species that they share the planet with. Some people observe birds from afar with binoculars while others take a more hands-on

approach to unravelling the mysteries of bird ecology and behaviour by becoming bird ringers. Bird ringing has taken place in Britain for over 100 years, and currently there are over 2,500 registered ringers in the UK.

Several of the ringers operating in Glamorgan fall under the guise of the Cardiff Ringers (www.cardiffringers.blogspot.com). All are affiliated with the Bull and Morgan Ringing Partnership whose members have processed over 50,000 individual birds of 185 species in just over two decades. Within Gla-

morgan, the activities of the team have are largely centred on monitoring wetland sites such as Cosmeston Lakes and Cardiff Bay where we have ringed over 1500 and 5000 birds respectively. We also have a number of single species studies running and more recently we have become involved with the birds on Flatholm.

With funding from the Vale of Glamorgan and the Cardiff Harbour Authority we have been able

Cardiff Ringers (...cont.)

to not only monitor priority species using ringing but to run a project examining connectivity between wetland sites in South Wales. Through ringing we have shown connections between “our” sites of Cardiff Bay Wetlands Reserve, Cosmeston Lakes, and Cadaxton Ponds, but also further afield with the Gwent Levels and Kenfig. Although these connections have been demonstrated by species such as reed buntings, reed and Cetti’s warblers and even bearded tits, much of our information has come from ringing waterfowl, particularly mute swans, 100 of which have been ringed at Cosmeston to date. Although it is tempting to think of these as big, white, sedentary bread-eating machines, these birds actually move around quiet a bit. There is a lot of movement between Cosmeston and sites in Cardiff, such as Roath Park, Cardiff Bay and St Mellons’ ree system but we have also recorded links with Merthyr Mawr, Talygarn and even Abbotsbury in Dorset – 95km from

Cosmeston. We are hoping to expand our knowledge of swan movements in South Wales, and if you see a ringed swan please report its ring number to www.ring.ac (or you can contact us direct on cardiffringers@yahoo.co.uk and we’ll let you know if it is one of ours!).

Another of our long term species surveys is based at the Cardiff Riding School where we study the site’s swallows through nest recording and ringing. Up to 21 pairs of swallows breed at the site each year producing upwards of 80 young. Most of the adults and young at the site are colour ringed and we now have several birds breeding at the site that are over 5 years of age – not bad for a species with an average life expectancy of 3 years! We have also “controlled” swallows ringed in the Cotswolds and even Spain! This year we are expanding the project to other sites within the park in which



© Cardiff Bird Ringers

the stables are found, and this year the project will be registered with the BTO’s Ringing Adults for Survival (RAS) scheme.

We are also heavily involved in training new ringers. When people think of becoming bird ringers they are often motivated by an interest to learn more about birds and by the obvious joys of observing them at close quarters. All too often, however, they are motivated by the often exaggerated tales of the rate at which rare species are caught and the rosy image of ringing painted by programmes such as Springwatch! But Ringing is not for the faint hearted and nor is it a pastime that should be taken on lightly. What they don’t bank on is the time it takes to train to become a ringer (two years or more!) and that ringing can be an activity defined as much by exhaustion, pain and frustration and as it can by elation, pleasure and fascination! Some of the less pleasant tasks it involves include; waking at 03:30am on a work day, dealing

with bird parasites, wading through a reed bed at a water level far exceeding welly height surrounded by buzzing mosquitoes and occasionally losing said boot.

The negatives of heavy eyelids, wet socks, sore bumps and pecked fingers are, however, far outweighed by the positives. For those that persevere, the news of long distance movement reports, recapturing an old bird, studying populations and generally finding out about the lives of birds are more than worth the hardships. For more information on ringing visit www.bto.org.uk/volunteer-surveys/ringing/

Richard Facey & James Vafidis

(Cardiff Ringers)



© Cardiff Bird Ringers

Stop the Spread!



Invasive non-native species can have a damaging impact on British plants, animals and ecosystems. They can spread disease, prey on native species and compete with them for food and living space.

If you are a water user, you may unknowingly be helping to spread invasive species from one water body to another in equipment, shoes and clothing. The Welsh Assembly Government has been working with DEFRA, the EA and

other stakeholders to highlight the importance to all recreational and other water users of taking basic, but effective bio-security measures to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. You can help by following three simple steps: **check, clean and dry equipment before leaving the water.**

Check your equipment and clothing for live organisms - particularly in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.

Clean and wash all equipment, footwear and clothing thoroughly. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.

Dry all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

If you do come across an invasive species, you should report it. You can

do this on the GB non-native species secretariat (GBNNSS) website (<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/home/index.cfm>) or pass the record to your local biodiversity records centre.



Azolla filiculoides (water fern) © Crown Copyright 2009. Photo downloaded from GB non-native species secretariat website.

Cardiff Garden Wildlife Survey 2011

The Cardiff Garden Wildlife Survey aims to find out about the hidden wildlife in Cardiff. Amongst the roads and buildings of the capital city our gardens are offering food and shelter to some of our most exciting wildlife.

It is hoped that this will be the biggest wildlife survey ever carried out in Cardiff. The main face for the survey is the form printed in the May edition of the Capital Times. This will guarantee we reach every household in Cardiff with a total distribution of 155,000 copies. This will be followed up with press releases and presence at events such as Wales

Biodiversity Week and Out of the Woods in August where additional survey sheets will be handed out.

This is all backed up by a dedicated web page at www.cardiff.gov.uk/biodiversity with a saveable form and identification guides.

The project is a partnership between Cardiff Council and the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales with funding from CCW. The WTSWW will be doing the really hard work when the results come in. They will have dedicated students from Cardiff University to input and process the data.

Although the project is only being run in Cardiff it is hoped that the results will be transferable and will lead to a greater understanding of the wildlife in our gardens. It is very difficult to put a measure on gardens as a biodiversity asset but we are hoping that this will help us generate some baseline data and that the survey can be repeated in the future to get an idea of how important gardens are.

We are also advertising the Wildlife Trust wildlife gardening website www.wildaboutgardens.org, and offering an incentive for all completed

forms received by the 13th December 2011 to be entered into a prize draw to win a wildlife gardening pack, including a wildlife gardening book, bird box and feeder.

We urge anyone living in Cardiff to take part in the survey, even if you don't have anything in your garden as all information is important.

Laura Palmer
(Cardiff Council)

Explore Nature at St. Fagans



© National Museum Wales

Despite having hundreds and thousands of visitors a year, St. Fagans is home to some fantastic Welsh wildlife!

It's not just a place to see historical buildings and farm animals but also a really great place to catch a glimpse of some of Britain's rare and endangered animals. The new 'Explore Nature' project aims to encourage and inspire visitors to explore the natural history of St. Fagans and their own local wildlife.

You cannot tell the history of Wales without including the natural history, as the two are entwined in our everyday lives and traditions. The wildlife at St. Fagans has flourished due to the traditional manage-

ment of the woodlands, buildings and farmlands. As a result, the museum is home to hundreds of different plants and animals including rare Lesser Horseshoe Bats and endangered Great Crested Newts. This project will provide new facilities to enable visitors to see these otherwise 'hidden' animals as part of their visit. We are very lucky to have such fantastic wildlife at St. Fagans and we are committed to protecting it for us all to enjoy.

New facilities for spring 2011

Visitors can walk the woodland trail to a bird hide, watch wildlife on our

nature cams in the 'nature den' gallery or take part in a series of nature events and activities, run by the Explore Nature facilitator.

The bird hide is a really relaxing place to watch and listen to woodland birds. It also offers a great opportunity to take photographs of the wide variety of birds that feed all year around.

The bat cam allows visitors to watch Lesser Horseshoe Bats raise their young during the summer months and is also a useful tool for monitoring the bat population.

The nature den is a popular addition to the Oriel 1 gallery. Visitors are able to control live nature cameras or take part in fun nature games and activities. By using a touch-screen, visitors are able to zoom-in on different bird feeders and focus on the different woodland birds. Within the den visitors can also pick nature activities and trails to explore the wildlife at St. Fagans or in their own locality. Also available are several activities to help families engage with British wildlife, including: nature books, identification quizzes, magnifiers, real museum specimens, jigsaws, art activities, finger puppets and a dressing up box.

In the first 8 months of the project over ten thousand visitors have actively engaged in the drop-in sessions or nature surveys run by the Explore Nature Facilitator. Events have ranged from bat surveys to making nest boxes to mini-beast hunting.

national
museum
wales
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cymru



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth
Cynulliad Cymru
Sponsored by
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Government

Funding

The Explore Nature at St. Fagans project is kindly funded by Biffaward & Legal and General. Biffaward is a multi-million pound environment fund managed by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, which utilises landfill tax credits donated by Biffa Waste Services. The funding for this popular 18 month project comes to an end in October 2011 – if you are interested in supporting it further please contact Dan-ielle.cowell@museumwales.ac.uk

To see the Explore nature events listing visit: www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/woodlands/events/

To follow wildlife updates on twitter or our blog page visit: Twitter page twitter.com/#!/Nature_StFagans

Museum blog page <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/blog/?cat=110>

Danielle Cowell
(National Museum Wales)



© National Museum Wales

An extract from 'Animal Life Along the River Wye'

Extracted from 'Animal Life Along the River Wye'. For the full article, please see the SEW-BReC website.

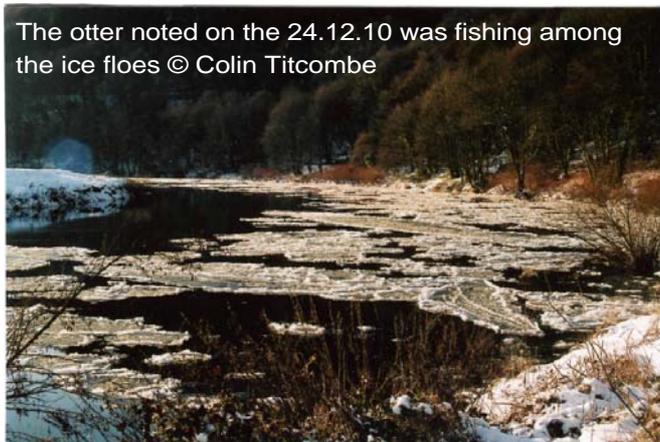
For my 2010 study I have chosen a stretch of the Wye at Llandogo. A river is a living corridor, a corridor along which birds and fish migrate. It is also a habitat of more permanent residence for many animals, but one which is relatively difficult to investigate by us land-based animals.

The stretch of river to be investigated comprises about a mile of varying depth and substratum. In places the river bed is pebbly, in others it is muddy, a mixture which ensures a suitable habitat for a wide range of different species. An additional element at Llandogo is the influence of the tide. Here we come well within the limits of tidal flow and this provides another ingredient in the study of riverlife along this stretch. The tide moves both fauna and flora up and down the valley, so presenting an ever-changing range of species. Regular bird counts

vary considerably depending on the state of the tide at the time of the recorder's visit. A bird can be missing from a stretch of river one minute, only to reappear a few minutes later as the tidal flow changes. There are also the changes brought about by neap-tides and spring-tides, and also by floodwaters coming down from the mountainous heartland of Wales. The high spring-tides carry seaweeds in from the Severn Estuary and deposit them along the river-bank at Llandogo. These same tides carry the infant stages of both Eel and Flounder during the months of April and May. It is this ever changing, ever mobile environment which has provided the following records and observations for 2010.

The range of species recorded here include those best described as sub-aquatic (fish and some molluscs etc.), aquatic (some of the birds such as Little Grebe) and riverine (those species spending part of their time in the river and part on the river-

The otter noted on the 24.12.10 was fishing among the ice floes © Colin Titcombe



bank — most of the species). Terrestrial species are also listed if they have been noted along the river-bank - i.e. the strip of trees, shrubs and rank growth lying between the tended riverside field and the river itself. These species may include insects such as meadow or woodland butterflies, and also some birds of woodland or scrub habitats.

Notable finds include: Depressed River Mussel (*Pseudanodonta complanata*) a Section 42 (NERC Act 2006) species, White-legged Damselfly (*Platycnemis pennipes*), and Club-tailed Dragonfly (*Gomphus vulgatissimus*). Section 42 fish include: Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), Twaite Shad (*Alosa fallax*), and Salmon (*Salmo salar*). A large number of bird species were also recorded including Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), Dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*), Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) and reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*).

Signs (principally footprints) of Otter (*Lutra lutra*) were noted on many occasions during the course

of the year but actual sightings were only made in the period from the 5th September to the end of the year. Most authors refer to the Otter as being nocturnal or mostly nocturnal. All of my sightings in 2010 were made in the daytime which suggests to me that the Otter of today, not being subject to hunting or other forms of human aggression, has become diurnal, or at least, just as much diurnal as it is nocturnal. One other point of interest should be made here. During my visits to the Wye this year evidence of Mink (*Mustela vison*), either sightings or sign, was totally lacking. This would appear to corroborate opinions made elsewhere that Otter presence has a limiting effect on the activities of Mink.

Colin Titcombe

For the full article with full species lists, please see the SEW-BReC website.



Exuviae of club-tailed dragonfly and (far right) golden-ringed dragonfly © Colin Titcombe

WBP Priority Habitat Mapping Initiative

Biodiversity Action Planning in Wales is coordinated and delivered by Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) with the considerable efforts of national organisations, Local Authorities, voluntary organisations, recorders and individuals.

The production of Priority Biodiversity Habitats Action Area maps are part of this process and will be completed for all terrestrial ecosystems which consist of: Uplands; Lowland Grassland and Heathland; Coastal; Enclosed Farmland; Woodland; Urban; Wetland; Freshwater. The Marine ecosystem will also produce a priority assessment of marine habitats and species. These maps will be used to inform and plan biodiversity action across Wales and assist in identifying potential partnership projects

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Partnerships and WBP partner members will now have access to GIS-compatible maps relating to priority

habitats in their area. Please contact your LBAP partnership to review the maps.

The first batch of Priority Biodiversity Habitats Action Area maps has been produced by the WBP ecosystem groups following work coordinated by CCW and with the input of habitat and species experts drawn for the biodiversity community at national and local level. A synopsis of each habitat and the associated priority species is also available with the maps.

1. Upland Ecosystem Group
2. Lowland Grassland & Heathland Ecosystem Group
3. Coastal Group
4. Enclosed Farmland Group

The second batch will cover the following priorities:

1. Woodland Ecosystem Group

2. Urban Ecosystem Group
3. Wetland Ecosystem Group

Species

A number of species surveys will be included in the maps and the WBP Species Expert Group will produce actions for those species not covered in the priority habitat mapping exercise.

You can view progress of the WBP Biodiversity Action Planning process and progress to date on the Wales Biodiversity Partnership website: www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/bap_in_wales-27.aspx

Sean McHugh (WBP)



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WALES BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

Wildlife Sightings

Spring highlights from Brynna Woods (Wildlife Trust Reserve):

Birds:

19/4/11: **Barn owl**—very visible above Brynna street lights and alarm call (shreee shhreee) heard over Brynna Woods frequently.
20/4/11: 2 **house martins** (seen most days). **Great spotted woodpecker** occasionally feeding on peanuts in my garden but 3 weeks in April very busy about 100m from my house (possible nest hole).
14/05/11: **swift**.

Invertebrates:

April & May: **Brimstone, orange tip, speckled wood, large cabbage white** have all been active in the second half of April and into

May. 14/05/11: **Violet oil beetles** (male and female). In May, **common blue damselfly**, and 2 **large red damselfly** flying in tandem (mating?) in my garden in Brynna.

Flowering plants:

Three cornered leek - considered a pest in the Scilly Isles!
Balm (lemon) and **Welsh poppy**, both possible garden escapes. In April, lots of **lesser celandine, wood anemone** and masses of native **bluebells**. **Marsh marigold** in flower alongside Ewenny Fach river on the 14th May.

Mark Steer

Editors note: The **three cornered leek** (*Allium triquetrum*) is indeed highly invasive. In 2010, it was included on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act which prohibits the planting or growing in the wild of any plants listed.

Records of non-native species are just as important as native species, so please make sure you share such records as they are invaluable in mapping the spread of these invaders across the country.



A First for Wales!

This uninspiring looking moth - a proper 'little brown job' was trapped on the 6th May in my garden in Llanishen, Cardiff. On close examination, it proved to be *Scrobipalpa atriplicella*, a species that feeds on Oraches but that has not previously been recorded from Wales. Given that these are an easily overlooked (or ignored) group of moths, it is unlikely that this record represents a genuine change in this species' distribution, but instead highlights the lack of recording of LBJs!

David Slade (VC41 Recorder)

Biodiversity Blitzes 2011



Biodiversity Blitzes are now regular events in the SEWBReC calendar. The aim is to gather as many recorders together at one location, and to record as many different species as possible within a set time period. These events are **free** and open to **all** recorders.



Penhow Woodlands (Coed Wen) NNR & SSSI

Saturday 9th July 2011

10am - 4pm

Penhow Woodlands is made up of two separate areas of woodland. On the day we will be concentrating on the most westerly region (Coed Wen) which CCW currently manage. The habitat is largely semi-natural ancient woodland located on steep limestone hills, and the woodlands have been designated as both a NNR and SSSI. The woodland is dominated by tree species

such as lime, ash, elm, wild cherry, and field maple; whilst the ground flora is particularly rich with nationally rare species such as Tintern spurge (*Euphorbia stricta*), green hellebore (*Helleborus viridis*), bird's nest orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) and the native wild daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*). Very few records exist for other taxonomic groups so please join us on the day and help increase our species knowledge of the reserve.

Wenvoe Orchid Fields

Saturday 30th July 2011

10am - 4pm

SEWBReC and Wenvoe Wildlife Group are pleased to announce a Biodiversity Blitz Day will be held at Wenvoe Orchid Fields and the adjacent Whitehall Quarry site. The site comprises unimproved grassland, woodland edge habitat and a former quarry site which is generally closed to public access. The site has a variety of interesting flora and fauna, including 6 varieties of orchid. Wenvoe Wildlife Group are eager for more species to be identified in order to aid their management efforts; please come along and lend a hand!



Booking is essential for both events. Please register your interest with SEWBReC so that we can send you further details of the day closer to the time.

More Biodiversity Blitzes...

Blaenavon World Heritage Site (Keeper's Pond, Blaenavon, NGR: SO32542107) Friday 3rd June 2011, 10am - 3pm

It's national Volunteers' Week, so why not come and help us record as much wildlife as possible in this stunning area? No previous experience needed. Learn how to identify wildlife by working with naturalists, and find out about volunteering and training opportunities in the Forgotten Landscapes Partnership.

The event is free but booking is essential. For further information, please contact Sarah Lewis (Forgotten Landscapes Partnership) on 01495 742333.

Rogiet Countryside Park (NGR: ST459874) Saturday 4th June 2011, 10am - 1pm

Rogiet Countryside Park is a brownfield site located by the Railway Sidings near the Severn Tunnel Junction. Recently saved from the threat of development, it is host to a range of interesting plants and insects. The aim of the day is to gather information on the wildlife found on the site. It will also offer a learning opportunity for those who wish to develop their wildlife identification skills. *Directions: Take the B4245 from Magor or Caldicot. Turn into Station Road and the village of Rogiet. Drive through the village, over the railway bridge and pull into the car park on your right. Please wear clothing suitable for the weather. Children should be accompanied by an adult. Please bring your own refreshments and water.*

For further information, please contact Gabi Horup: email ghorup@gwentwildlife.org or tel: 01600 740600.

Selar Nature Reserve, Celtic Energy Selar Opencast Coal Site, nr Blaengwrach (NGR: SN874044) Friday 1st July 2011, start time to be confirmed

Booking is essential as the site is currently still worked by Celtic Energy and you will need to be transported across the active mining site to get to the Nature Reserve. The Reserve itself includes the translocated fields from the original Selar SSSI that was moved prior to the start of mining back in the early 1990s. The site supports a wide variety of habitats including acid grasslands, neutral grasslands, marshy grasslands, wet and dry heath, steep wooded gorges and old coal spoil tips. Any records from the day will be actively used by the company to inform their current management commitments for the site. This site is under-recorded especially in relation to species due to the difficulty in accessing it.

For all queries and booking contact Rebecca Sharp: email r.sharp@npt.gov.uk or tel: 01639 686149.

Cefn Cilsanws and Dan-y-Darren Quarry (Merthyr Golf Club Car Park, NGR: SO031085) Saturday 2nd July 2011, 10am start

The site includes bracken slopes with scattered trees, dry heathlands dominated by ling heather, acid grasslands, grass heaths, calcareous grassland and calcareous scrub, acid flushes, wet heathlands, mixed scrub, western gorse scrub, scree, small rocky outcrops and limestone cliffs and quarry. Neighbouring the blitz area is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), where noteworthy plant species include bog asphodel and round-leaved sundew; and notable bird species include stonechat, skylark, redstart, and nightjar. The Blitz site includes Darren Fawr Nature Reserve (Brecknock Wildlife Trust), www.brecknockwildlifetrust.org.uk/darren-fawr.html. Dan-y-Darren Quarry is home to the exceptionally rare Ley's Whitebeam (*Sorbus leyana*), found nowhere else in the world.

Meet in the Merthyr Golf Club car park at 10am: Merthyr Golf Club, Cloth Hall Lane, Cefn Coed y Cymmer, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 2NT. *Directions: From the A470, exit onto the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road, heading east (towards Abergavenny). Take the first left signposted Cefn Coed y Cymmer and cross over the junction at the top of the slip-road. Take the first left up Cloth Hall Lane, following the Golf Course sign, and go to the top.*

For further information and to confirm your attendance, please contact Phil Ward at BIS: email phil@b-i-s.org or tel: 01874 610881.

Species ID Training Days

These events are **free** but **booking is essential** as spaces are limited. Please complete the form (available to download at www.sewbre.org.uk/news.page or contact the SEWBRc office for a paper copy), and return it to SEWBRc **BEFORE** the 10th June. Places on the courses will then be allocated by a random selection process.



Introduction to Rocky Shores

Date: 13 August 2011, 9.15 am - c.4.00 pm

Location: Mumbles Yacht Club, Swansea (morning - classroom), and then a short walk around to Bracelet Bay, Gower (afternoon - shore)

Trainer: Judith Oakley (VC 41 Recorder) **Level:** Beginner

The morning classroom session will include an introduction to the identification of major groups of intertidal animals and the more 'common' seaweed species. The rest of the day will be spent on the shore where you will be able to observe rocky shore species. Please note that some walking over uneven and wet terrain will be required.

Available places: 15



Leaf Mining Lepidoptera

Date: 01 October 2011, 10 am - 4 pm

Location: Dare Valley Country Park, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Trainer: David Slade (VC 41 Recorder) **Level:** Beginner

The course will begin with an introduction to recognising and identifying leaf mines. You will also learn how to distinguish Lepidoptera mines from other insect orders. Please note that the day will be spent entirely in the field.

Available places: 10



Shield bugs - In association with Department of Biodiversity:

Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales

Date: 05 November 2011, 10 am - 4 pm

Location: National Museum Wales (NMW), Cardiff

Trainer: Dr Mike Wilson (NMW) **Level:** Beginner

The workshop will include a brief introduction to the key features of Heteroptera, followed by a class on identifying shield bugs using museum specimens and keys. The day may involve some microscope/hand lens work, and will be spent entirely in the classroom.

Available places: 15



The Back Page!



Wythnos Bioamrywiaeth Cymru
Wales Biodiversity Week

Go Wild! - Fun days out with a Wildlife Twist

Wildlife-themed public events across Wales: 4th- 12th June. Join thousands of people and be inspired by Welsh wildlife!

Wales Biodiversity Week celebrates all things wild in Wales and invites you to join in the fun. Coordinated by Wales Biodiversity Partnership, events take place throughout Wales each day of Biodiversity Week including guided wildlife walks, boat trips on the high seas, green fairs, hands on activities and advice and encouragement from local experts. Suitable for all ages, events are a great way to learn about the natural environment on your doorstep and its importance to our wellbeing.

With over 70 events to choose from, there's something to suit all ages and levels of interest. All events are open to the public, ranging from a couple of hours to all day and the vast majority are free.

Two of the larger events cater for a diverse audience and are perfect for a family day out - '**Botanical Beats**' (5th June) takes place annually at **Treborth Botanical Gardens**; Jackie Read, coordinator commented, "*Botanical Beats is a one off. We use wildlife and arts activities, within our beautiful garden environment and washed by live music from local bands, to promote and provide access to the natural world.*" The ever popular '**Go Wild!**' event, this year in **Pontllanfraith (11th June)** features local wildlife and offers practical advice on the measures people can undertake at home to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Maggie Iles, 'Go Wild' coordinator added, "*Go Wild! is a fantastic, free family day out, showcasing the fabulous wildlife of the Valleys*".

To locate events in your part of Wales simply click on www.biodiversitywales.org.uk and follow the '**Wales Biodiversity Week**' link.

A **big thank you** to all those who have contributed to this newsletter! But, thinking ahead to the next issue, we want more articles from Recorders – it could be just a list of species you have recently recorded, or an update of where you have been surveying in the last year. This is an opportunity to plug your favourite recording location, to raise awareness of the species that you record, and to communicate to a wide range of individuals about your hard work!

BBC Wildlife 'Wildlife to Work' Survey

There are many opportunities for recording wildlife without having to disrupt your daily routine. The *BBC Wildlife Magazine* want to know what their readers see on their daily commutes and errands. They would like you to record all the wildlife that you see on your regular commute or other daily journey between Monday 6th June to Friday 10th June 2011. Send your results to *BBC Wildlife Magazine*, 8th Floor, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol; or send an email (wildlifetowork@bbcmagazines.com); or fill in the online form www.discoverwildlife.com/wildlife-to-work. They would like to receive your results before the 30 June 2011, as they will be publishing the results in a special report in the autumn.

Biodiversity Audit - Garw Valley Cycle Route, Bridgend Thursday 9th June 2011

The event will comprise a nature walk and audit to develop general baseline knowledge of the cycle route (covering all species). Meet at Bryngarw House car park at 10am. The day will be spent walking the cycle route to the top at Blaengarw whilst recording habitats and species. Please wear suitable clothing, and bring your own lunch and drinks as refreshments are not provided.

For further information, please contact Wendy Mackay: Tel: 01656 727800 or Email: WendyMackay@groundworkbnpt.com

Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

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