Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

Issue 30
Spring 2024

2024
30 YEARS OF SEWBReC

SEWBReC
SOUTH EAST WALES BIODIVERSITY RECORDS CENTRE
CANOLFAN GOFNODION BIOAMRYWIAETH DE DDWYRAIN CYMRU

Contents

Front page photo: Frog spawn © Steven Murray

Welcome to the 30th edition of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter.

This year, we not only reach **30** editions of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' newsletter, but we also celebrate **20** years of SEWBReC.

Our **20th Anniversary Gwent—Glamorgan Recorders' Forum** (p26) kicked us off at the start of the year with a fantastic event which not only showcased a number of great presentations but the SEWBReC awards also celebrated your recording achievements. Look out for more celebratory recording events and training sessions later this year—details will posted in our monthly emails, social media posts., and on our website.

The **Common Frog** is placed firmly centre stage with Steven Murray's amazing photo collection illustrating the fascinating development from egg to tadpole (p8-9). One of his amazing frogspawn photos can also be seen on the front cover. A different photo collection (by Howard Burt) depicts the intriguing development of the Poplar Hawk-moth from larva to adult (p12-13).

If you are looking for some recording inspiration, there are lots of local recording projects to get involved with: **Bees of Monmouthshire Recording Project** (p4-5), **Natur am Byth** (Lesser Horseshoe Bats, and Adders (p16-20), the new **National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme** (p22), and the **British Bat Survey** (p23).

As usual, a very big **thank you** to all those who have contributed to this newsletter. I hope you enjoy it.

Rebecca Wright-Davies, SEWBReC (Editor)

Recorders' Forum c. 224 AD: the format has changed slightly! 'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum', Wikimedia Commons (2016)

Groundsel (different specimen & location) © Jon Mortin

A funny thing happened on the way to the Forum

Jon Mortin (Biodiversity Information Officer, SEWBReC)

The annual Gwent Glamorgan Recorders' Forum took place on Saturday 20th January 2024. I travelled over from Bristol by train and made my way on foot from Bridgend Railway Station to the venue (Sony Theatre on Cowbridge Road, Bridgend). I was hoping for an opportunity to gather a few interesting records on the way but was a bit disappointed to only manage 3 records: Maidenhair Spleenwort, Cornsalad and Groundsel all of which I photographed for good measure (and to confirm my identifications!). However, instead of identifying Groundsel the ID app I used surprisingly suggested Groundsel Crown Rust (*Puccinia lagenophorae*). This was quite impressive as only then did I notice the rust fungus on the Groundsel leaves. This was the first time I had come across this species so it was quite a bonus! My photograph is pretty dreadful but apparently sufficient to confirm the identification (and a lot of rust fungi seem to be quite host-specific).

Checking on Aderyn there are in fact 57 records of this species and it is presumably under-recorded as the host plant is so common especially in urban areas. My record is the first for Bridgend and puts me on the list of elite recorders who have recorded this species! You will probably know if you are also on the list!

So a funny thing did indeed happen on the way to the Forum (which as you may know is the name of a musical by Stephen Sondheim inspired by the farces of Ancient Rome and originally starring Frankie Howard). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Funny_Thing_Happened_on_the_Way_to_the_Forum

Editor's note: See page 26 for full write up of the Gwent Glamorgan Recorders' Forum 2024.

Groundsel Crown Rust (*Puccinia lagenophorae*) on Groundsel: can you spot it? © Jon Mortin

A clearer image of Groundsel Crown Rust from another example I found © Jon Mortin

Discovering the unknown bees of Monmouthshire

Ciaran Clark – Project Manager at Bees for Development

Many of us are aware of the plight of our pollinators and for most people bees are synonymous with pollination. They are certainly one of our most important groups of pollinators but in the minds of the public they often exist only as honey bees and the charismatic bumblebees.

Of the approximately 270 species of bees in the UK, only 24 are bumblebees and there is only one species of honeybee, *Apis mellifera*. The rest are often called the *solitary bees*, and include a diversity of fascinating life histories, shapes, colours, and behaviours. Many bees are not recognised as bees at all, with those in the genus *Nomada* like this male *N. goodeniana,* often mistaken for wasps because of their black and yellow markings and less fluffy appearance.

Nomada goodeniana ♂ © Ciaran Clark/Bees for Development

Even the label of *solitary* is not strictly true for all, as some species will create nests with a reproductive queen and workers, and even change their level of sociality based on the local climate.

This disparity in recognition is reflected in the records in south-east Wales [Figure 1], with the genera *Bombus* and *Apis* making up 83% of records in the vice county of Monmouthshire, despite only making up 12% of the species diversity. This is largely due to the fantastic work of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT), whose BeeWalk scheme and efforts to conserve what is likely to be the UK's largest population of the endangered *Bombus sylvarum* (Shrill carder bee) at Newport Wetlands, have contributed significantly to recording frequency. Other contributing factors are no doubt the elusive nature and difficult identification of many *solitary* bee species, with some species only 3mm long requiring microscope examination.

There has already been some fantastic work to conserve habitats and raise awareness for pollinators in Monmouthshire. As well as the BBCT, a dedicated group of volunteers, Bee Friendly Monmouthshire, have campaigned for the introduction of pollinator-friendly practices in the management of public spaces (Nature isn't Neat) and hedgerows (Hedgerow Manifesto).

The question now becomes, are we making a difference? Has our work increased our pollinator populations and produced more resilient communities? To answer this question, we need more record data, especially for those groups of bees that are routinely under-recorded.

The **Bees of Monmouthshire Recording Project** aims to address this imbalance of data by increasing the recording of this fascinating group of insects.

Despite a slow start to the field season, our local expert Roger Ruston and I have recorded 46 species so far this spring including two species that were recorded for the first-time in Monmouthshire last year, *Andrena synadelpha* and *Nomada zonata*.

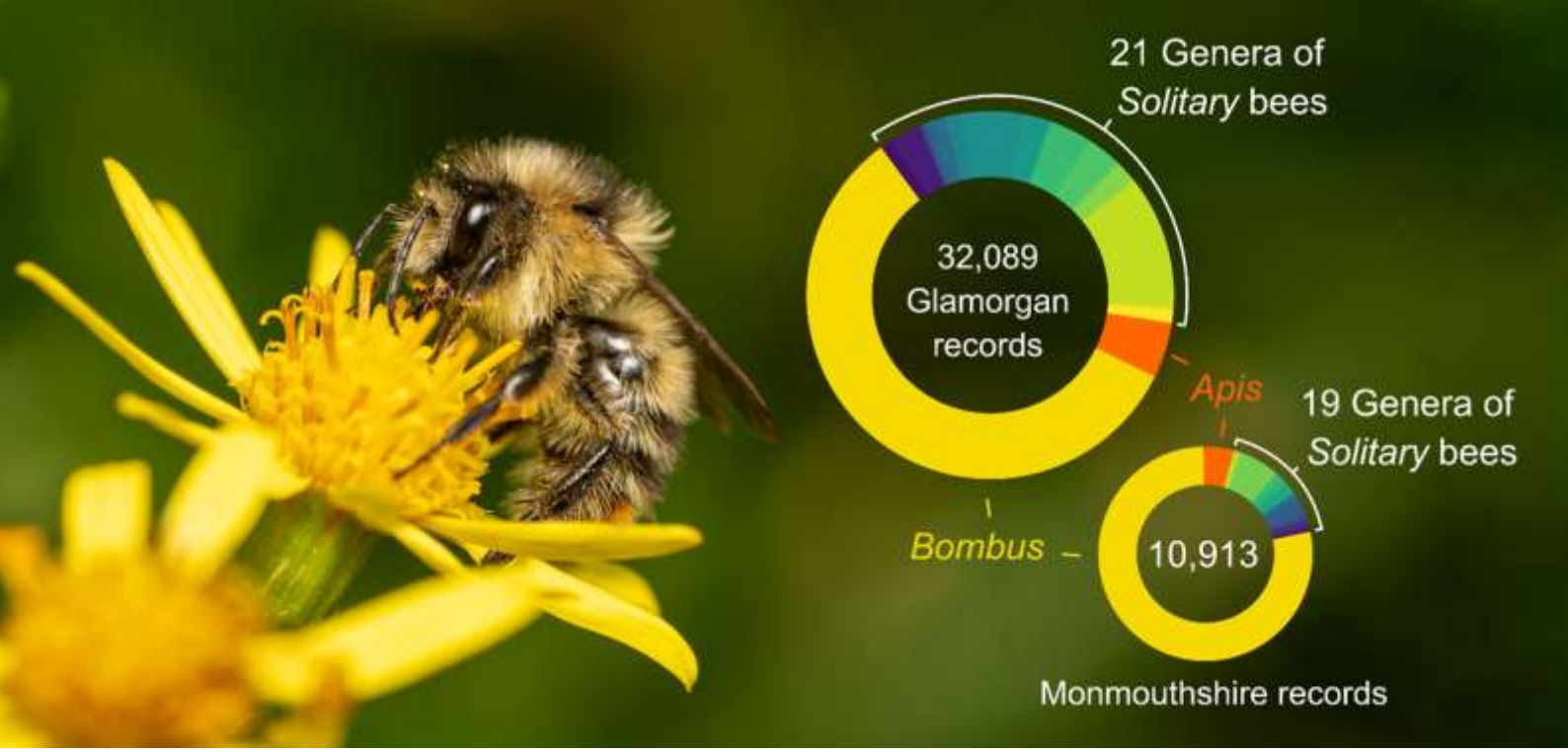


Figure 1. Picture - *Bombus sylvarum* worker at Newport Wetlands. Graphic - Pie charts showing the number of records per genus of bees in both Monmouthshire VC35 and Glamorgan VC41, with the size indicating the total number of records per county.

A. synadelpha is likely to already have been a resident here and just not been recorded. It has appeared in three different sites so far in 2024, with one being just outside my office on the Chippenham Playing Fields in Monmouth! The females are an attractive, medium-sized bee with orange to buff-ish hairs across the thorax and abdomen, and the males have distinctive long mandibles lacking a tooth at the base and an angular corner at the back of the head.

Nomada zonata is a cleptoparasite of one of our common *Andrena* species, *Andrena dorsata*. It arrived in the UK in 2016 from the continent and it seems to have reached Wales for the first time last year. It has been given the common name the Variable nomad bee, as this species' colouration can vary considerably (helpful).

Editor's note: A cleptoparasite is an animal that steals food or prey from another animal.

Along with a fair amount of extra recording effort on our part, we are hoping to also encourage others to increase their recording of all bee species. We will be running talks and a workshop this year to introduce people to the world of *solitary bees* and to learn about their identification and recording, respectively. We have also started guided bee walks to allow people to gain hands-on experience with their local bee populations and to get a feel for where to look for bees themselves.

Any records made over the next couple of years will be collated, along with existing records in the BWARS and SEWBReC databases, to create a guide to the bees of Monmouthshire, including photographs, maps and graphs, and information on each species. This guide will be published in print and in some form on a dedicated website for the project.

If you are interested in the project, we would love for you to get involved! For more information, please join our Facebook group (Bees of Monmouthshire Recording Project) or email me at ciaranclark@beesfordevelopment.org.

I am also contactable via the Bees for Development office at 1, Agincourt Street, Monmouth NP25 3DZ Tel: +44 (0) 1600 714848

Andrena synadelpha ♀ © Ciaran Clark/Bees for Development

Andrena synadelpha ♂ © Ciaran Clark/Bees for Development

Nomada zonata ♀ © Ciaran Clark/Bees for Development

This project has been supported by the Sustainable Development Fund, a Welsh Government initiative in the Wye Valley National Landscape (NL).

Ditiola peziziformis © Wendy Tyler-Batt

Ditiola peziziformis © Wendy Tyler-Batt

A rare fungus *Ditiola peziziformis*

Stephanie Tyler and Wendy Tyler-Batt

On 24 November Peter Martin, who is President of the British Bryological Society, and two enthusiastic bryologists, Clare Halpin and Wendy Tyler-Batt (WT-B), carried out a mini BioBlitz for mosses and liverworts in the garden, steep pasture and wooded area off Lone Lane, Penallt SO5209 belonging to Stephanie Tyler (SJT). The Yellow Meadow Ant mounds received particular attention and WT-B and SJT were also looking out nearby for fungi, especially waxcaps. WT-B collected some mosses from the pasture and amongst them were some tiny fungi. Through a lens the fungi had yellow disc-like caps and a broad greyish stipe. WT-B took two photos of them.

Neither of us could at first identify them. SJT trawled through all her fungi books and eventually in the *Collins Fungi Guide (2012)* by Stefan Buczacki and illustrated by Chris Shields and Denys Ovenden she found, in a section on jelly fungi and similar groups, a good match for the find. There were illustrations of both *Ditiola radicata* and *D peziziformis*, the former supposedly growing on conifer wood and the latter on broad-leaved wood. Stefan Buczacki noted that *D. radicata* was very seldom recorded and not recorded in Britain in recent years. We found that there have been only eight records of *D. radicata* in Britain in the last 150 years, four of these in Scotland. The four old records in southern Britain have not been accepted. It therefore seems most unlikely that our small fungi were *D. radicata*.

Unfortunately, we had no idea what sort of wood the fungi had been on as they appeared to be within the moss. The field is edged by broad-leaved trees including an English oak *Quercus robur* so it is much more likely that any buried wood would be of a broad-leaved species. However, old fence posts and telegraph poles could have been sourced from conifers.

SJT sent a note with the photos to Roger Evans the VCR for fungi in Monmouthshire for his opinion. He said that there had been no records in the vice-county for *D. radicata* so *D peziziformes* was the more likely species. Roger informed us that there had been only one previous record even for this species in Monmouthshire, from Lady Park Wood on the border with Gloucestershire in 1977. Apparently, as Roger added, the two species have rather different spore sizes which might have helped identification but spores and their septation takes a long time to develop. We conclude that the fungi in the Lone Lane pasture were *D. peziziformis*.

Looking through the rather limited number of records of this species, it is apparent that it has been found occasionally in much of southern England, especially Devon, Somerset and West Gloucestershire. In Wales the only records apart from the 1977 Lady Park Wood one, seem to be from Gower and Swansea in Glamorgan VC41 in 1915 and more recently from Clyne Wood in 2008 and Hensol Forest in 2018, as well as from Milford Wood near Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire VC45 in 2007.

Many thanks to Elaine Wright at SEWBReC for letting us know of the two more recent Glamorgan records.

Glue Crust in Monmouthshire VC35

Stephanie Tyler

I must have walked past the Glue Crust *Hydnoporia corrugata* fungus hundreds of times without noticing it. In late February 2024 friends from Scotland called by and we went for a walk in the Wye Valley down from Prisk Wood through Graig and Hael Woods to the old railway line between Redbrook and Whitebrook. Before we reached the railway line, Ian and Nicky Francis pointed out lots of Glue Crust which had stuck many small twigs of hazel to other small branches at SO532085.

Glue Crust, Penallt © Steph Tyler

Roger Evans told me that Glue Crust was not uncommon in Monmouthshire and that Sheila Spence had pointed it out on past fungus forays. Looking at the records however, it seems that there are rather few. In the British Mycological Society (BMS) database there are 1,391 records in the UK with fewer than 30 in Wales. In Monmouthshire VC35 there is a 1977 record from Lady Park Wood SO5414 and 1992 records from Cwm Coed y Cerrig SO2921 and Wyndcliff ST529750.

More recent records are mostly attributed to Sheila Spence and the Gwent Fungus Group between 2005 and 2012 – Aberbargoed Grasslands ST1699, Coppice Mawr near Chepstow ST5193, Caerllan SO4908, Croes Robert Wood SO4705, Strawberry Cottage Wood SO3121, Cwm Coed y Crerrig again, and in the Wye Valley records in three years at Priory Wood SO5212 and Bargain Wood, Tintern SO5203. There are also two records from Sam Bosanquet at Dingestow Court in SO40.

Elaine Wright has 39 records in the SEWBReC database for Monmouthshire. Excluding the BMS records and repeat records for sites mentioned above, there are just 12 recent other records, four from Christian Owen in the west of the vice county at Brittania in ST1598, in Hawtin Park wood ST1696 and by the Rhymney River SO1501 with records too from Keith Alexander in Lower Wyndcliff ST5296, Martin Bell in Silent Valley SO1806 and Castell Pin ST4092, Austin Rice in Slade Wood ST4489, Dave Shorten in Margarets Wood SO5207, Sheila Spence at Cefn Ila SO3500, Peter Sturgess at Ystrad Mynach ST1493 and Karen Wilkinson at Newbridge ST2096.

Since being shown Glue Crust in February, I have been looking out for it and found it at several sites, so it is as Roger Evans noted, not uncommon despite the general paucity of records.

Glue Crust, Danescourt Woods (2021) © George Tordoff

Frogs

Steven Murray

One evening while putting the chickens to bed I heard the lovely seasonal sound of amorous amphibians croaking. I knew my frogs were back. The next day I checked out my two ponds. Both my ponds are both quite large but heavily overgrown with bog bean, having not been maintained by the previous owners. The ponds are 50cm deep at deepest point and almost dry up over the summer. Having said this they seem to be perfect for amphibians. I estimated that about 30 litres of spawn had been laid. After my inspection I sat by the pond for a while and slowly heads emerged up from under the water, I counted 20 at one point though I suspect it was higher. Most were paired up and in amplexus with the odd singleton towards the edge of the pond.

Frogs can be somewhat underappreciated in the beauty stakes: that rakish facial stripe, variety of colours, and gold glittery flecks on their skin. Being in full breeding season mode these specimens were highly alert, sleek and surveying the pond with those huge eyes. Needless to say I took more pictures than was strictly necessary. It was at this point I decided to photograph the development of the eggs.

I removed a few eggs to a small aquarium and took regular photographs. The spawn was laid on February the third and my first shots of the spawn were on the 10th, you could just make out things happening at this stage. I then followed through until the 18th when they had hatched properly and were getting a bit of a handful! I then released them back into the pond. It was quite a privilege to be able to see the tadpoles develop within the egg, their own pond within a pond, slowly becoming more recognisable each day. I was also surprised by the success rate, very few eggs in the batch did not develop and we only lost a couple of hatched individuals.

I will certainly be giving this a go again, despite being a biologist I was taken aback by how fast they develop. I highly recommend giving it a go. My advice though would be very little spawn, lots of water and don't keep them too long.

All photos (frog spawn, eggs, tadpoles & adults) © Steven Murray

The Lost Leaf Miner

Graham Watkeys

Most *Agromyzids* are by nature inconspicuous. Their various leaf mines are usually the only way of finding them (and I recommend looking by the way) but when you find out that some have eschewed the leaf altogether and mine under bark they become almost invisible. Invisible enough that some have drifted out of most recorders minds altogether. *Phytobia cerasiferae* was until very recently thought extinct in the UK until Barry Warrington, the UK national recorder for Agromyzids, started looking for and rediscovered it.

There are a number of different species of *Phytobia* and amongst the most common and apparently ridiculously easy to find once you know they exist and decide to look is *Phytobia carbonaria*. It feeds under the bark of Hawthorn leaving characteristic brown feeding signs. Armed with a pair of secateurs I literally found it on the first twig I cut and subsequently on Hawthorns all over Taf Fechan. Despite it being so common this was a first record both for Taf Fechan and for VC42.

Phytobia carbonaria feeding signs on Hawthorn © Graham Watkeys

After this success I decided to look for *Phytobia cerasiferae* which is a Blackthorn feeder and has slightly more specialised habitat requirements than its Hawthorn feeding cousin. It appears to like thick dense stands of Blackthorn and whilst there are a lot of individual trees at Taf Fechan this particular growth form was more difficult to find. After some searching without success I finally found a patch that looked promising.

A dense Blackthorn stand © Graham Watkeys

The feeding signs of *Phytobia cerasiferae* © *Graham Watkeys*

Secateurs in hand I cut young suckers as low as I could and slowly cut inch long sections carefully looking at each cut for the feeding signs at first without success until the third or fourth stem when the characteristic brown marks appeared. Whilst not being as common as *carbonaria* it was present when looked for and is probably widespread, but the only way to know is to brave the spines and start looking. Needless to say this was also a new record for VC42 and Taf Fechan.

If you do fancy having a look for either of these species (or any other Agromyzid) Barry is happy to help with enquiries just email barry@agromyzidae.co.uk

Editors note: Further information about Agromyzidae (Diptera) can be found at **National Agromyzidae Recording Scheme**

Dare Valley Country Park© Elaine Wright

National Forum for Biological Recording (NFBR) Conference 2024

Elaine Wright (SEWBReC & NFBR)

Returning to Wales for the first time in 20 years, the NFBR Conference took place in Pontypridd on 9th – 11th May 2024. This annual conference brings together the recording community from across the UK, and is an opportunity for individuals from organisations such as National Recording Schemes, Local Environmental Records Centres, the National Biodiversity Network and the Biological Recording Centre to meet and compare notes alongside inspirational and informative talks.

The theme this year was Next Level Recording, with talks highlighting the extra lengths recorders go to in terms of geography, developing new technology and pushing at the boundaries of taxonomy with the discovery of new species. The event was organised jointly with LERC Wales (the consortium of four Local Environmental Records Centres in Wales).

Our extreme geography talks took us under the sea (*Magnificent Marine Life: Biodiversity, Health and Conservation of Our Local Sea*, Matthew Green, Seasearch), up onto the valley hillsides (*Unearthing Diversity: Surveying Invertebrates in Extreme Colliery Spoil Environments*, Liam Olds, Colliery Spoil Biodiversity Initiative), into the tree tops (*Extreme mothing: adventures with caterpillars that live in awkward places*, George Tordoff, Butterfly Conservation) and deep underground (*Life in the Dark: The Challenges of Monitoring and Recording the Invertebrate Biology Deep in the Caves of South Wales*, Julian Carter, National Museum of Wales).

New technology talks covered groundbreaking genetic work (*eDNA in detection of waxcaps and other CHEGD grassland fungi*, Gareth Griffith, Aberystwyth University and *The Darwin tree of Life project; Sampling across Britain for invertebrates genomes*, Inez Januszczak, Darwin Tree of Life) and the use of remote sensing to capture records (*Martens on the Move: establishing a national monitoring programme for a recovering carnivore*, Lucy Nord, Vincent Wildlife Trust). We also covered lower tech recording techniques used in structured recording (*Fledgemore Nest Recording*, Tara Okon, Fledgemore Nest Recording Group) learning the importance of tapping sticks and extendable mirrors.

New species talks were of the invertebrate variety (*New Millipedes in south Wales*, Steve Gregory, British Myriapod and Isopod Group and *Non-marine mollusc distribution mapping by the Conchological Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, Ben Rowson, National Museum of Wales), both with interesting theories on the origins of some species found in south Wales including stowaway Spanish millipedes!

Talks also covered the ways in which organisations can help individual recorders, including targeting recorder efforts (*LERC Wales: supporting the recording community in Wales*, Jo Milborrow, BIS) and facilitating continued learning and expansion of skills (*BioLinks: Structured ID Training Pathways for Invertebrates*, Keiron Derek Brown, Biological Recording Company).

We ended the conference with a panel led discussion on the topic "*How can we help recorders reach their next level?*", a stimulating session full of ideas on how organisations in the recording community can inspire and support biological recorders in their important and valuable work.

NFBR panel discussion © Imogen Cavadino

The two days of talks was followed by an enjoyable field day to Dare Valley Country Park, concentrating on the colliery spoil area of the park. We had an iRecord activity running throughout the conference, to encourage delegates to record in Pontypridd and at the field day.

On behalf of NFBR and LERC Wales, I want to thank everyone involved in making this event a success; our excellent speakers, tireless conference working group members and everyone who joined us in south Wales. You can learn more about NFBR on our website.

Poplar Hawkmoth - Photo Diary (July 2023 - May 2024)

Howard Burt

Strangely, I don't see many caterpillars in our Creigiau garden so when I do see one that looks 'interesting' I try and rear it through to see the various instars as it develops.

On 13 July 2023, whilst stalking a Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*) around the garden, I noticed a very snazzy caterpillar (approx. 10mm) on the willow tree. I put it, and the leaf it was on, into a petri dish and, after consulting the books, I identified our smart little friend as an early instar Poplar Hawkmoth (*Laothoe populi)*. I found this quite surprising as I haven't seen a Poplar Hawkmoth in the garden for a couple of years. Fully grown this should be approx. 40mm so it was a long way to go to pupation but I decided to try and rear it through.

By the end of July our little friend was getting quite chunky and by mid August it had grown to 45mm. It was obviously going to pupate soon, so I put it on an old fence post for a last photo opportunity in the morning sunshine and then placed it in my rearing box with some fresh willow leaves. I last saw it on 15 August after which, I assume, it went into the soil layer to pupate. Hopefully, it will emerge as an adult in Spring 2024 but whatever the outcome, the journey was well worth the effort.

Jump forward to 12 May 2024 and there were signs of movement in the rearing box. I had started to think that the Poplar Hawkmoth was not going to make it but here it was, looking very odd with short stunted wings, rushing around the box looking for a suitable place to 'hang out' for a while.

Almost immediately the wings started to expand but it was another 20 minutes before they had achieved the length required, and even then they were still saggy and wrinkled.

A further 30 minutes passed before the wings lost their wrinkly appearance and looked to be showing their correct shape and after a spell of just 'hanging' there the wings slowly opened out. Ten months after finding that 10mm caterpillar we had a wonderful fully formed adult moth with a wing span of approx. 70-80mm.

I released the moth into the garden after dark the following night. The weather wasn't good but I left it in a sheltered spot and it was still there when I checked later. Conditions had eased by midnight and when I went out for a final check there was no sign of it. Hopefully it had flown off to explore its new world and maybe it will visit when the moth box is next in the garden.

A satisfactory ending to, what has been, an interesting and enjoyable look into the not so often seen life stages of this well recorded moth.

Time 'Flies' at Preston Montford

Steve Dixon

One of my goals for this year was to try and become more familiar with another Diptera taxon. I had enjoyed discovering large tachinids in woodlands and grasslands last year and I spotted a Dipterists Forum course, organised by Matt Smith and Chris Raper in February. I booked on to the course at the Field Studies Centre in Preston Montford, Shropshire – and then I was hit by a load of bills for my ageing car and a leaking gutter. Murphy's Law was taking hold.

Andrew McGleish had benefited from a SEWBReC grant to study bees and suggested I make a request to help with the course fees. "It's quick and easy and they pay promptly." So, I thought I would give it a go and I had the same pleasing experience – the process was simple and quick and the outcome much appreciated!

The Dipterists Forum weekend in Shropshire was very good. Preston Montford has been a field studies centre since the 1940s and everything runs very smoothly. The staff are very good at facilitating events like this: spare microscopes were found when requested, cakes appeared in the kitchen and the bar was a nice place to relax in the evening after staring quizzically at bristles through a microscope.

Chris Raper had brought along a huge European collection of tachinids. And when Steven Falk made a cameo appearance to talk about his Flickr photo page updates on tachinids, he was enthralled with Chris' many specimen cases. Not a man to waste any time, he was quickly scanning rare species to Flickr with his camera!

Even though I was quite inexperienced with the species, I was able to pick up some good tips quite quickly from Matt and Chris: using L-shaped plastezote mounts to study side-pinned specimens looking down; how to locate sets of bristles with adjustments to lighting; using Belshaw's keys (I wasn't the only one getting lost!).
Indeed, being surrounded by experts in various taxa was very rewarding – I was able to listen and learn from notable figures like Jane Hewitt, Andrew Halstead, Rob Wolton, Ryan Mitchell and others during the weekend.

On Sunday, attendees were even invited to re-home an old Diptera collection, which had been donated to the centre. I picked up a plastezote-lined tray and added a selection of pinned hoverflies. These will come in handy for another venture this spring.

Editor's Note: Tachinids are a large group of flies (Diptera) that are parasitoids on other insects. Parasitoids are animals that live on other animals for part of their life cycle and eventually kill them. See the Tachinid Recording Scheme for more information.

The Field Studies Council is an environmental education charity that organises many residential and day natural history courses. They have a network of education centres across the UK.

You can find more information about the SEWBReC Recorders' Grant overleaf and on the SEWBReC website, or contact SEWBReC staff directly (email: info@sewbrec.org.uk).

SEWBReC Recorders' Grant Scheme

Rebecca Wright-Davies, SEWBReC

SEWBReC Recorders' Grants are available to support wildlife recording in south east Wales. The grant is primarily aimed at funding opportunities for existing recorders to enhance their recording efforts; or for group projects with the potential to reach a number of new recorders.

Small grants up to a maximum of £500 are available for items such as:

- Field/lab equipment
- Travel expenses
- Identification guides
- Software
- Attending courses
- Running courses and workshops
- Promotional material
- Atlas and checklist publication.

A **Books Grant Scheme** for up to £75 for field guides, taxonomic keys and other relevant publications is also available.

Download the application forms for both grant schemes from the SEWBReC website.

Range of botanical field guides and equipment to help a community group record plants © Cosmeston Lakes Country Park Wildlife Group

Chris Jones with his new microscope for identifying fungi © Chris Jones

Lesser Horseshoe Bats (c) John Black/www.bats.org.uk

Swansea Bay Stars of the Night: A Focus on the Lesser Horseshoe Bat

Bethan Withey, Natur am Byth Project Officer, Bat Conservation Trust

Did you know Wales is home to 61% of the UK's population of Lesser Horseshoe Bats? In the Gower region alone, there are over 50 roosts of this species. However, with the increased urbanisation of the area and associated artificial light, there could be a severe impact in the movement of Lesser Horseshoe Bats throughout the landscape.

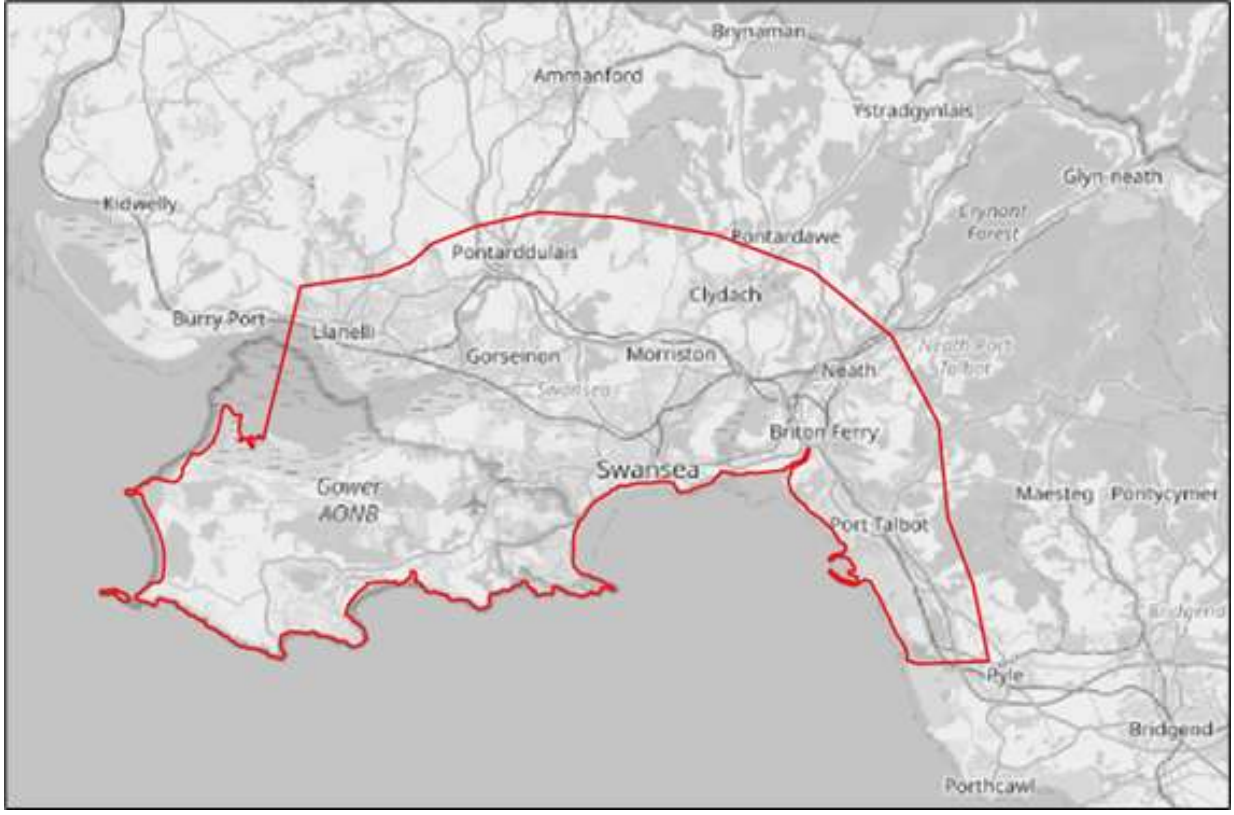
This is where the Swansea Bay Stars of the Night project comes in. We want to find out more about the routes these bats are taking to navigate the urban landscape, work with local councils and decision makers, with the aim of protecting these dark corridors in the future and influencing lighting plans. We want to raise the profile of the Lesser Horseshoe Bat in the local area and encourage people to value dark skies and the species they support, by revealing the nocturnal wonders on their doorsteps.

This exciting work is part of Wales' flagship species recovery programme: Natur am Byth!, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and others. It brings together nine environmental NGOs with Natural Resources Wales at its centre, running between September 2023 and September 2027. These organisations will work closely to deliver the country's largest natural heritage and outreach programme to save species from extinction and reconnect people to nature.

The programme will focus on particular areas across Wales; with our focus at BCT being the Lesser Horseshoe Bat in Swansea and the Gower.

Swansea Bay Stars of the Night - Our Aims

- Inspire people to discover and enjoy nature on their doorstep, with a focus on including groups which are often underrepresented in nature conservation.
- Inspire people to discover the wonders of dark skies and the impacts light pollution can have on nocturnal wildlife.
- Carry out a citizen science survey to identify commuting routes of Lesser Horseshoe Bats in the Swansea area and understand how they're navigating across the urban landscape.
- Use our data to inform lighting policy in the Swansea area.
- We'll also be part of an Arts Engagement Programme taking place across Wales!



Survey area © Bat Conservation Trust

Get Involved

If you're local to Swansea, we would love to hear from you. There will be numerous exciting bat walks, talks and events happening in your area over the coming months and we also have fantastic volunteer opportunities too. You could play an important role in our citizen science project by deploying bat detectors; this could be at some of our 'target' areas or even just in your garden. Or help us by verifying recorded bat calls or leading a bat walk.

Please do get in touch if you'd like to get involved; email Bethan Withey (bwithey@bats.org.uk) and keep an eye on the BCT website and social media for updates on the project. You can find out more about Swansea Bay Stars of the Night here.

Lesser Horseshoe Bat Facts

- One of the UK's smallest species weighing only 5g-9g, that's as light as a 50p piece.
- Lesser Horseshoe Bats display a behaviour called 'light sampling' prior to emergence, where they exit and re-enter their roosts multiple times to ensure light levels are optimal for their safety before heading out to feed.
- Historically, this species was found all across the UK, but it is now restricted to Wales and the southwest of England.
- These bats were originally cave dwellers, but summer maternity roosts are now usually found in buildings.
- They feed on flies, mainly midges, lacewings, small moths, beetles, small wasps and even spiders.
- The Lesser Horseshoe Bat is one of two species within the *Rhinolophidae* family of bats that we get here in the UK. Its larger counterpart is the Greater Horseshoe Bat which is roughly the size of a pear. For comparison, the Lesser Horseshoe is about the size of a plum.
- Horseshoe bats are very sensitive to light and actively avoid high levels of artificial lighting.
- Horseshoe bats have very distinctive echolocation calls, which sound like a continuous series of warbles on a bat detector. The lesser horseshoe calls at a frequency of 110kHz. Find out more about this species on BCT's website.

Natur am Byth!
Adfer rhywogaethau dan fygythiad yng Nghymru
Saving Wales' threatened species

Wedi'i gefnogi gan Gronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri Genedlaethol a Llywodraeth Cymru
Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Welsh Government

CRONFA DREFTADAETH HERITAGE FUND

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Cynllun Cymunedau y Dreth Gwarediadau Tirlenwi
WCVA CGGC
Landfill Disposals Tax Communities Scheme

Adder Action and Natur am Byth!

Matt Cooke, Natur am Byth! Swansea Bay + Adder Action Project Officer, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC)

Current research suggests that Adders in the UK are declining rapidly, with population trends projecting a significant increase in extinction risk for Adders in the UK over the next 15-20 years. The primary factor responsible for Adder declines in the UK is thought to be public disturbance/persecution, followed closely by Adder-inconsiderate habitat management and habitat fragmentation. Population declines and increased habitat fragmentation can result in inbreeding depression, accelerated local extinction rates, and a genetic vulnerability to climate change.

Wales is a stronghold for Adders within the UK, with relatively abundant populations occurring along the North, South and Western coastlines. However, action is needed immediately to prevent our Welsh Adders from following the dramatic declines observed in England, as Welsh populations are suffering from many of the same pressures that have resulted in such declines, namely persecution and inconsiderate habitat management. Natur am Byth (NaB) is Wales' flagship Green Recovery project, and is a partnership of conservation charities, including the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC), and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to deliver the country's largest natural heritage and outreach programme. Adder Action is an ARC project within NaB that specifically involves the conservation and research of Welsh Adders. Adder Action has several main objectives:

- Increase our knowledge of Adder population density and distribution in Wales.
- Collect Welsh Adder sloughs for a genetic health analysis (in collaboration with Bangor University)
- Overcome any negative perceptions of Adders in the public psyche (to reduce prosecution of the species) and raise awareness for the conservation of Adders in Wales.
- Work with other Natur am Byth projects, partners and volunteers to ensure any planned habitat works are considerate of the needs of Adder populations and, where apt, Adder-positive features are integrated in to project planning.
- Engage with project volunteers and local communities to: i) Generate Adder records; ii) Carry out structured surveys; iii) Assess attitudes to Adders and raise awareness; iv) Collect Adder sloughs (shed skins) for investigation of genetic fitness.
- Support an MSc Student at Bangor University who will use the latest genomic techniques to assess potential genetic fitness in Wales' Adders (e.g. such as might result from living in small, isolated populations).
- Work with Natur am Byth central comms team on series of events to increase knowledge of Adders and raise awareness – possibly as part of a 'theme' improving knowledge of 'unloved species' (TBC)
- Carry out habitat work in some areas that will benefit important Adder populations e.g. Swansea Bay.

To achieve these objectives, Adder Action will provide volunteer survey opportunities, survey training events, land management advice and educational workshops across Wales over the next three years. The evaluation of social strategies for raising the conservation awareness of Adders and overcoming negative reputations, will be achieved through gathering data at public events in Wales. Surveys and questionnaires will be utilised to gather data on public attitudes towards the species and will be used to monitor how these attitudes can change after exposure to different social strategies such as education, storytelling, art therapy and blended science-art workshops.

Current and Future Progress

Work has already begun! During Spring 2024, Adder Action organised and hosted two public survey training sessions at Oxwich National Nature Reserve, with many attendees achieving their first ever Adder sightings. These sessions were reinforced with two online training courses that covered basic Adder ecology and survey technique. On April 27th, Adder Action attended the Porthcawl Eco Day Festival to raise awareness of Adder conservation amongst the local community and dates have already been confirmed for future events at St Fagans National Museum of History (29th June) and on World Snake Day (16th July), with further field training sessions occurring in Anglesey, North Wales over the summer.

Figure 1 - Male Adder (newly emerged, pre slough) recorded during field training at Oxwich © ARC

Figure 2 - Volunteer Dafydd Evans recording Adders during our May field training at Oxwich © ARC

Slough Collection and Genetic Analysis

Aside from increasing survey data and public engagement, a key objective of Adder Action is to support an MSc research project which will investigate the genetic fitness of Welsh Adder populations. Adder Action is encouraging volunteers and staff to send in Adder sloughs (shed skins, pictured overleaf) that they find across Wales. DNA can be extracted from sloughs, revealing information about the health and extent of isolation of populations.

Adders tend to slough their skins during Spring and Autumn, with adult Adders sloughing an average of four times each year. Genomic data gathered from the sloughs can identify which Welsh populations are most at risk from the debilitating effects of low genetic diversity, such as reduced litter size or physical abnormalities, which can occur in smaller populations. Once identified, these populations may be candidates for genetic rescue or targeted habitat management.

How to collect and send sloughs for our genetic research:

Do not disturb, handle or physically remove the slough from any reptile. If you find an Adder slough anywhere in Wales, please follow these guidelines:

- Keep each individual slough separate, even from the same site or refuge (any contamination will compromise or invalidate the value of the slough).

Figure 4 (above, right)- Adder sloughs in the field, photo taken by AGILIS, Herpetofauna native to UK forum © ARC

Figure 3 (left) - Male Adder recorded during April field training at Oxwich. Dull colour and cloudy eye indicate imminent shedding © ARC

- Collect as much of the skin as possible, but it does not need to be entire to be useful.
- Record the grid reference (minimum four figure, i.e. XX 12 34) and/or postcode.
- If the slough is wet/damp please dry it out as best as you can but avoid prolonged exposure to sunlight as this can destroy the DNA.
- Before placing each slough in a separate, dry paper envelope and sealing it, write on it which species you think it is, the location and date you found the slough, your name and contact details.
- Place the envelope (or envelopes) in another envelope and post to: Prof. Wolfgang Wuster, School of Environmental and Natural Sciences, Bangor University, Bangor LL57 2UW.

Habitat Management Awareness

Adders are found in a range of habitat types, including heathlands, mountains, woodland rides, bogs, marshes, and coastal areas such as dunes. Historically, a primary cause of local Adder declines has been inappropriate habitat management. Adder Action aims to help landowners and NaB partners that plan habitat works, and/or grazing, to consider the possible impacts on Adders which may be present. There are some key management considerations for planning habitat works:

- Surveying and monitoring are key to locating and protecting important Adder foci (i.e. hibernation sites).
- Find alternatives to the inappropriate use of heavy machinery on Adder sites.
- Manage bracken/gorse sensitively – Adders need a mosaic of habitats including shelter – avoid removal of large blocks.
- Carefully consider grazing timings, stocking densities, and protect foci (0.2. livestock units per ha (i.e. 1 cow per 5ha) is recommended).
- Avoid uncontrolled burns and reduce controlled burns (maximum of 1ha on very large sites (>50ha) ranging to a maximum of 0.1ha on some small (<3ha) sites is best practise).
- Ensure wetland connectivity in relation to immature Adder summer feeding areas (juveniles often feed on small frogs or lizards).
- Maintain and improve hedge bank (cloddiau) connectivity as this can be key in some locations.

Conclusions and Contacts

Natur am Byth and Adder Action have just begun delivering their conservation work and vision for nature across Wales. Now is the perfect time to get involved with the abundant volunteering and collaboration opportunities available across the various NaB projects. If you'd be interested in getting Involved with Adder Action, or have any related questions, please contact the following email: Matt.cooke@arc-trust.org

Together, let's keep Wales a stronghold for this beautiful, yet fragile reptile. The guardians of heath and dune!

Natur am Byth!
Adfer rhywogaethau dan fygythiad yng Nghymru
Saving Wales' threatened species

Wedi'i gefnogi gan Gronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri Genedlaethol a Llywodraeth Cymru
Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Welsh Government

CRONFA DREFTADAETH HERITAGE FUND

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

amphibian and reptile conservation


Garden Tiger Moth © Colin Titcombe


Ruby Tiger Moth © Colin Titcombe


Jersey Tiger Moth © Gail Reynolds

Changing Fortunes for Gwent's Tiger Moths

Colin Titcombe

The 'tiger moths' are members of the family Erebidae, and more specifically, the subfamily Arctiinae. They share this subfamily with some species of footman moths, White Ermine, Buff Ermine and the Cinnabar, among several others. The species discussed here are those which have 'tiger moth' as part of their common name. More specifically their generic names vary quite considerably, only two species sharing the same such name. That name is *Arctia* and the two species concerned are the Garden Tiger and the Cream-spot Tiger.


Jersey Tiger Moth © Gail Reynolds


Green Alkanet © Colin Titcombe

During the span of my lifetime to date, the relative abundance of these moths has changed considerably. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the two common species were the Garden Tiger (*Arctia caja*) and the Ruby Tiger (*Phragmatobia fuliginosa* ssp. *fuliginosa*). Their larvae were familiar to everyone in the countryside at that time, those of the Garden Tiger being known as 'Woolly Bears'.

In the early 1960s I also found my first Cream-spot Tiger (*Arctia villica* ssp. *britannica*) but I never found these to be a common species. While working in the Wentwood Forest during the 1970s I came across my first Wood Tiger (*Parasemia plantaginis*), and a little later, on the upland moors of Mynydd Maen, but again, I never knew this as a common species.

Then, in the latter part of the 1990s, having planted Rough Comfrey (*Symphytum asperum*) in my garden at Brockwells, I found the larvae of the Scarlet Tiger (*Callimorpha dominula*) feeding on them in large numbers. It was about this time that I moved into my new home in Llandogo. Here I found the Scarlet Tiger to be plentiful, and the larvae feeding on Green Alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*).


Scarlet Tiger Moth © Colin Titcombe

Finally on the 20 August 2023, I found the forewing of a Jersey Tiger (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*) on some bramble foliage at the edge of Llandogo village. Checking this with our local lepidopterist, Gail Reynolds, I found that she had attracted one of this species to her light-trap in Llandogo. Gail was also able to tell me of the presence of Jersey Tigers in other parts of southern Gwent. It seems that the fortunes of the 'tiger moths' have changed yet again!


Garden Tiger Moth 'woolly bear' © Colin Titcombe


Cream-spot Tiger Moth © Colin Titcombe


Garden Tiger Moth 'woolly bear' (curled defensive posture) © Colin Titcombe

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* © Howard Burt

New National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme

Henrietta Pringle, People's Trust for Endangered Species

Sadly, our much-loved hedgehogs are under threat, having undergone considerable declines in recent years. To reverse this trend, we need to understand it better, to identify where and why hedgehogs are struggling and implement appropriate conservation measures. People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS), in partnership with Nottingham Trent University, Zoological Society of London, London HogWatch, Durham University and MammalWeb, are launching a new National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme (NHMP), supported by Natural England, to build this picture.

The NHMP is a national camera-trapping survey which uses robust analytical method that allows estimation of population density from imagery. Previously such estimates have relied on identification of individuals, thus limiting their application to species with recognisable unique features, or to mark-recapture studies. The Random Encounter Model eliminates this requirement, instead using a map of the field of view of each camera to relate pixel position to the animal's real world position on the ground. Recent adaptations of this method mean that we can now apply this to a citizen-science programme.

The NHMP will rely on volunteers to deploy cameras at a network of sites across the country, in a range of habitats. At each 1km^2 site, 30 cameras will be set up, and left for 30 days. We're working with organisations across the country to act as regional hubs that can coordinate the monitoring at several sites. These hubs are responsible for coordination of deployment and collection days, as well as the uploading of images and preparation of cameras ready for the next deployment. The organisations involved so far include universities, Wildlife Trusts and Mammal Groups. Out first site deployed this year was under the auspices of Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC), who have committed to surveying a brilliant 5 sites this year! We are in discussion with Cardiff and Swansea Universities as volunteer hubs, but are keen to explore additional opportunities for survey coverage in Wales.

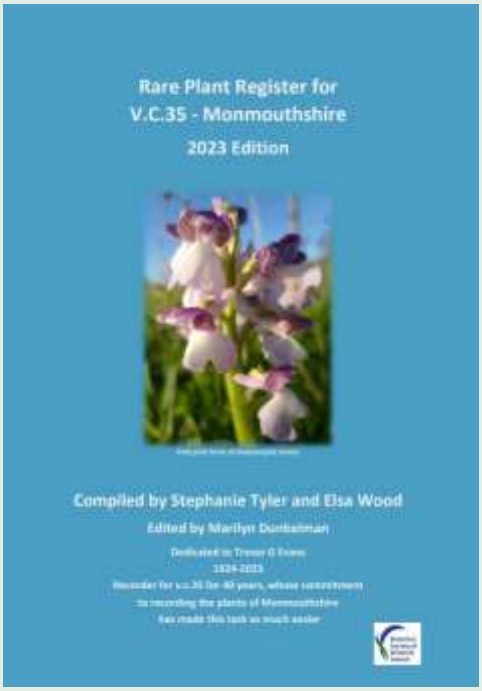
One of the challenges of the project will be dealing with the volume of images that are captured by the cameras. Before the data can be analysed, all the images with hedgehogs (or other species of interest) will need to be identified. We're using MammalWeb, an online platform for collaborative monitoring of mammals using camera traps. New AI tools will be used to filter out images that contain humans and any blank images caused by false triggers, but we need help from the public to identify the animals in the remaining images. Volunteers can sign up to MammalWeb (www.mammalweb.org/en/register) now and view images from our pilot sites deployed last year. By tagging the species they see, members of the public can directly contribute to this ground-breaking project, from the comfort of their home! To find out more and to sign up, visit www.nhmp.co.uk .

A hedgehog spotted on a trail camera as part of the new National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme © National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme.

The NHMP is a pilot project, so we'll spend the next two years gradually rolling out the programme, ironing out any kinks in the process. This is the first time camera trapping has been used at a UK scale to monitor species, so we're really excited to be launching this highly novel, ambitious project. If you have any questions or would like to know more about becoming a regional hub for the programme, please email Henrietta Pringle at nhmp@ptes.org.

New issue of Rare Plant Register for VC 35 Monmouthshire (2023 Edition)

A new issue of the Rare Plants Register for the vice-county of Monmouthshire, compiled by the County Botanical Recorders Stephanie Tyler and Elsa Wood, was published in October 2023. Steph and Elsa produced the last version in 2019, which in turn updated the original register from 2007 compiled by Trevor Evans. Wales was the first UK country to produce a register for each vice-county, with the aim of informing statutory agencies and local authorities when considering future plans for their areas. The register lists species that are considered rare or scarce in the county, or threatened at a national level, together with records of sightings in Monmouthshire since 1970. With 386 entries, it represents a great dedication to surveying, compiling and checking results over the last few years. The team has already started work on the fourth edition! The register is available to download from the BSBI web site



***Article was originally published in Meadow News (the newsletter from the Monmouthshire Meadows Group), Issue 39 - Spring 2024 ***

SEWBReC Membership and Governance

Adam Rowe, SEWBReC CEO

SEWBReC membership is open to anyone with whom a working relationship exists (including individual recorders, local groups and partner organisations). If you would like to become a member of SEWBReC, please complete and return an application form.

The SEWBReC board of directors steers the development of the company, and provides advice and support to the manager and staff. We currently have one vacancy on the SEWBReC board of directors – please get in touch if you'd be interested in joining the board and helping to steer the current and future work of SEWBReC.

Current SEWBReC board of directors: Steve Bolchover (Chair), Alison Jones (Vice Chair), Stuart Bain (Treasurer), Kate Stinchcombe, David Clements, Andy Karran, Alex Wilson, David Lee, Kirsty Lloyd.
Observers: Karen Wilkinson.
Company Secretary: Rebecca Wright-Davies.


Long-eared bats © Steve Wadley

The British Bat Survey (BBats)

Sophia Davies, BBatS Project Officer, Bat Conservation Trust

The British Bat Survey (BBats) is a passive acoustic monitoring survey being developed to estimate trends in Great Britain's bat species. We will send volunteers AudioMoth bat detectors, ready to deploy and attach somewhere manageable within a 1km square location. They will be left in situ to detect bats for 3 recording nights, after which you will take them down, send back to us and receive a report detailing the bats at your location. The exact locations are still yet to be determined, but locations near you should hopefully be available. Please fill in the form (https://forms.gle/Y1tCcbQBoUDUfsox7) to register your interest in taking part during July 2024 and we will be in touch shortly. If you have any further questions, please email britishbatsurvey@bats.org.uk.

The top 50 recorders in the SEWBReC area. Each have contributed >15,500 records!

SEWBReC BUSINESS UPDATE: Celebrating 20 Years of Brilliant Biodiversity Recording

Adam Rowe, SEWBReC Chief Executive Officer

Throughout 2024 we are marking a significant milestone—**the 20th anniversary of SEWBReC**. For two decades, we've been beavering away behind the scenes to train and support a community of wildlife recorders, to collate data from a range of sources and to ensure that the evidence base we have built is a critical resource that is properly used both to inform decisions that may impact on biodiversity, and to assist those working towards nature's recovery in our part of Wales and beyond.

2024 is a year of celebration for us. It kicked off in January with our popular and well-received **20th Anniversary Recorders' Forum**. The event was a great chance to gather together to hear inspiring presentations and to look back with pride on the achievements of the past two decades. Highlights include:

- **Three offices:** Taff Gorge Countryside Centre, Tongwynlais; 13 St Andrews Crescent, Cardiff; and 15 Talbot Road, Talbot Green.
- **Unrivalled staff retention:** Three staff appointed in 2004/05 are still working for SEWBReC.
- **25 staff and 25 directors have served SEWBReC since 2004.**
- **Over 6.5 million biological records captured.**
- **30 Recorders' Forum meetings held.**
- **29 editions of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter produced.**
- **72 field events organised or attended.**
- **51 species identification courses and other training courses delivered to over 500 participants.**
- **1,500+ recorders including 50 who have submitted over 15,500 records each.**
- **1 recorder who has submitted over 400,000 records:** Barry Stewart.
- **Over £12,000 of recording grants distributed.**
- **Aderyn combines over 20 million records from across the Welsh LERCs:** 14,000 partner searches and 10,000+ public searches undertaken, 100,000+ public species distribution maps generated.
- **10,500 commercial data searches commissioned.**
- **98,000 planning applications screened against our data.**
- **Over 20 projects and contracts delivered.**

For the remainder of 2024 we will be holding a number of **recording events and training sessions** – the schedule for the latter is inspired by our "greatest hits" from the past 20 years, as we revisit some of the most popular (and often heavily-oversubscribed) training courses we have delivered. The greatest hits theme continues with our species of the month initiative which will look back on some of the species we have highlighted for special recording attention down the years. Look out for details of all of this our monthly emails and social media posts!

In order to help SEWBReC deliver its range of services, we have recently taken on three new staff who I am delighted to introduce:

10 of the 29 editions of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter (2018-2023)


Ed Robbs

Ed Robbs (Biodiversity Events & Outreach Officer):
Ed will be splitting his time between SEWBReC and a long-term role as a Ranger at Margam Country Park and will be helping to deliver our suite of events, as well representing us at partner events.

Katherine Slade (Temporary Biodiversity Data and Enquiries Officer):
Katherine has worked as a Botany curator at National Museum Wales for over 20 years and remains in that role whilst joining SEWBReC part-time to cover Rachel Shepherd-Hunt's maternity leave.

John Prasad (Front-end Developer - Aderyn):
John is a talented IT professional who joins the LERC Wales team (hosted by SEWBReC) to help deliver the brand new Aderyn v2 website.


Katherine Slade

I would like to take this opportunity to **recognise and celebrate our amazing community of voluntary wildlife recorders** – our heroes in hiking boots! You embark on quests across moors, woodlands, and marshes, armed with notebooks and knowledge, and fuelled by curiosity and enthusiasm, to document both the rare and the commonplace. **Your records are more than data points**; each captures a moment in our natural history, and each can make its own small contribution to nature recovery.

Please can you all **continue to generate and submit records** in the way that suits you best (whether via paper form, spreadsheet, SEWBReCORD, the LERC Wales app or any other means). Your records really matter to us, and we are immensely grateful for your ongoing support. Also, please remember to share your exciting finds or seek identification assistance through the SEWBReC Facebook Group.


John Prasad

Whether you're a seasoned recorder or a curious newcomer, you're all **part of SEWBReC's story**. So, let's raise our binoculars, adjust our focus, and embark on the next chapter of discovery … **Here's to the next 20 years!**

Colin & Connie Caterpillars at the 2024 Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Forum © SEWBReC

Gwent Glamorgan Recorders' Forum 2024

Rebecca Wright-Davies, SEWBReC

To help celebrate 20 years of SEWBReC, the annual Gwent Glamorgan Recorders Forum took place on Saturday 20th January at the Sony Theatre in Bridgend. With 107 attendees, three Colin & two Connie Caterpillar cakes, and numerous vegan/gluten–free caterpillar babies, it was quite the crowd!

Amy Schwartz kicked off proceedings with a fascinating talk about *Bat Rehabilitation and its role in education and conservation.* This was followed by extraordinary footage of our underwater marine life by **Matthew Green** (Marine Matters) during his talk *Magnificent Marine Life: Biodiversity, Health and Conservation of our Local Sea*. **Ingrid Juettner** (Amgueddfa Cymru) gave us an insight into *Current diatom studies in South and Mid Wales—environmental assessments and rare species*, and **Richard Pullman and his team** (Lost Peatlands Project) updated us on the progress of the National Lottery Heritage funded *Lost Peatlands Project.* Two soapbox sessions then took place: first up was **Colin Cheesman** (County Ecologist, Vale of Glamorgan) who outlined the *Vale of Glamorgan's experience of SINCs;* followed by **Trevor Fletcher** who updated us on the *Fledgemore Starling Colour Ringing Project.*

After a delicious lunch and lots of networking, quizmaster Dave **(David Slade, SEWBReC)** presented a great recording quiz—no prizes, just for fun! **Imogen Cavadino** then gave a captivating talk about recording slugs in British gardens. A second break provided an opportunity to visit stalls from SEWBReC, *Natur Cymru, Marine Matters, and David Barden (Llantrisant Common). Tara Okon's* nature inspired artwork, and books by *Tim Rich, Glamorgan Moth Group and David Barden* were also available to purchase. Plenty of Colin/Connie caterpillar cake was available to munch on whilst interacting with other attendees!

Unfortunately **George Greiff** was unable to join us in-person due to illness, but he provided us with a recording of his enthralling talk *Bryophilous ascomycetes in Wales: new records and new species.* **Adam Rowe** (SEWBReC) then updated us with news from SEWBReC. Lastly, it was time for the much anticipated *2024 SEWBReC Awards.* **Adam Rowe** presented each of the winners with a certificate and book voucher**.** The winners were……drumroll……..

- Highest Number of Records on SEWBReCORD: **Rob & Linda Nottage**
- Highest Number of Records on LERC Wales App: **Martin Bell**
- Highest Number of Species Recorded via SEWBReCORD/LERC Wales App: **Graham Watkeys**
- Highest Number of Records: All Sources: **Barry Stewart**
- Top Verifier: **David Slade**
- Best Newcomer - Recorder(s): **Andrew McGleish & Stephen Dixon**
- Best Newcomer - Community Engagement: **Sue Colwill 'Friends of the Road to Nature'**
- Unsung Hero: **Greg Jones**
- Special Award: Longest Serving Director: **Alison Jones**

A massive congratulations and well done to all our winners - very well deserved.

Matthew Green at the 2024 Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Forum © SEWBReC

Amy Schwartz at the 2024 Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Forum © SEWBReC

Events

See the SEWBReC website for events in the area. Some highlights in the coming weeks are...

Discovering Nature Old Castle and Ogmore Downs Bioblitz, St Brides Major. Saturday 25th May 10am-4pm. Join SEWBReC & the Natur am Byth High Brown Fritillary Project exploring and recording nature. Free event but **places need to be booked.** See poster above for further details.

River Usk Festival, Usk Island, Usk, Saturday 1st June 10am - 3pm
A celebration of the River Usk and the communities that live and work alongside this beautiful river. Organised by 'Save the River Usk' See poster above for more details, and look for the SEWBReC stall on the day.

The Grange (nr Monmouth) Recorders' Day, 13th July. Join SEWBReC to record the biodiversity of this privately owned site currently being re-wilded. Check the SEWBReC website for further details shortly.

Go Wild, Pontypool Park, Saturday 29th June, 10am - 4pm
A celebration of wildlife. Organised by the Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Local Nature Partnership. Come say hello at the SEWBReC stall at this event!

Celebration of Nature, St Fagans National Museum of History, Saturday 29th June. Keep an eye on the National Museum Wales website for further details and come say hello at the SEWBReC stall on the day.

Wales Nature Week: 29th June—7 July 2024

Monmouthshire Dragonfly Recording Update

Steve Preddy, Monmouthshire County Dragonfly Recorder, British Dragonfly Society

The latest Monmouthshire Dragonfly Recording Update has several articles which will be of interest to SEWBReC recorders, you can read it on the British Dragonfly Society website here. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for these updates, which are sent out two or three times a year, please contact Steve Preddy at steve.preddy@me.com . Previous updates are available from the British Dragonfly Society.

AMERICAN SKUNK CABBAGE

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT

Plant introduced to ornamental gardens and found in boggy areas and water sources

Identifying features:

- Large waxy green leaves
- Pungent sickly smell
- Bright yellow flowers with tall seed stems

Do

- Take pictures and record your location
- Inform your local biological records centre

Do Not

- Pick/cut any part of the plant
- Attempt to destroy it yourself
- Move the plant away from where you found it

Check www.lercwales.org.uk to find your Local Environmental Records Centre or contact us at www.westwalesriverstrust.org

PIDYN-Y-GOG

AMERICANAIDD

YMDDIRIEDOLAETH AFONYDD GORLLEWIN CYMRU

RHYBUDD RHYWOGAETHAU YMLEDOL

Planhigion a gyflwynwyd i erddi addurnol ac a geir mewn ardaloedd corsiog a ffynonellau dŵr

Nodi nodweddion:

- Dail gwyrdd cwyr mawr
- Arogl sâl pungent
- Blodau melyn llachar gyda choesau hadau tal

Gwneud

- Tynnu lluniau a chofnodi eich lleoliad
- Rhoi gwybod i'ch canolfan cofnodion biolegol lleol

Paid

- Casglu/torri unrhyw ran o'r planhigyn
- Ceisiwch ei dinistrio eich hun
- Symudwch y planhigyn i ffwrdd o'r lle y cawsoch hyd iddo

Gwiriwch www.lercwales.org.uk i ddod o hyd i'ch Canolfan Cofnodion Amgylcheddol Lleol
Neu cysylltwch â ni yn www.westwalesriverstrust.org

South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC)

15 Talbot Road, Talbot Green,
Pontyclun, CF72 8AD.

Telephone: 01443 808896
Fax: 0843 265 2714
E-mail: info@sewbrec.org.uk
Web: www.sewbrec.org.uk
Follow us on Facebook & Twitter:

www.facebook.com/sewbrec

www.twitter.com/sewbrec

Greater Gwent Biodiversity Action Group

BIOAMRYWIAETH
HOLL GYFOETH BYWYD
BIODIVERSITY
THE VARIETY OF LIFE

Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group