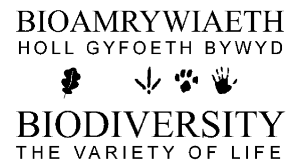


**GWENT
RECORDERS
NEWSLETTER**



Issue 5 Summer 2003

1. QUICK UPDATES

1.1 Gwent Recorders' Forum Meeting January 2003

[Melanie Sutherland]

The third Gwent Recorders' Forum meeting was held at the Glen yr Afon Hotel in Usk on Saturday 19th January. It was another well attended meeting and discussion centred on the future of the group, its involvement with Greater Gwent Biodiversity Action Group (GGBAG) and consultation regarding the South Wales Local Record Centre (LRC). Martin Anthoney agreed to continue as Chair and will represent the Forum at GGBAG meetings. Melanie Sutherland will also continue as secretary and newsletter editor. Two issues of the newsletter will be produced each year instead of four, and the Gwent Wildlife Trust offered to publish them on their website. The Wildlife Sites project and LRC development were the main topics of discussion. Dave Slade was also introduced as the South Wales LRC Development Officer and Adam Rowe from the Powys/BBNP Biological Information Service was on hand to provide information on the workings of an LRC.

1.2 Wildlife Sites

[Gemma Bodé]

After rather a long time since the first draft we may finally have a set of guidelines for the selection of Wildlife Sites in South Wales any time now. The Wildlife Sites Partnership, which consists of 13 Local Authorities across South Wales, CCW, The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and the Gwent Wildlife Trust, has spent many hours discussing the guidelines and whether the presence of certain habitats and/or species is enough to designate a site or not. The Wildlife Sites Partnership was set up in 2000 in order to create a unifying set of guidelines for the selection of Wildlife Sites that could be used across the whole of South Wales, from Gwent to Carmarthenshire. In doing so there would be a range of expertise and knowledge, maximising the consultation in order to produce a clear and convincing justification for Wildlife Site designation, which is able to stand up to any sort of scrutiny, including public enquiry.

Wildlife Sites, or SINC's (Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation) as they are also known, are non-statutory designated areas recognised as being rich in wildlife at a local level. The network of sites throughout a county complement legally protected sites such as SSSIs, by maintaining wildlife corridors, providing buffer zones and most importantly maintaining biodiversity at both the local and national level. *'The Guidelines for the Selection of Wildlife Sites in Gwent, Glamorgan and Carmarthenshire'* is currently having some finishing touches before it goes out to wider consultation in August. If you are a local recorder in Gwent and you would like to be involved in the consultation process, but have not received a copy by September then please contact me at Gwent Wildlife Trust (01600) 715501.

With the *Guidelines* almost complete we are a step closer to a Wildlife Sites System here in Gwent. The Gwent Wildlife Trust received further funds for the project from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund in April this year, ensuring a further two years, in conjunction with Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen local authorities. As a result we have been busy surveying areas in Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen this summer for potential Wildlife Sites and next year we will be concentrating our efforts in Monmouthshire. If you think you know of a potential Wildlife Site anywhere in Gwent then do contact me, and you may play an important part in the designation of a Wildlife Site and the future of Gwent's wildlife. Contact: Gemma Bodé, Wildlife Sites Officer ✉ Gwent Wildlife Trust, 16 White Swan Court, Monmouth, NP25 3NY ☎ 01600 715 501 📧 gbode@gwentwildlife.cix.co.uk

1.3 Gwent Species Audit

The audit has been out for consultation over the past year or so and is now due for publication to enable work to produce regional species action plans and stimulate action for important species in Gwent (GGBAG). Contact: Colin Cheesman ✉ Blaenau Gwent CBC ☎ 01495 355 550

✉ colin.cheesman@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

1.4 Species Action Plans for Gwent

Species subgroups have been set up as part of the Greater Gwent Biodiversity Action Group (GGBAG), to involve recorders as well as officers and other species groups prepare regional Species Action Plans (SAPs) for species of importance in Gwent. This will assist Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) and co-ordinate action for some of the less well-known taxonomic groups. A few more recorders signed up to a particular group of interest at the Gwent Recorders' Forum meeting in January. The aim is to initiate the process for Mammals, Fish and Herpetofauna, Invertebrates and Plants subgroups, to catch up with the Birds subgroup, which has already prepared a number of draft species action plans. Regional actions for selected species can then be implemented.

Contacts for the subgroups are as follows:

- **Mammals/Fish/Herpetofauna:** Melanie Sutherland ☎ 01495 235 253 ✉ sutherm@caerphilly.gov.uk
- **Invertebrates:** Alison Jones ☎ 01495 235187 ✉ jonesa2@caerphilly.gov.uk
- **Birds:** Jerry Lewis ☎ 01633 644856 ✉ jerrylewis@monmouthshire.gov.uk
- **Plants:** Colin Cheesman ☎ 01495 355550 ✉ colin.cheesman@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

1.5 South Wales Local Record Centre

For an update contact: David Slade, LRC Development Officer, c/o National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff ☎ 029 20397951 ✉ david.slade@nmgw.ac.uk

2. LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANS

2.1 Blaenau Gwent

- **New Biodiversity Project Officer!** Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has recently appointed a new Biodiversity Project Officer. Her name is Deborah Beeson and she is based at the Business Resource Centre on Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate in Tredegar, Gwent. Deborah has over 7 years experience within the field of nature conservation working for both local government and voluntary conservation organisations. Her last role was with East Staffordshire Borough Council where she was the main point of contact on issues relating to biodiversity and was responsible for managing a country park and other wildlife sites. She is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Blaenau Gwent launched in 2001, offering advice on biodiversity issues, and running the Blaenau Gwent Biodiversity Partnership.
- The LBAP can be viewed at all main libraries or you can download it at www.bgpublic.gov.uk
- The Blaenau Gwent Biodiversity Partnership is a committed and enthusiastic group working together to conserve and enhance local biodiversity within the County Borough. The partnership is currently looking for new members, and in particular, recorders who can bring their expertise to the group to benefit biodiversity conservation within the County Borough. If you are not currently a member but would like to contribute, please contact Deborah Beeson (details below).
- **SNAP! Photographic Competition 2003:** The Biodiversity of Blaenau Gwent & The Landscapes of Blaenau Gwent - Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are organising two photographic competitions this year to celebrate biodiversity, together with the borough's beautiful and varied landscapes. The biodiversity competition is open to everyone to join from all ages. The landscape competition is aimed specifically at the under 16s. Prizes include cameras and vouchers from *Walters Photovideo* in Ebbw Vale. Closing date for entries is the 17th October 2003. For further information and entry forms, please contact Deborah Beeson (details below). There will be a presentation evening at Parc Bryn Bach on the 12th November 2003 to present the winners with prizes.
- A new **biodiversity website** is in the process of being devised for Blaenau Gwent called '*The Web of Life!*' This will include information about biodiversity in Blaenau Gwent and why it is important. There will be

sections on *What's on?* in terms of the latest events, projects etc., *What's New?* in terms of the latest developments in promoting, protecting and enhancing local biodiversity, and what *You!* can do to get involved. This includes a section on surveying for wildlife asking members of the public for records on plants and animals of conservation concern in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Blaenau Gwent. If you have any wildlife records for priority species within Blaenau Gwent or suggestions for improving the site, please contact Deborah Beeson (details below).

- A **new events guide** is currently being considered by the local authority to publicise environmental activities and events next year within the county borough. This will include a programme of wildlife events to generate awareness and interest in the amazing biodiversity resource the county borough has to offer! Such events may include bird watching, bat talks, nature walks, moth trapping, fungi forays, and slideshows. We are currently looking for people who would be willing to lead wildlife events, therefore if you are interested, please contact Deborah Beeson (details below).
- For more information contact: Deborah Beeson, LBAP Officer, Blaenau Gwent CBC ☎ 01495 355702 ✉ deborah.beeson@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

2.2 Caerphilly

- Caerphilly Biodiversity Partnership's 2nd **Go Wild! event** was a huge success with over 2,800 visitors. Held on 21st June as part of Wales Biodiversity Week, it helped to re-emphasise the importance of local wildlife through a variety of activities, competitions, live animals on show (snakes, hedgehogs and owls) and a mobile wildlife garden display!
- **Great crested newt survey** identified 4 new breeding ponds on Caerphilly Mountain for restoration and management.
- **House nesting bird survey** has been really successful, with over 200 survey forms received this summer. Information gathered will be passed onto local bird clubs, RSPB and BTO.
- **Cornish moneywort survey** with Trevor Evans – visited the only known site for this species in Gwent with Colin Titcombe on 12th August.
- For more information contact: Melanie Sutherland ☎ 01495 235 253 ✉ sutherm@caerphilly.gov.uk

2.3 Cardiff

- Consultation drafts of the second tranche of **Habitat & Species Action Plans** are now available. This tranche includes chiding pink, dormouse, stag beetle and reedbed action plans.
- If anyone is interested in receiving copies for comment please contact: Melissa Moore, Biodiversity Assistant, Cardiff Council, County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff, CF10 4UW ☎ 02920 873268 ✉ mmoore@cardiff.gov.uk.

2.4 Monmouthshire

- Despite still not having an LBAP Officer or an Ecologist, biodiversity project work continues in Monmouthshire. During the summer **habitat restoration projects for mire, heath land and species-rich grassland** have been taking place:
 - At both Cleddon Bog and Whitelye Common, encroaching birch scrub has been removed and the twigs are being recycled for racehorse jumps.
 - At Gray Hill, as well as birch, there is extensive bracken invasion, which has been rolled.
 - All 3 projects were started in previous years and the management works are part of long term management which will hopefully culminate in stock being introduced. The grassland restoration work involves a combination of bracken and bramble removal, fencing and reintroduction of grazing. The majority of the meadows are in the Wye Valley plateau area and work is being done in conjunction with the Monmouthshire Meadows Group, Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Wye Valley AONB.
- A number of farmers have also altered their maize cultivations to benefit breeding **lapwing** (most lapwing in the Usk Valley now nest in this habitat but fare badly as the nests are ploughed or rolled). Farmers have helped the birds by altering the timing of the cultivation or compressing the whole operation into a shorter period, which allows those birds that are effected to relay. A small grant is paid to the farmer for the additional work in disrupting the normal operations, and a bonus for each successful nest.

- Enhancement for **dormice** in woodlands in the south of the county continues with proposals for an aerial ropeway linking adjacent woods presently separated by a highway.
- A new site for the **greater butterfly orchid** has been found near Monmouth (while visiting a goshawk nest to ring the chicks, a plant was found in an area where bramble had been trampled during the first visit to check the eggs). Discussions will be held with the woodland manager to initiate practical improvements to help the orchid in adjacent areas of the wood.
- A count of the **bee orchids** at a quarry site near Caldicot resulted in 1,085 spikes in an area the size of 2 tennis courts. In 1999 only 20 spikes were found before Hanson (the quarry owners) fenced the area to prevent rabbits from eating the orchids.
- For more information contact: Jerry Lewis ☎ 01633 644856 ✉ jerrylewis@monmouthshire.gov.uk

2.5 Newport

- **LBAP Document** - maps have now been produced. The document needs a final tweaking – we will then be ready to send it to the printers. Watch this space!
- **Review of current green area management regimes:** the Countryside & Conservation Team and the Grounds Maintenance Team at Newport City Council are working closely together in reviewing the current management regimes of parks, school grounds and other green areas under their remit. I hope to implement a strategy that will increase and maximise the biodiversity interest as much as possible in these green open spaces. We aim to strike a balance between a site's role (e.g. sport and leisure facility), and its potential to provide biodiversity-rich habitats.
- **Wales Biodiversity Week** was very successful – a number of public events were very well attended. The *Nightjars and Bats* event in Wentwood (led by Chris Jones) was great with reports of seeing and hearing lots of nightjars, woodcock and a tawny owl. A few bats were also detected. An impressive 52 people attended the *Orchid Walk* around the Gwent Levels Wetlands Reserve led by Roger James. A huge variety of orchids were noted such as southern marsh orchid, bee orchid, common spotted orchid, pyramidal orchid, and green-winged orchid. A wide range of dragonflies, butterflies, and moths were also spotted. During the week, presentations on biodiversity were also given to various groups including a community group in Llanmartin that are now hoping to carry out a biodiversity audit in their local area. With guidance from some local enthusiasts and myself it should prove to be a very useful survey.
- For more information contact: Rebecca Davies ☎ 01633 232 880 ✉ rebecca.davies@newport.gov.uk

2.6 Torfaen

- White clawed crayfish survey with students from the University of Wales Cardiff
- Ponds and scrapes have been created at Garn Lakes
- Management plans for Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are being prepared
- LBAP is almost ready for publication
- For more information contact: Kris Roberts, Ecologist ☎ 01633 648 308 ✉ kris.roberts@torfaen.gov.uk

3. MONMOUTHSHIRE MEADOWS GROUP

[Stephanie Tyler]

The Monmouthshire Meadows Group has been active on the Trellech Plateau and in the Wye Valley surveying fields that members have reported. One marvellous site at Maryland owned by a 91-year old lady, turned out to be an incredibly rich hay meadow. When we returned for a training session and detailed survey in late June over 200 flowering spikes of Greater Butterfly Orchid were counted. Trevor Evans was in seventh heaven! Other sites have provided a wide range of botanical interest as well as the gems such as Dingy Skippers on pastures on steep slopes at Far Hill, Llanishen and at Penallt. The Group, thanks to funding through the Wye Valley AONB, is training owners and interested people in the identification of grasses and other wildflowers in meadows and pastures and is also providing advice and practical help with management. For more information please contact: Stephanie Tyler ✉ steph_tyler2001@hotmail.com; Caroline Howard ✉ foresthouse@foresthouse.plus.com or Maggie Biss ✉ maggie@pilstone.com

4. "ENVIRONMENT JOINS IN THE CITY STATUS CELEBRATIONS - a bird nests in Wales for the first time!" [CCW News Release, 29th May 2003]



A pair of avocets has nested in Wales for the first time ever. This is the good news story emerging from the Gwent Levels Wetlands Reserve, Newport. Tony Pickup, CCW's Senior Reserve Manager at the Gwent Levels Wetlands Reserve said: "This is really exciting news. The avocets have nested and are now rearing their four chicks on an island in one of the specially created saline lagoons. This proves that the work that we are doing to attract birds here is on course and this is a major milestone in our progress."

Avocets, although very shy and difficult to see, are unmistakable by their snow-white feathers, boldly patterned with black; and their up-curved, slender black bill.

Avocet chicks:



Tony Prater, RSPB Conservation Manager, added: "It is wonderful news that this elegant bird has colonised the Gwent Levels Wetlands Reserve. The spread of the avocet through the UK has been fuelled by a network of nature reserves, and is truly a conservation success story".

"I believe that the reserve can develop and mature into a fascinating and spectacular bird and wildlife haven if we manage the site correctly. The long term plan for the Reserve includes targets to attract many different bird species including bittern, wigeon, shoveler, teal and Bewick's swan," explained Tony Pickup, "but the appearance of the avocets is a particular bonus - the icing on the cake."

Councillor Graham Dally, Cabinet Member for Transport and Sustainable Development, commented: "This is tremendous news for the reserve. Over the past few years it has become a popular place for people from Newport and further afield to visit. The reserve is an interesting place to learn about the environment and also provides a wonderful location to get away from the daily stresses of life.

"We have an events programme which allows people to enjoy the Reserve and its birds in the company of one of the Wardens or one of the many voluntary wardens. This way we can make sure that we don't disturb the birds and that the visitor can learn about the wealth of wildlife and the history of the Gwent Levels Wetlands Reserve" added Tony Pickup.

For more information on the Gwent Levels Wetlands Reserve, please contact CCW's Enquiry line on ☎ 0845 130 6229 or Tony Pickup, CCW's Senior Reserve Manager at the Gwent Levels Wetlands Reserve on ☎ 01633 275567.

5. **Other interesting bird sightings in Gwent** by Vaughan Grantham, Cardiff CC, include the squacco heron at Lamby Way and Cors Crychudd reen on 24th June and a hobby at Magor Marsh on Gwent Wildlife Trust training day on 12th July; and also the Ruddy Darter dragonfly *Sympetrum sanguineum*.

6. **GWENT AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE GROUP - WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?** [Rebecca Davies]

6.1 **Events**

Dai Hale (*Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service*) took a number of us on a reptile ramble around Caerphilly Common during a wet and cold day in May. The site is great for reptiles, being host to adders, grass snakes, slow worms and common lizards. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't great so we were

unable to spot grass snakes and lizards; but we did manage to find a female adder and some slow worms. Everybody was able to have a good look at the reptiles and fire their many questions at Dai. A trip to Flat Holm took place in July. Flat Holm is located just five miles off the coast of Barry and Cardiff. It is a tiny island with a wealth of history and wildlife including slow worms and common lizards. Having been used throughout its history by Vikings, Anglo-Saxons, silver miners, smugglers and cholera victims, the island is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). We found plenty of slow worms, gulls, and wild leeks, but unfortunately no common lizards. GARG was also present at the Caerphilly Biodiversity Partnership's *Go Wild!* event during *Wales Biodiversity Week* on 21st June. We had lots of interest in a stall with lots of posters and free information from Froglife, The Ponds Conservation Trust and CCW. A *Feed the Frog* game was also run, which entertained many young people that attended the event. We hope to attend more in the future.

6.2 Surveys

Matthew Harris and myself have finally got our licences for great crested newt surveying. We have been out and about surveying a number of ponds through Gwent. We have concentrated our efforts on those ponds that have had records for GCNs in the past and worked our way outwards. Some sites have been disappointing, but others have been very surprising and have possessed all three species of newt despite having only a few inches of water and in badly need of restoration!

If anybody would like to get involved in the group's work, then please contact:

Rebecca Davies ☎ 01633 232880

OR

Matthew Harris ☎ 01633 664662

✉ rebecca.davies@newport.gov.uk

✉ m.harris@ccw.gov.uk

7. MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH RECORDING GROUP

[Martin Anthoney]

The group's newsletter, the *Silurian*, will be published approximately monthly, and to save effort, we would prefer as many copies as possible to be distributed electronically. To those who gave an e-mail address on their membership form, unless we hear otherwise your copy will be sent to your e-mail address. For those without e-mail, Kevin Dupé has agreed to post out paper copies, but these will obviously reach you slightly later than the electronic version. We can include colour pictures at no extra cost in the electronic version, but only small numbers of the paper version in colour can be made available at present. Membership of the Group now stands at 25. Keep the articles, titbits and interesting records flooding in please (membership enrolment form attached).

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8. RARE BRYOPHYTE ON THE INCREASE

This article has been adapted from one that will appear in the next Bulletin of the British Bryological Society by Sam Bosanquet

Fingered Cowlwort, *Colura calyptrifolia*, is a tiny liverwort with very oddly shaped leaves that has always been regarded as a rare and exciting species by bryologists. It requires high humidity levels to grow, and was thought to be restricted to ultra-humid ravines in southwest Ireland, western Scotland and, to a lesser extent, north Wales and The Lake District. Here, it grows on base-rich rock faces with other members of the Lejeuneacea, notably Toothed Pouncewort, *Drepanolejeunea hamatifolia*, and Pointed Pouncewort, *Harpalejeunea molleri*, but is consistently rarer than its relatives.

The discovery of *Colura* in southwestern Britain therefore came as a surprise to members of the British Bryological Society. It was first found in small quantities on *sallows* in Hensol Forest, Glamorgan (VC41) by Tom Blockeel during a BBS excursion (Perry, 1986). This was followed by records in the early 1990s from damp woodland in North Somerset (VC6) (P. Martin in Corley, 1987), a *Nothofagus* trunk in woodland on Dartmoor, South Devon (VC3) (R. Stern in Long, 1999) and an oak trunk in humid woodland in southern Breconshire (VC42) (M. Newton, unpublished survey for CCW). This scatter of records suggested that *Colura* had changed its habits, but it still didn't seem that anything dramatic was happening.

Gwent's first *Colura* turned up in 2001, on two ash trunks in mixed woodland near Penyclawdd (S. Bosanquet in Blackstock, 2002). This record conformed to the emerging pattern of scattered colonies of *Colura* in rather humid woodland, but was still regarded as unusual by the BBS recorder (Blackstock, loc. cit.). Tetrad bashing in Carmarthenshire (VC44) produced the first Dyfed record in early 2002. A strong colony, of several hundred tufts, occupied sallows in the unremarkable Afon Pib valley in Brechfa Forest (SN53), a Forestry Commission conifer plantation stretching over 150km² of hill country. Over the next year, I found nine further colonies of *Colura* in Carmarthenshire, between Cwmduad (SN33) in the west and Cwm Twrch (SN64) in the east. Some of these colonies supported just a few tufts, but most had hundreds or even thousands. All were, like the first, on willows in shallow-sided valleys surrounded by planted conifers. Associated species were common epiphytes of humid western woodlands such as Whiskered Veilwort *Metzgeria temperata*, Fairy Beads *Microlejeunea ulicina* and Crisped Pincussion *Ullota crispa*.

By mid 2003, *Colura* had become almost predictable and a few searches of suitable habitat were unsuccessful. This was illustrated by the first Pembrokeshire (VC45) and Cardiganshire (VC46) records; both came from the first suitable willows that I searched, the latter site being spotted from a moving car. Two brief stops during a drive between Pembrokeshire and Monmouthshire in June 2003 produced the second Glamorgan and Monmouthshire records at Cwm Afan, Port Talbot and Cwmcarn Forest Drive, south of Newbridge. Arthur Chater located two more colonies in Cardiganshire, whilst Graham Motley found at least three in Breconshire.

The majority of known colonies of *Colura* in South Wales are in Brechfa Forest, an area with some exceptional bryophyte habitats, at least in a South Wales context. Its humid gorges hold locally abundant Prickly Featherwort *Plagiochila spinulosa* and Rock Veilwort *Metzgeria conjugata*, several colonies of Spotty Featherwort *P. punctata* and single sites for Petty Featherwort *P. exigua*, Autumn Flapwort *Jamesoniella autumnalis*, Lax Notchwort *Hygrobrella laxifolia* and Cut Notchwort *Tritomaria exsecta*. But *Colura* is absent from these situations and, instead, favours willows surrounded by conifers; its other South Wales sites are similarly either in or close to conifer plantations. This contrasts with a generally saxicolous habit in North Wales and Scotland, although *Colura* does also occur quite frequently as an epiphyte in these areas. Willows in deciduous woodland, in carr and on riverbanks are all regularly searched during recording in South Wales and *Colura* has not been found, despite its striking appearance. The association with conifers does, therefore, appear to be genuine.

The combination of an atypical substrate, the small size of the Breconshire and Monmouthshire populations and the lack of records prior to 1985 suggest that *Colura* is a relatively recent arrival in South Wales. It may, then, be colonising sites with suitable conditions.

Various explanations for the apparent liking of *Colura* for conifer plantations have been put forward, the most convincing being that conifer cover protects *Colura* more effectively from both drying sunshine and harmful frosts than deciduous cover (R.G. Woods pers. comm.). Evidence for the former is provided by the Pembrokeshire colony, which occupies willows on the east-facing side of a forestry track, but not those on the drier, west-facing side. It seems likely that willow or ash trees are favoured as they have relatively base-rich bark, although in Brechfa Forest *Colura* has been found on alder, blackthorn and rowan where these grow near willow.

Judging by the number of recent records of other species regarded as humidity-demanders, including Minute Pouncewort *Cololejeunea minutissima*, Wood-rust *Nowellia curvifolia* and Frizzled Pincussion *Ullota phyllantha*, several species of bryophyte are, or have recently been, spreading in lowland Britain. These 3 species are now widespread in Monmouthshire, although none of them is yet common. It appears that *Colura calyptrifolia* is also spreading, but can only colonise localities with particularly suitable conditions. It is unlikely that these new colonies of *Colura* are of much conservation significance, other than as an example of dynamic spread by a rare plant and as demonstration that conifer plantations are beneficial to some species.


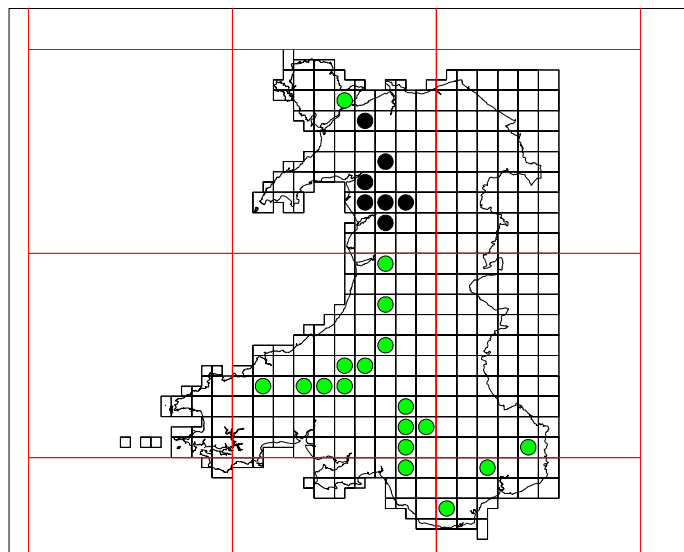
Contact: Sam Bosanquet (BBS Recorder for VC35)  s.bosanquet@ccw.gov.uk

Fig. 1: Distribution of *Colura* in 10km squares in Wales

Black dots are records from humid gorges; green dots are recent records; all but two of them from willow trees in conifer plantations. Targeted searches have not taken place in Clwyd or most of Powys.



References

1. Blackstock, T.H. (2002) - New Vice County records and amendments to the *Census Catalogue*, Hepaticae. *Bull. Brit. Bryol. Soc.* **79**: 40
2. Corley, M.F.V. (1987) - New Vice County records and amendments to the *Census Catalogue*, Hepaticae. *Bull. Brit. Bryol. Soc.* **50**: 20
3. Long, D. (1999) - New Vice County records and amendments to the *Census Catalogue*, Hepaticae. *Bull. Brit. Bryol. Soc.* **72**: 95
4. Perry, A.R. (1986) - The paper-reading meeting, 1985, Cardiff. *Bull. Brit. Bryol. Soc.* **47**: 11

9. AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES IN THE GWENT LEVELS

CCW report now available on website: Bratton, J.H. 2002. *Aquatic invertebrates recorded in the Gwent Levels: introduction, checklist and bibliography*. CCW Natural Science Report No. 02/5/2.

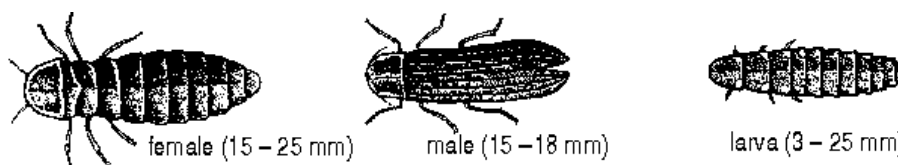
Go to www.ccw.gov.uk/reports then click on "Research" and "Reports".

Anyone who can't download it may be able to obtain a paper copy from John Bratton, Countryside Council for Wales, Maes y Ffynnon, Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2DN

10. GWENT WILDLIFE TRUST GLOW WORM SURVEY 2003

[Steve Rogers]

Glowing Tonight in a Grass Verge Near You? The glow worm is not at all worm-like but is a beetle which can grow up to 25mm long. For centuries it has fascinated people because of its seemingly magical ability to glow in the dark on warm summer evenings. A process known as bioluminescence enables the female to glow about as brightly as an LED indicator on a hi-fi. She glows to attract males for mating and it is this that makes glow worms easy to spot for a few weeks primarily in July and August. Unfortunately, it is thought that this extraordinary insect has, like so much of our once common wildlife, been on the decline since the 1950s. The reasons for this decline are not clear, but levels of artificial lighting have increased significantly since the 1960s and it is known that male glow worms are attracted to artificial light of any colour.



Though they favour chalky or limestone areas, glow worms may be found wherever there are small snails as this is the main food of the larvae. They prefer flower-rich meadows, hedgerows, disused railway lines, churchyards and roadside verges on unlit country lanes, but they are rarely found on intensively farmed

land or in woodland. You can start looking for them as soon as it gets dark. They glow for a few hours at a time, and usually stop glowing soon after mating (don't we all!). If you do see glow worms, don't disturb them and certainly don't take them home as trophies or to 'entertain the kids', no matter how many there are on a site, as their continued existence could be on a knife-edge. But a short look by torchlight will do no harm, and you may even see the smaller, less brightly illuminated, males mating – with up to several on one female! On particularly moonless nights you may also spot larvae. These glow much more faintly, and only intermittently, for a few seconds at a time. Sometimes the larvae help themselves along with their tails which makes them look a bit like caterpillars. You are more likely to see them on vegetation, searching for snails, than in the same areas as the glowing females. Comparatively little is known about the preferred habitat of the larvae, so it is important for the survival of the glow worm to find the sites where the larvae live.

How can you help? With support from the Countryside Council for Wales, Gwent Wildlife Trust is organising a 2003 survey for this threatened species. The aim is to determine the current distribution of glow-worms in Gwent and also to identify their preferred habitats. Participants are asked to count glowing females along a chosen route on three occasions during August. Even if no glow-worms are seen, the results are still valuable as it is important to know which habitats do not support glow-worms. The surveys are ideal for late evening dog walkers, insomniacs, people who have just had a family row and need some fresh air, or people returning from the pub! If you would like to help, contact us for more details and a survey form. However, if you do not have time for the full survey but would still like to help, any reports of glow-worm sightings old or new would be greatly appreciated. Contact the Gwent Wildlife Trust, 16 White Swan Court Monmouth NP25 3NY ☎ 01600 715501

11. ORTHOPTERA: ANNUAL ROUND UP AND CALL FOR RECORDS

[Steve Williams]

Its that time of year again when I make my annual request for grasshopper, cricket and allied insect (earwigs and native cockroaches) records for the vice county of Monmouthshire. There has been steady progress since I last reported with yet more tetrads covered by a small band of recorders. But a lot more surveying is to be done if a credible provisional atlas is to be realised by 2006. In previous articles I've stressed the value of reporting common species. Submitting data for the common earwig and meadow grasshopper is just as important as that of long-winged conehead or great green bush cricket, so please keep the records coming in. Record cards are available from the Biological Records Centre, the relevant codes are RA4 for site based cards or GEN 13 for general cards. These can be ordered direct from the web site at www.brc.ac.uk or through myself, contact details at the end of this article.

As no new species were found in 2002 the county total remains at 16 (see table below), but I believe it's only matter of time before Roesel's bush cricket and long-winged conehead are added to the list. New coverage for last year included a valuable batch of cards from Adrian Hickman containing new tetrads for six species. Colin Titcombe also provided further information for the under recorded Wye Valley and I am thankful to Rob and Linda Nottage and Vaughan Grantham for their contributions to another poorly covered area near the county boundary.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Conservation Status	VC35
Oak bush cricket	<i>Menconema thalassium</i>		✓
Great green bush cricket	<i>Tettigonia viridissima</i>		✓
Wart biter	<i>Decticus verrucivorus</i>	WCA/RDB2	
Dark bush cricket	<i>Pholidoptera griseoptera</i>		✓
Grey bush cricket	<i>Platycleis albopunctata</i>	Nb	
Bog bush cricket	<i>Metrioptera brachytera</i>	Nb	
Roesel's bush cricket	<i>Metrioptera roeselii</i>	Nb	
Long-winged cone-head	<i>Conocephalus discolor</i>	Na	
Short-winged cone-head	<i>Conocephalus dorsalis</i>		✓
Speckled bush cricket	<i>Leptophyes punctatissima</i>		✓
House cricket	<i>Acheta domesticus</i>		✓
Field cricket	<i>Gryllus campestris</i>	WCA/RDB1	
Wood cricket	<i>Nemobius sylvestris</i>	Na	
Scaly cricket	<i>Pseudomogoplistes squamiger</i>	RDB1	
Mole cricket	<i>Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa</i>	WCA/RDB1	
Cepero's ground-hopper	<i>Tetrix ceperoi</i>	Na	
Slender ground-hopper	<i>Tetrix subulata</i>		✓

Common Name	Scientific Name	Conservation Status	VC35
Common ground-hopper	<i>Tetrix undulata</i>		✓
Large marsh grasshopper	<i>Stethophyma grossum</i>	RDB2	
Blue-winged grasshopper	<i>Oedipoda caerulescens</i>		
Jersey grasshopper	<i>Euchorthippus pulvinatus</i>		
Lesser mottled grasshopper	<i>Stenobothrus stigmaticus</i>		
Stripe-winged grasshopper	<i>Stenobothrus lineatus</i>		
Woodland grasshopper	<i>Omocestus rufipes</i>	Nb	
Common green grasshopper	<i>Omocestus viridulus</i>		✓
Field grasshopper	<i>Chorthippus brunneus</i>		✓
Heath grasshopper	<i>Chorthippus vagans</i>	RDB3	
Meadow grasshopper	<i>Chorthippus parallelus</i>		✓
Lesser marsh grasshopper	<i>Chorthippus albomarginatus</i>		✓
Rufous grasshopper	<i>Gomphocerippus rufus</i>	Nb	
Mottled grasshopper	<i>Myrmeleotettix maculatus</i>		✓
Dusky cockroach	<i>Ectobius lapponicus</i>	Nb	
Tawny cockroach	<i>Ectobius pallidus</i>	Nb	
Lesser cockroach	<i>Ectobius panzeri</i>	Nb	
Lesser earwig	<i>Labir minor</i>		✓
Short winged earwig	<i>Apterygida media</i>	Nb	
Common earwig	<i>Forficula auricularia</i>		✓
Lesne's earwig	<i>Forficula lesnei</i>	Nb	✓

Key: ✓ = recorded in VC35 (Monmouthshire); WCA = Wildlife & Countryside Act; Na/b = Notable a/b; RBD1 - 3 = Red Data Book

This season has started well. A mid March record of slender ground hopper from a churchyard in Pontypool has led me to think about compiling early and late dates for orthoptera. The early spring date contrasts with references in some textbooks suggesting that this species does not normally occur before mid May. Any un-seasonal occurrences you might have would be useful additions to an atlas text.

Julian Branscombe's report of four lesser earwig in a moth trap at his home near Pontypool is not only the second county record for this elusive species but illustrates how some species are readily attracted to light. The oak bush cricket is another found near light sources and can often be encountered about now in outhouses and porches. Local moth recorders are in a unique position to make a contribution to our knowledge in this respect.

I have been struck by just how widespread the short winged conehead appears to be. The national atlas fails to reflect its true distribution in south Wales and on current evidence appears to be expanding its range quickly. It's certainly all over the Gwent Levels, around Llandegfedd Reservoir, abundant in suitable habitat in the Usk Valley and commonly encountered on damp grassland around Cwmbran, Caerleon and Newport. As the long winged conehead is superficially similar to the short winged and often found in the same habitat it will come as no surprise to hear of the first long winged record for the county. Please keep looking!

For those who believe that recording orthoptera is all about crawling around on your hands and knees parting tussocks of grass in the hope of catching a glimpse of a grasshopper as it leaps into the distance, think again. During this current warm spell I took a late evening drive from Caerleon to Usk with the primary objective of recording the dark bush cricket along the way. Doing the speed limit with the window wound down was more than enough to detect the distinctive chirp from the confines of the roadside hedgerow and verge. This trip produced seven new tetrad records for this widespread cricket.

Finally, I look forward to your 2003 records; only with your help will this project be a success. Please send them to /contact for more information: Steve Williams, Orthoptera Recorder, 8, Snatchwood Terrace, Torfaen. NP4 7BP. Email: steven71296@aol.com

12. EVENTS

AUGUST

The events in italics have already taken place, however, they give you an idea of what's been happening:

Sunday 3rd August 6.30am – 9.30am An opportunity to see birds in the hand including Reed and Sedge Warblers and other reedbed birds at the Uskmouth reedbeds. Led by Richard Clarke, Goldcliff Ringing Group, at the Gwent levels Wetlands Reserve. For more information please contact ☎ 01633 275567

Friday 8th August 8:00pm – late Bats in the Belfry: go batty in a rural churchyard and discover more about these harmless flying mammals of the night. Places are limited, so please book your free place in advance - contact the Caerphilly tourist information centre ☎ 029 2088 8681. Part of the Caerphilly CBC Hidden Treasures Week, which runs from Saturday 2nd August to Sunday 10th August 2003 with many events aimed at exploring Caerphilly County Borough's magnificent churches and chapels, including history tours and wildlife walks, concerts and plays, a food and craft bazaar, tower tours, ghost stories, banner making workshops and lots, lots more. For a full programme of events and further information contact the Museums and Heritage Service ☎ 01443 864224 or ✉ museums@caerphilly.gov.uk

Sunday 10th August 2:00 – 5:00pm A walk at Uskmouth to discover more about these fascinating creatures. Led by Mike Kilner, South Wales Arachnid Group at the Gwent levels Wetlands Reserve car park. For more information please contact ☎ 01633 275567.

Saturday 16th August 7.45am – 10.00am A morning walk to the Goldcliff Lagoons to see birds on their way south for the winter. Led by Chris Jones, County Bird Recorder, at the Goldcliff Lagoons – meet at the Farmers Arms public house in Goldcliff. For more information please contact ☎ 01633 275567.

Saturday 16th August 10:00am – 4:00pm Spreading Bellflower Survey, Monmouthshire (Plantlife Conservation Activities Programme) Spreading bellflower, a beautiful campanula, is a new addition to Back from the Brink in Wales. Help Plantlife survey this rare and elusive flower. For more information and to book contact: Trevor Dines ☎ 01248 385445 or ✉ trevor.dines@plantlife.org.uk

Sunday 17th August 4:00pm – 6:00pm A walk at Uskmouth to see small mammals that have been live-trapped as well as looking for signs of larger mammals such as otters and foxes. Led by Janice Kinchington, Mammal Society at Uskmouth Reserve. For more information please contact ☎ 01633 275567.

Forthcoming Events:

Wednesday 27th August BATS AND OTHER CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Slindon Estate, Monmouth ☎ 01243 814730

Saturday 30th August 7:30pm – late MOTH RECORDING AND IDENTIFICATION COURSE

Jointly organised by Butterfly Conservation and Caerphilly CBC, at Parc Cwm Darran, Deri, near Bargoed. With Norman Lowe and Martin Anthoney. Advance booking necessary, please contact Nichola Davies (Butterfly Conservation) on ☎ 01792 642972 for more details.

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 9th September 5.15pm – 7.30pm

An evening walk to the Goldcliff Lagoons to see birds on their way south for the winter. Led by Chris Jones, County Bird Recorder at Goldcliff Lagoons – meet at the Farmers Arms PH, in Goldcliff. For more information please contact ☎ 01633 275567.

Saturday 20th & Sunday 21st September 2003 BEACHWATCH 2003: *Beachwatch* is an annual event which takes place on the 3rd weekend of September every year. Thousands of volunteers from all across the UK visit their chosen beach, remove all the litter from it and record what they find. Through these efforts, the Marine Conservation Society can monitor litter on Britain's beaches, raises awareness of the issue of

marine debris, and encourage action to reduce marine pollution at source. Website: <http://www.mcsuk.org/>

OCTOBER

Saturday 11th October 10.30am to 3pm LEAF-MINING MICROMOTHS

Led by David Slade at Gwent Wildlife Trust reserves: Allt-yr-yn, Newport and Springdale Farm, near Usk. Advance booking necessary, contact the Gwent Wildlife Trust on ☎ 01600 715501. Costs £8:00

Sunday 26th October THE NOT SO FRIVOLOUS FUNGI

Once thought to be the work of the devil, fungi have always proved popular with people. Find out more about these fascinating “will-o-the-wisps”. Contact ☎ 01243 814730

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

Sunday 21st December 8:00am - 11:00am REEDBEDS IN WINTER

An early morning walk to see over-wintering ducks on the Uskmouth Reedbeds. Birds of prey such as hen harriers and short-eared owls may also be seen. Led by Tony White, Gwent Ornithological Society at Uskmouth Reedbeds - meet in the reserve car park. For more information contact ☎ 01633 275567