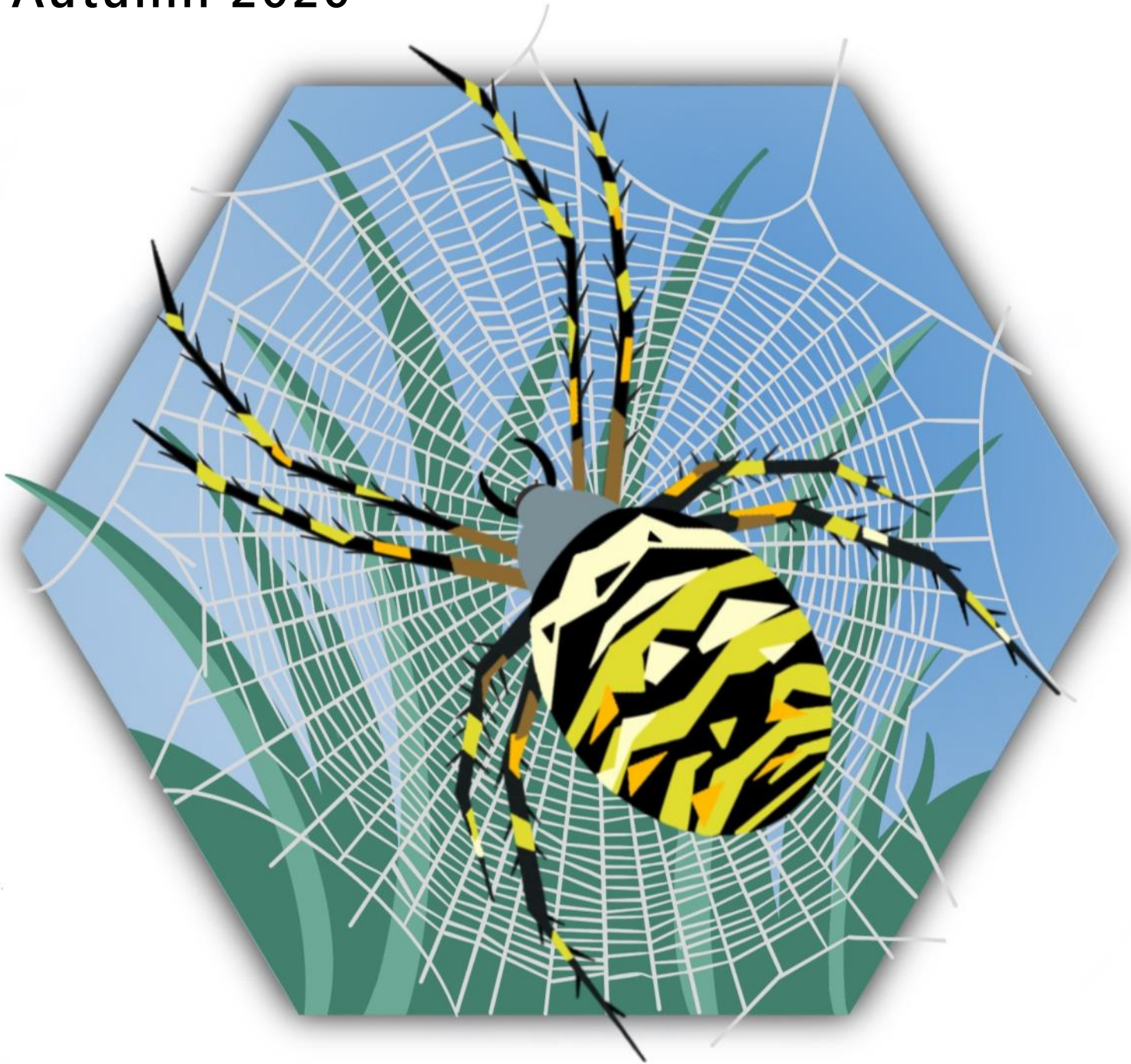


Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

Issue 23

Autumn 2020



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Cover artwork: Wasp Spider by Eve Morgan

Welcome to the 23rd issue of the Gwent - Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter.

Towards the end of such a strange year, it is wonderful to see that the community of naturalists and recorders in south east Wales is still as strong as ever and that people are still finding plenty of ways to safely connect with nature and each other. This issue shows how people have found opportunities this year to record in new places (p6), focus on new taxonomic groups (p20) and look more closely at the wildlife around their homes (p24-25), and how groups and clubs have continued to find ways to work together (p8).

In May, many of us came together to take part in Wales Garden Bioblitz and generated thousands of new records in gardens across Wales (p28). Meanwhile, Illustration students at Coleg Gwent have created a beautiful exhibition of Gwent Levels species (including our cover artwork) despite the challenges this year has brought them (p12).

As the nights draw in, we have plenty of suggestions for home-based wildlife resources and activities to keep you busy (p30) and I hope you are all also able to continue safely spending time enjoying nature, however you can.

Amy Hicks - SEWBRcC (Editor)

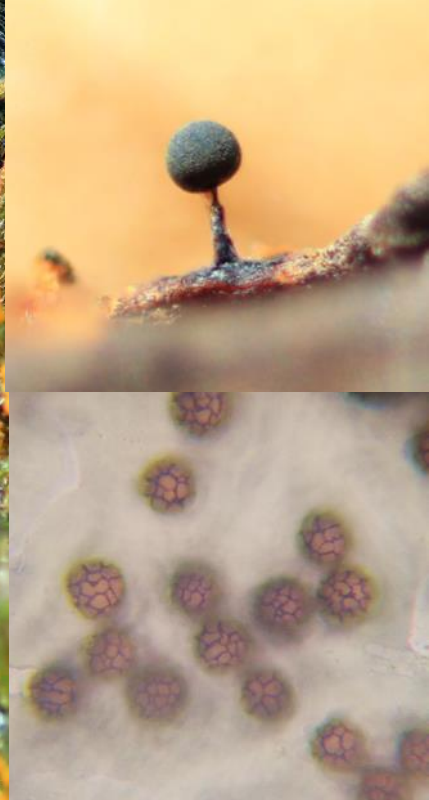
Online Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Forum 2021

We are delighted to confirm the date of the first ever ONLINE Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Forum

Saturday 16th January 2021

Watch this space for a full programme and details of how to join

If you would like to give a talk or a 5min soapbox at the forum please email elaine.wright@sewbrec.org.uk



***Lamproderma clynense* (Ing & K.Lawson) From Discovery to Publication**

Kevin Lawson

I found *Lamproderma clynense* as a bright orange plasmodium [above: left photo] on a fallen trunk in Clyne Wood, Swansea in October 2019. A small portion of the plasmodium was collected and brought home to mature. After a few days sporocarps [above: top right photo] had developed that were typical of the Genus *Lamproderma*, which was quite exciting as I do not come across *Lamproderma* very often. Microscopic examination of the internal structure showed this species to have distinctive (and I would say beautiful) reticulated spores [above: lower right photo].

After many days pouring through various reference works and internet searches, I came to the conclusion that this species had not been found in the UK before though I could not rule out that it could be a non-UK species. I needed to talk to someone about this.

My first attempt was to send an email to Prof. Bruce Ing who I had contacted several years ago with regard to another find (*Trichia erecta*). However, he no longer used the email address that I had. I then contacted Kew who had put me in touch with Bruce Ing previously, but they no longer dealt with Myxomycetes. Next, I contacted the British Mycological Society who suggested that I contact my local fungus group. I sent them an email asking who would be the best person to send the details of my find to and they put me in touch with the local Myxomycete expert. Unfortunately, he was not familiar with the Genus *Lamproderma* so could not help me. Now what...

I asked a friend in work, who is a bit handy with the internet, to try and find Bruce Ing's current email address. Which he did in a matter of minutes. If only I had tried this several weeks ago.

Finally, I could send the details of my find to someone who would take an interest - and he did. After several days Bruce Ing concluded that this was a species new to science and suggested the name *Lamproderma clynense* after the type locality. It was finally published in the July 2020 edition of *Field Mycology* nine months after being discovered. The find is now in the herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh.



Sporocarp of *Lamproderma clynense* showing the capillitium - a thread-like structure supporting the spores.



Taking Sleepiness to a Whole New Level - The strange world of the dormouse

Colin Titcombe

My first meeting with a Dormouse came about during the Spring of 1959 when I found a small, rounded nest in low bushes in the Cwm (the valley of the Cas-trroggy Brook below Earlswood). Curled up inside the nest was a sleeping (torpid) dormouse (just like the one in the photo above). After this initial experience it wasn't until the 1970s, and my days working in the Wentwood Forest, that I would become re-aquainted with these rather mysterious mammals. For basic information on this species (the Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*), and a very entertaining read, I recommend "Dormice" by Pat Morris (Whittlet Books, 2004), for here space dictates that I confine my text to recent experiences and findings.

Of the hazel-nuts produced in any given year a large proportion are usually plundered by Grey Squirrels, both when they are ripe in September, and before the kernels have developed, typically around late July. Dormice then have to take what nuts they can find from early September. Other nut feeders include the tiny weevil *Curculio nucum*.

Since moving into the Wye Valley in 1998 I have become aware of the proximity of Dormice to my own home. In fact, Dormice are active in the trees and bushes just fifty or so metres from my front door. In recent years, however, this activity has become less obvious and a question now appears in respect of their current abundance.



Hazel-nuts opened by (lower left) Dormouse, (top) Woodmouse/ Yellow-necked Mouse, (bottom right) Bank Vole © Colin Titcombe



Exit-holes of Nut-weevils (*Curculio nucum*) in Hazel-nuts © Colin Titcombe

To this end, 2019 being a good year for hazel-nuts, I decided on a more concentrated approach in order to ascertain their present abundance, or lack of it. In order to gauge the 2019 population level I visited a range of known sites, some of which are listed here.

15/09/2019 – Under a Hazel tree in Tintern – 6 whole nuts (all with kernels), but nothing opened by Dormice.

17/09/2019 – 70 Hazel-nuts collected below mature trees on the southern edge of Wentwood Forest at c. ST 406 926. None opened by Dormice.

19/09/2019 – In woodland at Llandogo (c. ST 539 046) I collected 44 Hazel-nuts from amongst the broken shells left by Grey Squirrels. No nuts were found to have been opened by Dormice except for one from a previous year.

20/09/2019 – 17 Hazel-nuts collected from below the Hazel in Tintern but, once again, there were no nuts which had been opened by Dormice.

With this lack of Dormouse activity in mind Chris Hatch and I walked the area from Tintern to Penterry to Fairoak and back to Tintern on the 1st October 2019. On this walk we collected 348 Hazel-nuts, of which 331 contained good kernels, two had been exited by Nut-weevils (*Curculio nucum*) but there was, once again, no sign of any Hazel-nuts opened by Dormice. On the 10th October, I drove down to the Cwm where, on the dead-end road at c. ST 460 934, I found 4 Hazel-nuts which had been opened by Dormice, or a Dormouse. Overall, a very poor result.

One of the more unusual aspects of Dormouse biology is the phenomenon of “summer torpor”. This, and the general sleepiness associated with Dormice, is dealt with by Pat Morris on pages 55-57 of the book mentioned above, but there is an associated consequence of this which I experienced on the 28th June 2020. While walking the Catbrook/White Lye area (c. SO 520 018) along very narrow country lanes, I found a torpid Dormouse curled up in a ball at the roadside. On investigation I found the animal to be unharmed, although in a very vulnerable situation. I moved it to a low wall in the centre of the hedgerow.

On this cool and very windy day the Dormouse had been dislodged from its nest or other place of rest and fallen to the ground. It might be thought that this occurrence would be rather exceptional but, apparently, it is not. Such a situation has been reported to me on three previous occasions. On two of these it was both nest and occupant which had been dislodged but, on the third occasion, the Dormouse itself was blown out of a tree in the lower Wye Valley woodlands, landing on the ground at my informant’s feet. It would appear from this that Dormice are unable to anchor themselves on their nests effectively, which is the only reason I can think of for the “Falling Dormouse Phenomenon”.



Hazel-nuts opened by Woodmouse/ Yellow-necked Mouse under Hazel trees at Parkhouse (c. SO 498 029), October 1996 © Colin Titcombe



Dormouse skeleton found in Kentwood Forest © Colin Titcombe



Molar teeth of Dormouse from skeleton shown above © Colin Titcombe

Post Script

In 2020 I first noted unripe Hazel nuts being taken by Grey Squirrels on 14th July



Lockdown Highlights Part 2

Linda Nottage

During the early weeks of lockdown it was a pleasure to walk beside traffic-free roads. However, a similar opportunity has arisen close to home following the upgrading of 'Five mile lane' which links Barry with Bonvilston. For the most part (and after months of frustrating roadworks) this is a new road, leaving the old sections as quiet country lanes allowing easy access to 1km squares we avoided previously. Circular rambles are possible including a footpath between sections of a solar farm south of Moulton. This proved a flowery haven for butterflies including brown argus, 6-spot burnet moths and *Ichneumon sarcitorius*. Along the lanes we found a wide variety of bugs including the distinctive *Heterotoma planicornis*. Whitethroats, lesser whitethroats and yellowhammers were breeding.

At a slow pace (as befits our advancing years) we spend our time peering into the hedgerows and consequently discover many species previously overlooked. We are grateful for SEWBRc members confirming some identifications.

New-for-us species have provided the greatest thrills and all within East Glamorgan. We found the tiny bug *Pseudoloxops coccineus* at Coed Garnllwyd, giant alder sawfly & eyed ladybird in Hensol Forest, a bee chafer & the hoverfly *Eriozona syrphoides* near Hirwaun, *Leopoldius signatus* (a conipid fly) at Talygarn Lake, *Campiglossa plantaginis* flies mating near Aberthaw, shrill carder bees near the Rhymney coast and a box tree moth in our home trap. All these excitements occurred during bread&butter wildlife recording (still to be submitted to SEWBRc). You never know what you will find!



Pseudoloxops coccineus

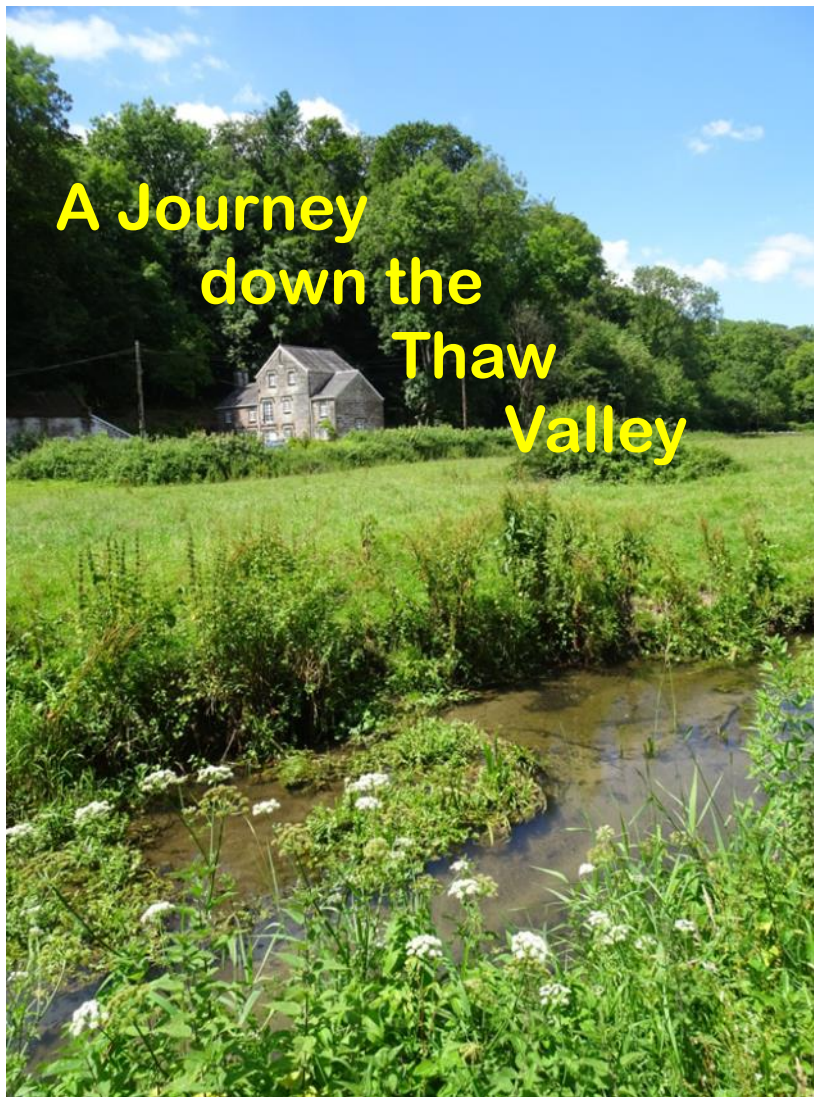


Leopoldius signatus



Shrill carder bees

Photos above clockwise from top left: giant alder sawfly, eyed ladybird, *Campiglossa plantaginis*, *Eriozona syrphoides*, box tree moth, bee chafer. All images © Linda Nottage



With this new, original book you can follow in the footsteps of a local group of explorers and explainers tracing the course of the River Thaw in the vale of Glamorgan.

Geology, scenery, history, settlements and agriculture are all highlighted as well as its special wildlife, with a sprinkling of anecdotes and personal stories.

160 pages, A5 softback, colour photos. £10 (plus £2.50 p+p)
from: rob.nottage@btinternet.com 01446 781423





Glamorgan Bird Club celebrates 30 years

Strinda I Davies - GBC Trustee



Glamorgan Bird Club (GBC) formed in 1989, becoming a registered Charity in 2009. Its geographical area (known by GBC as eastern Glamorgan) comprises the counties of Bridgend, Cardiff, western part of Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan; together with Flat Holm island and Bristol Channel inshore waters adjacent to Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

GBC relies upon members volunteering their time to the study and conservation of bird life and has long-standing links to Local Biodiversity Action Partnerships, Glamorgan Rarities Committee, East Glamorgan BTO and SEWBRcC.

The club has a special relationship with county bird recorders, a position established at the beginning of the 20th century, occupied firstly by Mrs Heathcote, the sole woman in this position for over 100 years.

GBC values are that we respect each other as birders, welcome birders at all levels, actively encouraging the next generation; create opportunities to study and enjoy birds; have the welfare of birds at heart, working with others to protect them and their habitats; recognise the important contribution volunteers make to conservation.

GBC committee has chosen to celebrate the 30th anniversary in a number of ways:

- Highlighting, in a GBC newsletter, changes in the species list of the eastern Glamorgan bird report (EGBR), looking at additions and species no longer found regularly, or at all
- Committing to tree planting at various sites in 2021
- Planning talks on aspects of the 30 years, including by a younger member
- Creating guides of 30 of the best birding sites in the GBC area
- Encouraging take-up for our *under recorded species* initiative

Photos above, clockwise from top left: Ringed Plover - © Jeff Slocombe, Hawfinch - © Frank Sengpiel, Lesser Redpoll - © Richard Smith, Curlew - © Richard Smith



In recent years it became clear from examining EGBR records that certain species are under-recorded, in particular:

- birds still thought to breed in eastern Glamorgan
- S.7 species - those listed as being of principal importance for conservation of biological diversity in Wales, under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- red-listed and amber-listed species
- other more common species where there are obvious gaps in breeding records.

In early 2020 a GBC sub-group looked at gaps in the 2018 EGBR, identifying species to which observers could be encouraged to give more attention. We recommended the most useful way of recording was to use BTO categories of: **Confirmed**, **Probable** and **Possible** breeding. This was at a time of the unprecedented Covid-19 UK wide lockdown, when it was thought easier for GBC members to observe more attentively birds in their local area, during permitted exercise walks.

27 target species were identified: grey partridge, lapwing, grey plover, curlew, herring gull, cuckoo, nightjar, lesser spotted woodpecker, kestrel, chough, marsh tit, willow tit, skylark, wood warbler, grasshopper warbler, song thrush, spotted flycatcher, pied fly-catcher, house sparrow, tree pipit, hawfinch, bullfinch, linnet, lesser redpoll, yellowhammer and reed bunting.

2020 species records will be illuminating, given Wales was in lockdown over the height of the breeding season. Observers may have had the opportunity to become familiar and/or reacquaint themselves with their local patch and track all aspects of breeding behaviour at any regularly visited sites.

In addition, GBC has started producing bird walking/watching site guides, to be available as pdfs, on the 30 "best" sites in the area. We aim to introduce GBC members old and new, who may not be familiar with a site, to birds they can expect to see and when, as well as access conditions and facilities.

Meanwhile conservation efforts continue as best they can under current circumstances, including feeding farmland birds at Ty-yn-y-Caeau farm, Vale of Glamorgan and preparing the next stage of the *Willing for Willow Tits* project, funded by the Welsh Ornithological Society.



Common clubtail © Bob Wilkinson

Rare River Dragon in Danger

Citizen science project reveals the plight of the UK's only Clubtail Dragonfly

Eleanor Colver - British Dragonfly Society

Despite the name, the Common Clubtail (*Gomphus vulgatissimus*) is a rarity, and can only be found on a handful of lowland river systems in England and Wales. Even the most avid naturalists will be lucky to see one as the dragonfly spends most of its life on the river bed as an aquatic larva. Once they transform into an adult the Common Clubtail hides away in woodlands, chasing insects through the tree tops.



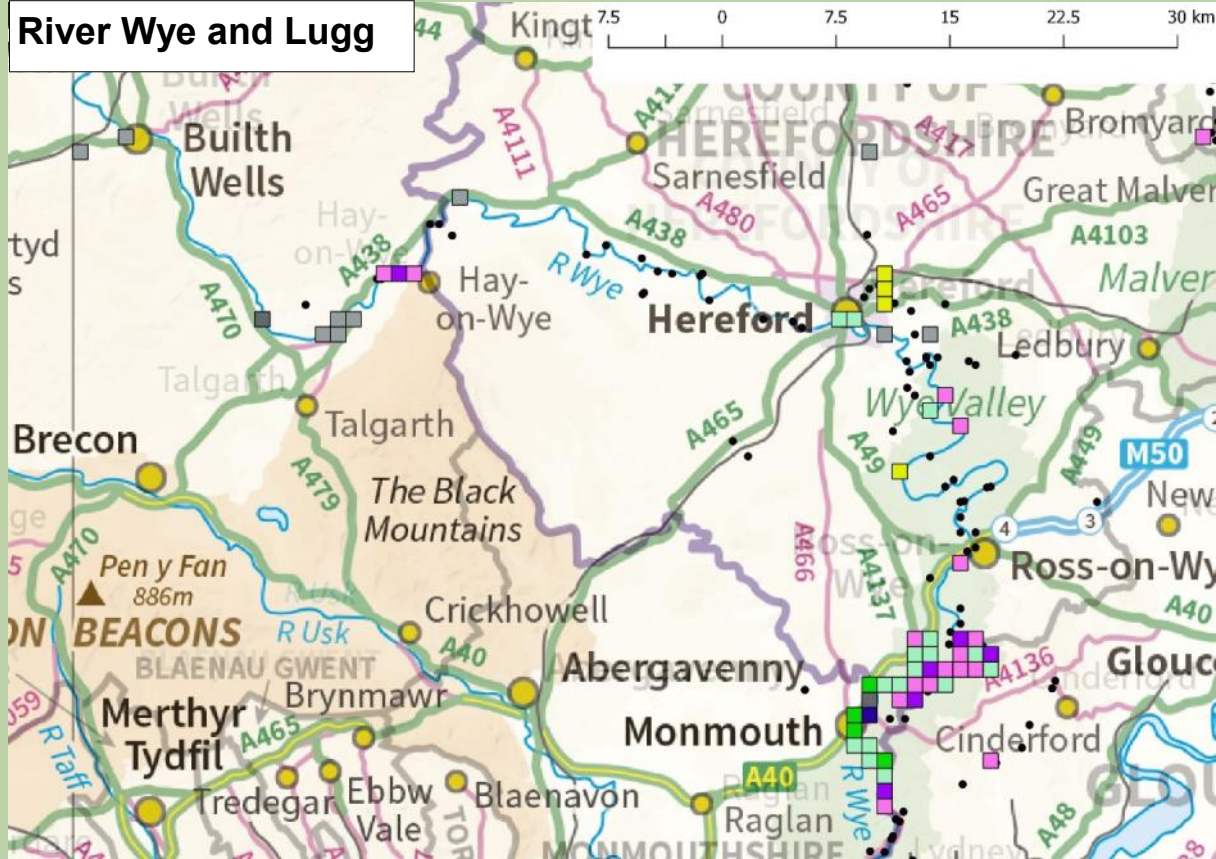
Common clubtail with exuvia © Tom Knight

The British Dragonfly Society (BDS) launched the Clubtail Count project in 2017 with the aim of mapping the location of Clubtail populations in the UK. Volunteers spent sunny days from May through to July each year searching river banks for the dragonfly's exuvia: the shed outer skeleton left behind when a larva turns into an adult (a transformation called 'emergence'). Between them, from 2017-2019, the 180+ volunteers found almost 2000 exuviae.

Findings varied greatly between river systems but overall the River Severn proved to be the winner with Clubtail reported all the way from Tewkesbury, north past Shrewsbury, to where the Severn meets the Welsh border. In Wales the two main hotspots included the River Dee between Chester and Wrexham, and the lower Wye, around Monmouth.

Unfortunately, the report was not all good news; despite once being widely distributed on the lower reaches of the River Avon, the river system only produced one Clubtail sighting during the three years of the project.

River Wye and Lugg



Common Clubtail could also not be found within its historic distribution on the River Tiefi near Cardigan.

The British Dragonfly Society is concerned the decline in Common Clubtail could be an indication of systemic underlying health issues within many of the species' river ecosystems.

The larvae of Common Clubtail are very sensitive to changes in water quality such as increases in pollution levels and the amount of sediment being deposited. As a predator, a decline in their populations can also reflect problems further down the food chain. In addition, insensitive river management activities, such as the extensive dredging of river beds, or disturbance to riverbanks during the emergence period can have a catastrophic impact on the amount of larvae that survive to adulthood.

The BDS is working with land management agencies and wildlife charities to raise awareness for the Common Clubtail and its conservation.

If you would like to learn more about the Clubtail and read the full report visit the BDS website: <https://british-dragonflies.org.uk/recording/clubtail-count/>

Map Key

Monad gains and losses

● **Historic site:** sites with historic (pre 2017) Clubtail records.

Clubtail absent: monads negative for Clubtail during the Clubtail Count and no historic (pre 2017) Clubtail records.

■ Monad surveyed all 3 years

■ Monad surveyed in 2 years

■ Monad surveyed in 1 year

Site gain: sites with no historic (pre 2017) Clubtail records but Clubtail were present during Clubtail Count surveys.

■ Clubtail present in all 3 years

■ Clubtail present in 2 years

■ Clubtail present in 1 year

Site loss: sites with historic (pre 2017) records, but Clubtail were absent during Clubtail Count surveys.

■ Monad surveyed all 3 years

■ Monad surveyed in 2 years

■ Monad surveyed in 1 year

Continued presence: sites with historic (pre 2017) Clubtail records and Clubtail were present during Clubtail Count surveys.

■ Clubtail present in all 3 years

■ Clubtail present in 2 years

■ Clubtail present in 1 year



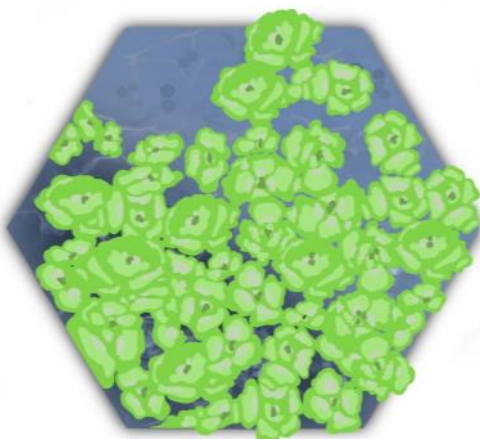
Students Artwork Illustrates Gwent Levels Wildlife

Gavin Jones - Community Engagement Officer, Living Levels Landscape Partnership

The Living Levels Landscape Partnership has been delivering 'Wild Watch' alongside SEWBRc, with the aim of engaging people in recording wildlife on the Gwent Levels through training, surveying and concentrating on a key species of bird, mammal, plant and fungi every month. Our Heritage Lottery funded programme has a strong relationship with Coleg Gwent, engaging with many of their students across courses as diverse as Photography, Construction and even the Performing Arts. One such course is the Foundation Degree in Illustration and this year the students created amazing illustrations depicting our key 12 Wild Watch species for 2020.

Originally, their work was to be displayed at the Orangery at Tredegar House, followed by a selection of work exhibited across the paths criss-crossing Newport Wetlands. Their brief included taking into consideration the challenging outdoor surroundings and therefore thinking of materials and mounting techniques for an 'outside gallery'. With the onset of lockdown and restrictions, the students worked incredibly hard to create their artwork under very difficult circumstances.

Artwork on this page (Clockwise from bottom right): Bullfinch by John Phillips, Water Fern by Eve Morgan, Dark Bush Cricket by Kyrie Cox, Glow worm by Sarah Dixon, Dark Bush Cricket and Water Shrew by Amy Moody.



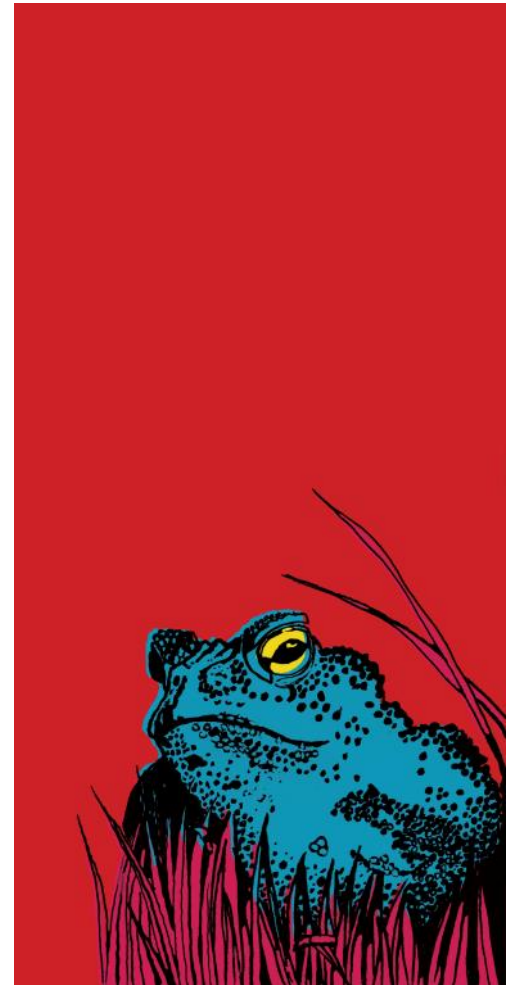
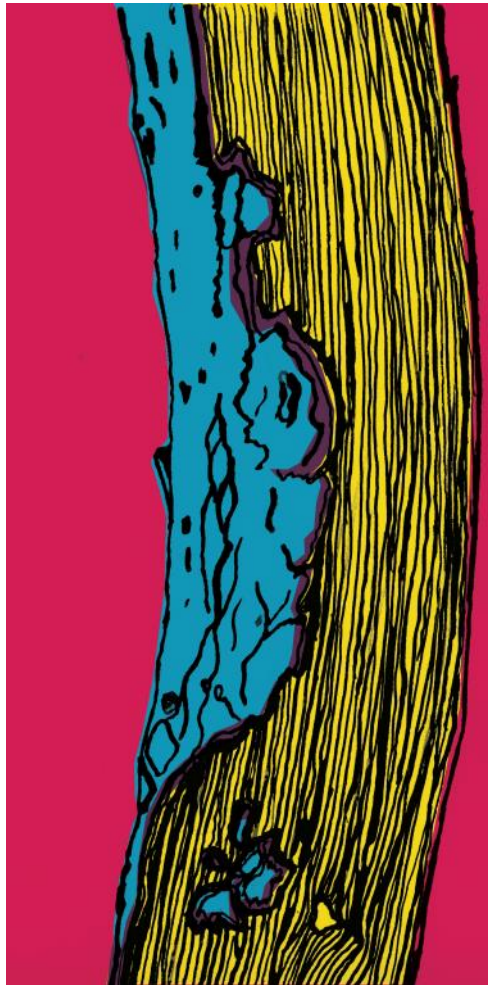


The results are incredible, featuring renditions from glow worms to slow worms, water ferns to water shrews, not only using traditional techniques like pencil sketching, watercolours and spray painting but also digital techniques.

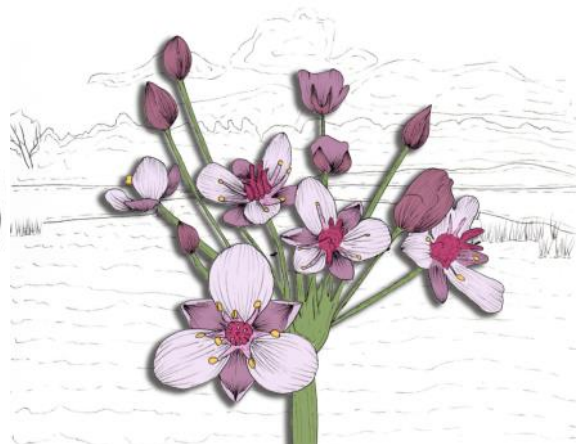
We were eventually able to move the exhibition online to the Living Levels website, along with images created by students from the Foundation Degree in Photography. With daily promotion through October on our social media platforms, we have arguably given them wider exposure than we ever could have hoped for and in turn, raised awareness of the amazing wildlife of the Gwent Levels.

The online exhibition can be found at:
<https://www.livinglevels.org.uk/coleg-gwent-exhibition>

Foundation Degree in Illustration:
<https://www.coleggwent.ac.uk/course/foundation-degree-illustration?uioid=436982>



Artwork on this page (Clockwise from top left): Common Toad, Water Fern and Slow Worm by Emily Nicholls, Cobalt Crust and Common Toad by Angelina Barnett, Flowering rush, Tawny Owl and Ivy Bee by Alisha Davies.





Nine years of botanical recording in Llantrisant

David Barden

One of the reasons we chose to make our home in Llantrisant when we moved to Wales in April 2011 was the proximity to Llantrisant Common and Pastures SSSI – over 100 hectares of undulating rhôs pasture, immediately north of the old town. Compared to the often rather sparse botanising to be had in East Anglia where I lived previously, this was a wildlife wonderland on my doorstep. So straight after unloading our belongings from the removals van, we went out onto the Common to enjoy the spring sunshine – and it seems like I've scarcely been back inside since!

Plants have always been my main interest, and at first, I was happy just scribbling down my finds in my little red Silvine notebooks. But in about 2015, I thought that it would be good to try and 'make something' of my observations. So I started to be comprehensive as regards species coverage, and also record populations and locations in more detail, mostly at 10 m resolution or better. The result is that I've now made nearly 11,800 individual plant records from the two sites. But what *use* is recording on one site in such eye-watering detail?

Firstly, deciding to be comprehensive has forced me to pay attention to everything – and so **I've improved my id skills**. Ferns I was already comfortable with, but I was forced to tackle Sedges (*Carex*), Willows (*Salix*) and Willow-herbs (*Epilobium*), amongst others. It's an ongoing process though – Bents (*Agrostis*) and Meadow Grasses (*Poa*) still give me far too much trouble, while Dandelions (*Taraxacum*) and Brambles (*Rubus*) will ... er ... have to wait for another day! I also like recording plant variations – so included in my notes are things like pink-flowered Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), white-flowered Ragged Robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*), and a spectrum of variation in Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) that even the BSBI referee struggled to make sense of.



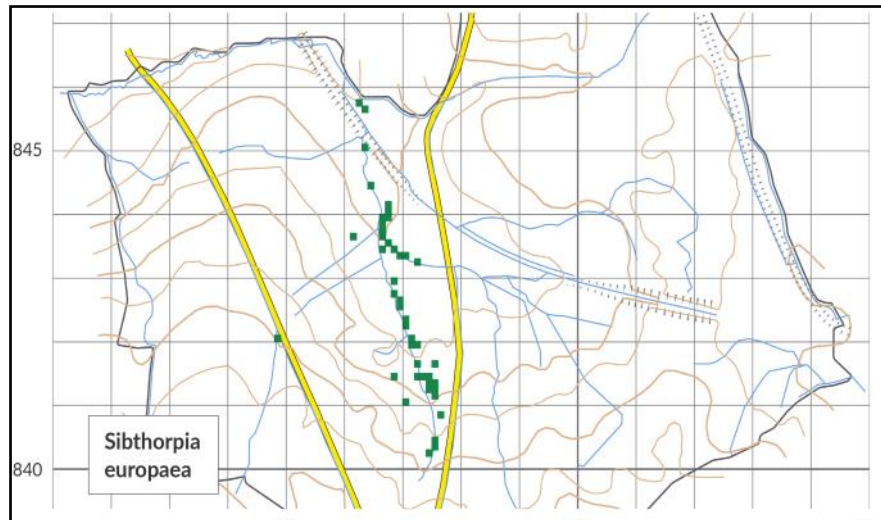
Some of the highlights of Llantrisant Common and Y Gweira. Left to right: Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*), Marsh Cinquefoil (*Comarum palustre*), and Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*) © David Barden.

I've gained a sense of the habitat preferences of different species, and the subtle differences between them. Cornish Moneywort (*Sibthorpia europaea*) thrives on wet, moderately shaded mud that is occasionally trampled by cattle; Ivy-leaved Bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*) prefers similarly wet places that are a little more open and less disturbed; and Wild Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) nearly always grows on tussocks of mosses (usually Sphagnum).

Over 70% of my records have been at 10 m resolution or better, meaning that I've been able to generate some quite detailed distribution maps. As well as throwing light on why plants are found where they are, this provides an extended 'baseline' that will hopefully enable changes in distribution to be assessed. In addition, 'chasing' up old records can be a rewarding exercise in its own right, so long as you have a well-localised record to work from. The detail I've provided should make this much easier for future recorders!

I've made some surprising discoveries, from the only extant site in Britain for a triple-hybrid willowherb (*Epilobium obscurum* × *palustre* × *parviflorum*), to a 50-strong population of Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*) that lay hidden until some scrub was cleared last year. Thanks to the Mary Gillham Archive Project, I was able to chase-up – and re-find – a record of the vice-county rarity White Sedge (*Carex canescens*), still growing where she saw it in 1973.

And as for the notion to 'make something' of my observations... well, it's ended up being a 192-page book! The reason for being so long is that I've aimed to produce something that is interesting at several levels – so there's a short history of the two sites, discussion of the landscape, studies of individual habitats, plant identification tips, as well as detailed plant accounts and distribution maps... and lots of photos too.



Because of my obsession with GPS, I've been able to plot distributions of all the plants at a 100 m level, and some of the rarer species at 10 m. This map shows how Cornish Moneywort (*Sibthorpia europaea*) sticks closely to the line of the stream running down across the centre of Llantrisant Common.

The plants

Water pepper, Common Water-nettle, Watercress, American Milkweed and sometimes Dogbane often flower in abundance.

Heavily trampled ground (H) can be found near Northgate and along the main path, and here the ground is mostly nutrient-enriched and/or cleared up by livestock to the point that very few characteristic species survive.

Watercress have already been discussed (see page 23–26), but typically take on the characters of the adjacent grassland, with the addition of plants such as Brodiaea and Fox's Watercress in flowing water, or reeds and frog plants where the water laccosera above remains. Some such as Horned and Lesser Scum. Ferns can often be found on the steep banks of the stream. Mostly spots dominated by bracken are often home to large earwigs, while in some places by-leaved Bellflower and Cornish Moneywort can be seen.

Rock and stone – in the form of walls, terraced edges and the limestone rocks – are a very localized but significant habitat for some ferns and other species of dry, open places.

A high degree of trampling on the main paths reduces the ground from the lower level to a more open and less trampled area, as here on the approach to White Bridge.

Wet and shaded by overhanging vegetation, the watercress on Llantrisant Common can have a large number of species in a small and varying number of species in the water in the shade of dry grassland on the banks above.

The plants

Photographic guide to wetland (Swampy) habitat species

When growing in 'wetland' areas, the three common white and yellowish Common and Cornish are easy enough to distinguish by examining the shape and position of the lower lip of the flower (lobes). Large Spotted Orchid (2) has broad, dark purple lobes of the labellum, a small central lobe, and prominent purple dots on a pale pink background. Common Twisted Orchid (3) has three more-or-less lobes and a smaller top of purple lobes on a pink background. Southern Marsh Orchid (4) has a distinct dark purple or purple, very slender, and more-or-less upright, pale yellow stem.

Two hybrids have also been found, and these usually combine the features of their parents, along with hybrid vigor. The hybrid Common Field Orchid and Common Twisted (5) – 50% with dark pink and 50% with the color and pattern of the Southern Marsh (6) – has a distinct dark purple and pink background. The hybrid Common Field Orchid and Common Twisted (7) – 50% with common and 50% with the hybrid Southern Marsh (8) – has a distinct dark purple and pink background.

The plants

Heath Mosses (see page 44) are a variety of other mosses, including those from heath (1) the regular heath moss, which is very pale, and also the mosses (2) which are the color of heath, and pale (3) the rest of the heath. 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Establishment of Reptile Presence in the Rhondda Valleys



Matthew Hopes

The Rhondda Valleys are internationally famous for their industrial past, but what is less well known is that the area is a great place for wildlife, including reptiles. For various reasons including a lack of funding and little investment, little is known about the Rhondda's reptile populations. Over the years, scattered observational data have been collected by members of the public during chance encounters, or by the occasional survey from groups such as the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, as well as from the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) during mitigation surveys for construction or development. As such, there has never been an in-depth scientific project investigating reptile presence in the Rhondda.



Photo 1: An adult common lizard (*Z. vivipara*), photographed on site © Matthew Hopes

There are 4 native reptile species in south Wales: the common/viviparous lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, the slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, the grass snake *Natrix helvetica* and the adder *Vipera berus*, and all are in decline. The threats to these species are variable but range from habitat loss to persecution. In such times, understanding a species' current distribution is essential to knowing its conservation status regionally, and to inform conservation strategies.

The aim of this study was to establish if, and which, reptile species were present and to investigate factors that could influence their presence. During the study, historical presence records were looked at, and presence/absence reptile surveys were carried out to get the modern picture. These surveys were conducted across 6 sites around the Rhondda area.

Sites were selected based on several factors, most importantly habitat, and the extensiveness of the habitat, safety of the surveyor and the likelihood of disturbance by passing people. All the sites were on land owned by RCTCBC (who had agreed to allowing the surveys on the selected sites). Several of the sites were also recognised areas of importance for nature conservation under the Biodiversity Action Plan. The surveys were a combination of 2 commonly used methods in reptile surveys; visually searching for any basking reptiles, as well as using artificial refugia, also known as artificial cover objects. These refugia were placed in strategic locations across the sites where they would attract reptiles. After leaving them for several weeks to allow the animals to become aware of them, as well as for nature to remove the artificial scent the refugia had when new, the surveys began. In total, each site was surveyed 30 times across the surveying periods (August-October 2019 and February-August 2020). When encountered, reptiles were recorded, along with their sex and age class when possible, as well as photographed.

The main results established that all 4 reptile species known to occur in south Wales are present in the Rhondda Area. By far the most abundant species were the common lizard (photo 1) and slow-worm (photo 2 - see next page), accounting for 57% and 42% of all the reptiles encountered, respectively. Lizards were encountered across all 6 sites, which showed that they occur in both valleys, in different habitats and on north, south and an east-facing site.

The snake species were encountered much less frequently, adders (photo 3) being encountered on 14 occasions, while the grass snake was only encountered once, compared to common lizards (791) and slow-worms (558). These numbers are not a representation of population size but the number of occasions each species was encountered. Adders were only encountered on 1 site, as was the grass snake. In the case of lizards and adders, both sexes were encountered, as well as juvenile specimens (except the adder). In several cases, melanistic common lizards were also found.

The study also found that, as is known from wider literature, reptile numbers detected in surveys change through the course of the year and from season to season. The surveys found that numbers peaked at 3 different points in the surveying period. The peaks were in August 2019, April 2020, and June-July 2020. Each of these peaks can be explained by reptile ecology and the behaviour they express during the times of the peaks. The first peak can be explained by the fact that August is known to be when lizards and adders give birth, so would be using refugia more frequently for shelter and to maintain their body temperatures to the levels needed for embryonic development. The second peak can be put down to the fact that it occurred in the middle of the reptile breeding season (March-May), and the final peak to the fact that June-July is when the viviparous species are pregnant and so would be using the refugia more, as was stated above.

There was, however, a drop in numbers encountered in May. This was likely due to the exceptionally dry conditions at the time. These conditions likely had several effects, including allowing the reptiles to warm up quickly, reducing detectability, as well as the very dry conditions reducing humidity and causing slow-worms in particular to take shelter. The single grass snake was encountered in July 2020, so could have been a female looking for an egg laying site.

This study enhances the understanding of reptile populations in the Rhondda and could help inform future conservation efforts and management programs. The study was done as part of a Professional Training Year as part of my degree at Cardiff University.

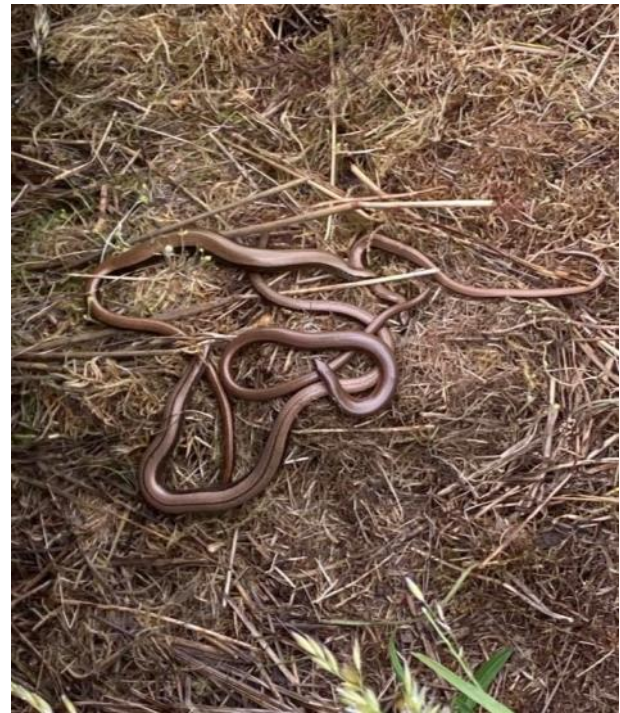


Photo 2: A group of adult female slow-worms (*A. fragilis*), photographed on site © Matthew Hopes



Photo 3: An adult male adder (*V. berus*), photographed on site © Matthew Hopes

Acknowledgements

Dr Rhys Jones, Cardiff University (Project Supervisor)

Richard Wistow, RCT Council Ecologist (Site Access and Selection Support)

Introducing the Neath-Port Talbot B-Lines Project!

Emily Shaw - Buglife Cymru

Buglife Cymru has been awarded funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver an exciting new B-Lines project in Neath Port-Talbot (NPT). The project is part of the wider B-Lines initiative that aims to develop a UK-wide network of wildflower-rich areas to address the decline in insect pollinators such as bees, wasps, butterflies, moths and hoverflies. The project will create a network of B-Lines linking wildflower-rich habitats across NPT, from Jersey Marine to Port Talbot and from Baglan to Neath.

The project is being delivered across a range of habitats to connect the scattered fragments of our wildflower grasslands, brownfield sites, woodlands, coast and heathlands to provide forage, nesting and overwintering habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. B-Lines will be able to link wildlife sites and residential areas together providing opportunities for people to experience nature close to hand.



Shrill Carder Bee © Liam Olds

Working in partnership

Buglife Cymru will be working in partnership with Neath Port Talbot Council, Swansea Bay University Health Board, housing associations, Swansea University, Bumblebee Conservation Trust and the Woodland Trust to restore, enhance and create habitat for pollinators across Neath Port Talbot, benefitting both pollinators, and the people that live, work and visit the area.

A boost for rare bees

Neath Port Talbot is home to one of the rarest bees in the UK – the Shril carder bee (*Bombus sylvarum*). Project partners Bumblebee Conservation Trust will be delivering 'BeeWalk' training and pollinator workshops to help volunteers identify and record bumblebees in the area and hopefully we'll encounter this rare bee!

Working with communities

The project will also work with communities by supporting the involvement of local groups, schools and residents, in the creation of these wildflower areas. A series of recording workshops and events will help to raise awareness of pollinating insects and the management of greenspaces for wildlife and there will be plenty of volunteering opportunities to get involved with.

Habitats under threat

In Wales, pollinating insects and the wildflower habitats they depend upon have drastically declined. Since the 1930s we have lost 97% of the UK's semi-natural grasslands due to changes in land-use, new farming practices and urbanisation. Fragmentation of habitats leaves populations of pollinators and other insects marooned and unable to move in response to environmental change, such as climate change. Movement across the landscape is crucial for pollinators to be able to find food, shelter, nest and over-winter. We need habitats that are bigger, better and more joined up!

Get involved

For more information on Neath Port Talbot's B-Lines project and how you can get involved in our training and volunteering opportunities, contact Wales Conservation Officer: emily.shaw@buglife.org.uk.

To explore Wales' B-Lines Network, please visit: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-wales/>. If you have created your own pollinator 'hotspot' or know of an existing wildflower area, you can add them to our Wales B-Lines Map!





Photos © Neville Davies

An exciting find - The nationally rare Hazel Gloves fungus

Neville Davies

Step back with me to April 2019. I was visiting a woodland in the Caerphilly Borough that my late father took me to from the age of seven. This particular woodland is a mix of Beech, Oak, Ash and Birch with a good understorey which includes Hazel. In the spring it is a sea of white from the Wild Ramsons, but by autumn the only colour is from the berries of the last of the Wild Arum or Black Bryony. In spring, the ground comes alive with Dog's Mercury, Wood Sorrel, Hedge Woundwort, Primrose and other glorious flowers. Orchids in the area have been good, and in this woodland and the surrounding area I have recorded Common Spotted, Early, Twayblade, Broad-leaved Hellebore, Marsh Hellebore, Bird's Nest and Heath Spotted Orchids. It really is a magical place for me and one I try to visit at least once a week.

By autumn, most of the plants have gone over, but the area is also good for fungi and in the last two years I have had some good lifers here including Giant Funnel and the rare Tiered Tooth fungus. But one particular April morning was to give me my rarest find to date and a lifer too. It was towards the end of my walk and I decided to cross down from the little woodland path and into the area where I had been watching ninety eight Early Purple Orchids growing. As I scaled a steep slope down into the leaf litter, I saw what I thought was some Curtain Crust growing on a Hazel branch. I glanced at it from about ten feet away and continued walking. But a nagging doubt came into my head, telling me to take a closer look. I was so glad that I did, and as I approached, I could not believe my eyes. I was staring at the very rare Hazel Gloves fungus (*Hypocreopsis rhododendri*). Excitement resonated through my body, to say I was overjoyed was an understatement. Only a week or so earlier a tweet had gone out from Scotland showing this rare fungus that a lucky observer had found, and I remember thinking then 'wow that would be an awesome find'.

They are indeed a rare fungus, and in Britain it occurs only on old Hazel trees, often in ancient coppice woodland. The 'Hazel' part of the name refers to the tree species upon which this fungus is found in Britain and Europe, and not to the nut-coloured fingers themselves. The genus name *Hypocreopsis* comes from *hypo-* meaning under and *-creopsis* which may imply 'similar to snakes' - and if so it is probably a reference to the contorted fingers of the stromata of Hazel Gloves. These striking fungi vary in colour from pale orange through to tan and to a very deep orange. Stromata can be up to 20cm across, with individual fingers typically 1 to 2cm across and up to 10cm long. When mature, the central area of a stroma becomes brown. This species is believed to be parasitic on Glue Crust fungus but it is not always possible to see the host fungus which may be covered by Hazel Gloves and by mosses, and I certainly couldn't see anything else associated with this fungus. These long-lasting fruit bodies are usually at their best from August to the end of December in Britain and Ireland, but old blackening fruit bodies are often in evidence right through to the following summer, when new Hazel Gloves begin to appear.

I put the picture out on Twitter and had close to 500 responses and likes which was very nice. Recently, I was walking through the same woodland and taking the old track through the woods well away from the main path used by walkers and cyclists. I had just photographed some Common Bonnet fungi when ahead of me on a Hazel branch about 100yds from the previous find site, there it was again - Hazel Gloves fungus. I couldn't believe my luck, and this specimen was four times the size of my previous find. I wasn't expecting to see this species again and once again my excitement hit overdrive. It just goes to show that dedication and hard work sometimes pays off. Good luck and keep your eyes open.

[@ecology_cymru](https://twitter.com/ecology_cymru) wildmajorca@gmail.com



Smooth Pea-Gall *Diplolepis eglanteriae* on wild rose, July 1984 © Colin Titcombe



Bedeguar Gall caused by *Diplolepis rosae* on wild rose © Colin Titcombe



Gall on stem of creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) caused by Dipterid *Urophora cardui*. © Colin Titcombe

Galls in Gwent 2020

Colin Titcombe

On the 14th June while searching the Gwent bank of the river Wye for signs of Club-tail Dragonfly, I noticed a mass of gall-swelling on plants of Hemlock Water-Dropwort. These, as I later discovered, were caused by a fungus – *Protomyces macrosporus*, a species I had not been aware of before.

Galls, and the various gall-causers, form a highly complex study area about which we have to learn so much. Personally I am fascinated by them, but know so little. My first book about galls was that by Arnold Darlington in the Blandford series (The Pocket Encyclopedia of Plant Galls, Arnold Darlington, Blandford Press Ltd, 1968). More recently I acquired a book by Margaret Redfern (see sources used at the end of this text). Consulting this combination of titles it soon becomes clear that these authorities don't always agree when it comes to what is and what is not a gall, and also that even the leading experts in this field have much to learn after a few years of study. With this in mind I am unable to contribute any factual information here, simply a list of gall types found during the period June – August in 2020, with dates of discovery, sites where found, the authorities used in identification in each case (including one by SEWBRc – *Trioza centianthi* on Red Valerian), plus occasional comments. I also include a range of photographs of galls found over previous years.

Galls noted in Gwent during June, July and August 2020

In the following list I use abbreviations in order to recognise relevant authors in respect of species identification – A.D. (Arnold Darlington), R&S (Redfern and Shirley).

14th June: *Protomyces macrosporus* on *Oenanthe crocata*, Bank of River Wye at Llandogo (R&S).

15th June: *Chirosia betuleti* on Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*) in Cuckoo Wood, Llandogo (A.D. and R&S).

15th June: *Contarinia scrophulariae* on Common Figwort (*Scrophularia nodosa*) in Cuckoo Wood, Llandogo (A.D. and R&S).

15th June: *Taxomyia taxi* on Yew foliage, Cuckoo Wood Llandogo (A.D. and R&S).

16th June: *Eriophyes laevis* on Alder along the Cleddon Brook, Llandogo (R&S).

16th June: *Eriophyes inangulis* on Alder leaves along the Cleddon Brook, Llandogo (R&S).

16th June: *Dasineura ulmaria* on the leaves of Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) along Wye riverside at Llandogo (R&S).

16th June: *Patchiella reaumuri* on Small-leaved Lime in woods below Bigsnap, Llandogo (R&S).

16th June: *Chirosia grassicauda* on Bracken frond, Cuckoo Wood, Llandogo (R&S).

17th June: Cola-nut Gall (*Andricus lignicola*) on oak, Cuckoo Wood – Cleddon (R&S).

17th June: *Andricus quadrilineatus* on oak in the Cleddon woodlands (A.D. and R&S).

17th June: Gall-midge (*Hartigiola annulipes*) pouch-gall on Beech leaf in the Cleddon Hall area (A.D. and R&S).

22nd June: "Bean Galls" of the saw-fly *Pontania Proxima* on Crack Willow, River Wye bank at Llandogo (A.D. and R&S).

23rd June: Common Spangle-galls caused by *Neuroterus quercus baccarum* on oak leaf in the Cleddon – Pen-y-fan aread (A.D. and R&S).

25th June: Hazel bud-gall caused by mites – Acari: Eriophyoidea *Phytopus avellanae*, Cleddon (R&S)

25th June: Eriophyid mite galls *Eriophyes macrorhynchus aceribus* on Sycamore leaves along track from Whitestone car-park to Cleddon (A.D.).

28th June: Oak cynipid galls *Cynips divisa* on under-side of oak leaves in the Cleddon Bog area (A.D. and R&S).

28th June: Oak-apple Gall caused by *Biorhiza pallida* from a previous year, in the Whitelye area (A.D. and R&S).



An oak "infested" with Oak-apple Galls (*Biorhiza pallida*) on "Llewellyns Bridge", Bank of the River Wye above Chepstow, June 1984 © Colin Titcombe



Oak-apple Gall Caused by Cynipid *Biorhiza pallida* – Upper Rodge Wood, Caerwent, May 1978 © Colin Titcombe



Oak Marble Galls caused by the Cynipid *Andricus kollari*, Wentwood Forest © Colin Titcombe



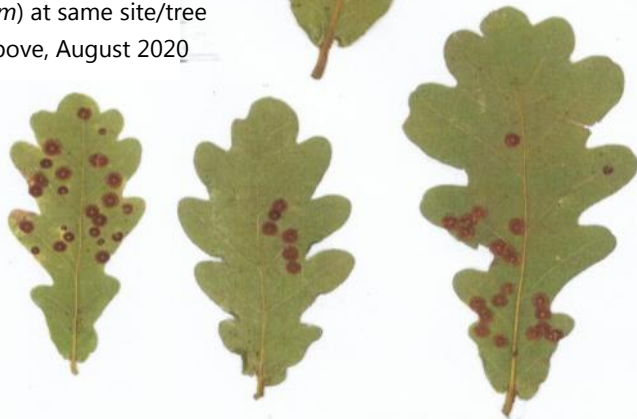
Knopper Gall (*Andricus quercus-calicis*) on acorn cup of Pedunculate Oak, Upper Rodge Wood, Caerwent, August 1978 © Colin Titcombe



Silk Button Galls
(*Neuroterus numismalis*)
on under-leaves of
Quercus robur. Near
Tintern Station in August
2020



Common Spangle Galls
(*Neurterus quercusbac-*
carum) at same site/tree
as above, August 2020



28th June: Rust fungus gall *Melampsora caprearum* on Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) leaves in the Catbrook – Whitelye area (A.D. and R&S).

28th June: Cupped Spangle-galls (*Neuroterus tricolor*) on underside of Pedunculate Oak leaf, Cuckoo Wood, Llandogo (A.D. and R&S).

2nd July: Eriophyid mite galls on Field Maple leaf caused by *Aceria macrochelus*, Llandogo (R&S).

2nd July: Reddish galls on leaves of *Centranthus ruber* and caused by the Homopteran *Tri-oza centranthi*. Common in Llandogo village (SEWBReC).

7th July: Bedeguar on wild rose in the Nedern Valley and caused by the hymenopteran gall-wasp *Diplolepis rosae* (A.D. and R&S).

7th July: Rose pea-galls caused by hymonopteran gall-wasp *Diplolepis eglanteriae* on wild rose leaves in the Neddern Valley (A.D. and R&S).

9th August: Reed-stem gall caused by Dipterid (Chloropidae) *Lipara lucens* in Common Reed, Black Rock – St. Pierre Pill (A.D. and R&S). This gall is generally referred to as a Cigar-gall.

10th August: Stem-swelling gall on creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) caused by Dipterid (Tephritidae) *Urophora cardui*. This is named by Arnold Darlington as the Fruit-fly *Euribia cardui*. Found on Wye riverside meadow near Tintern Station (A.D. and R&S).

10th August: Silk-button Galls caused by *Neuroterus numismalis* on underside of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) leaves. Riverside meadows near Tintern Station (A.D. and R&S).

18th August: "Cabbage Galls" on terminal leaves of Hawthorn caused by *Dasyneura crataegi*. Sea-wall below Redwick (A.D.).



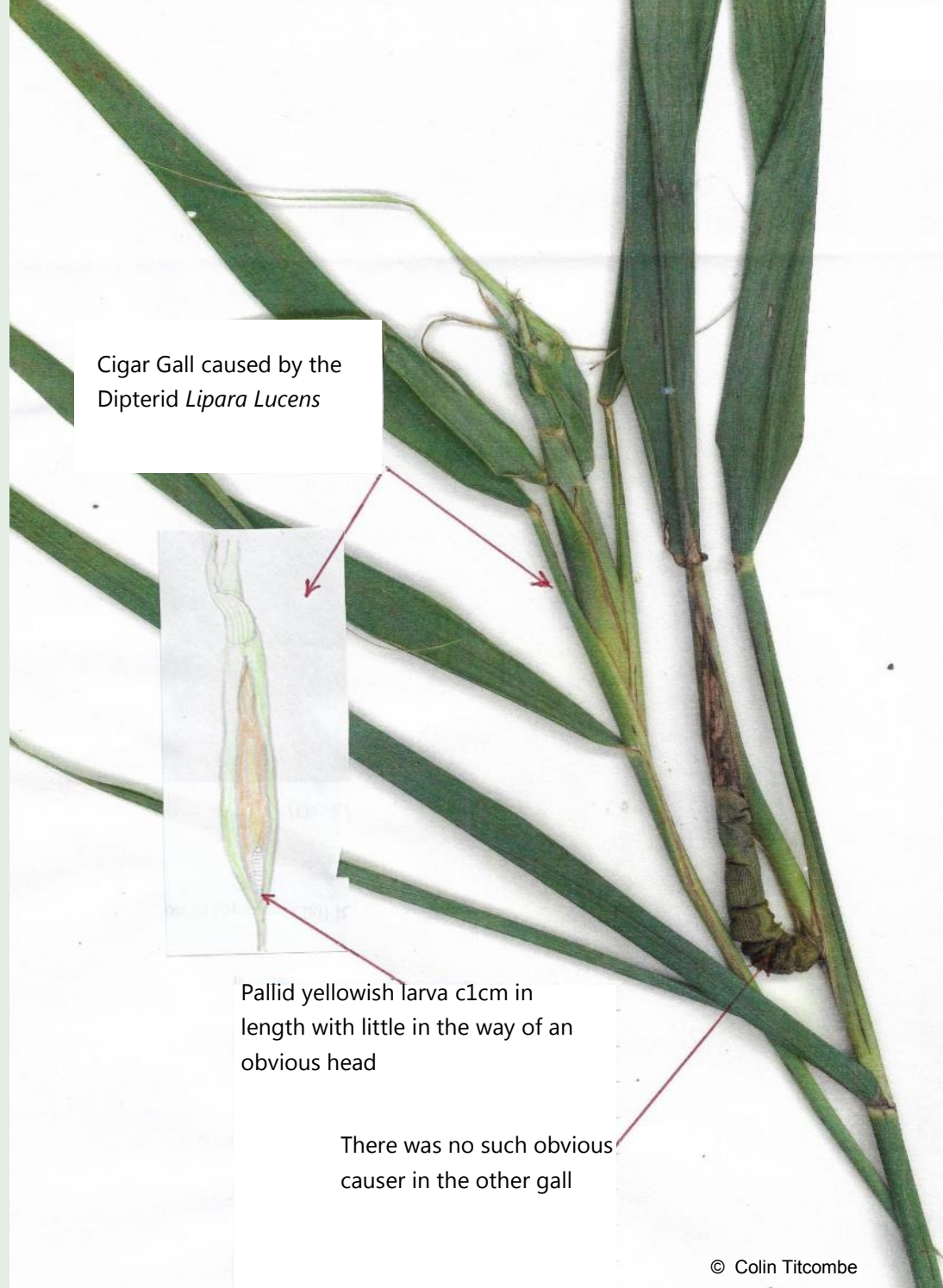
Terminal leaves of Speedwell (*Veronica* sp.) galled by gall-midge *Jaapiella veronicae* on roadside bank below Coombe Farm, Shirenewton

18th August: Alder leaf gall caused by Eriophyid mite (*Eriophyes brevitarsus*) on track close to Cleddon Bog (A.D. and R&S).

24th August: Terminal leaf galling on speedwell (*Veronica* sp.) by the gall-midge *Jaapiella veronicae*, Roadside bank below Coombe Farm, Shirenewton (A.D. and R&S).

24th August: Leaf-edge galling on Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) by the gall-mite *Eriophyes convolens*, Lanmelin Hillfort near Coombe Farm, Shirenewton (R&S).

26th August: Marble-galls on Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) caused by the oak cynipid *Andricus kollari*. Coastal Path hedgerow between Black Rock and Sudbrook (A.D. and R&S).



During the course of my searches for galls I found that examples were more difficult to find than I had anticipated. The last named species (Marble Gall) was the only one I was able to find. The only Oak-apple was one from a previous year and I failed to find any Currant Galls or Cherry Galls on oak. Similarly the distinctive stem-swelling gall on bramble caused by the gall-wasp *Diastrophus rubi* evaded my searches completely.

Sources used/recommended (in addition to Arnold Darlington already mentioned):

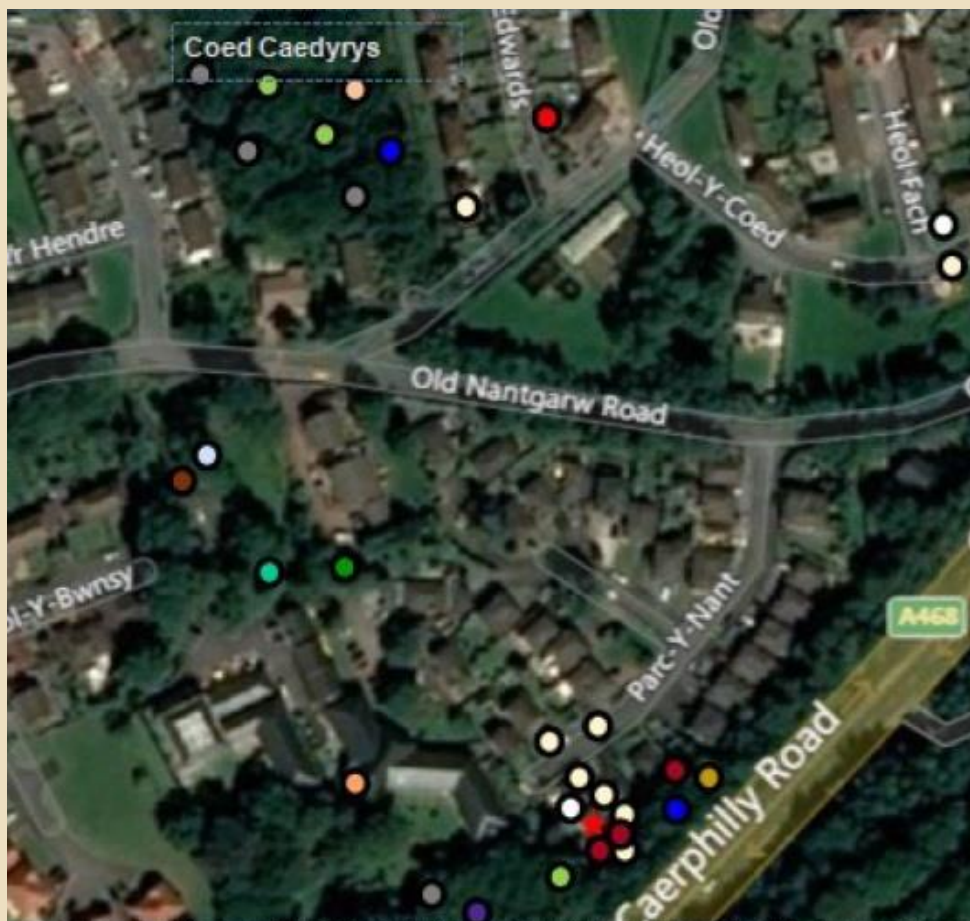
British Plant Galls (Identification on Plants and Fungi), Margaret Redfern and Peter Shirley, AIDGAP FSC, 2002

Plant Galls, Margaret Redfern, Collins New Naturalist, 2011

Lockdown Diary

Alan Rosney

I'm sure, like me, many of you found solace in the natural world in the early stages of the Covid-19 lockdown. The 5 mile travel restriction meant I was only able to explore the area around my home in Nantgarw. The signs of spring were all around so I embarked on a mission to record signs of nesting birds in my locale. Below is a satellite image of upper Nantgarw with my findings marked. In all, I found 15 species nesting in my area.



Map of findings

Key

- Nuthatch
- Blackbird
- Song Thrush
- House Sparrow
- Starling
- Robin
- Mistle Thrush
- Blackcap
- Wood Pigeon
- Collared Dove
- Jackdaw
- Great Spotted Woodpecker
- Magpie
- Blue Tit
- Great Tit

Fledglings of other species were seen but the nest sites weren't located: Goldfinch, Long-tailed Tit, Bullfinch, Siskin and Coal Tit. Willow Warbler, Wren, Chiffchaff and Treecreeper were singing in Coed Caedryys and are likely to have bred there. Surprisingly I saw no evidence of breeding Dunnock.

As well as the breeding bird survey, I used the Aderyn website (<https://aderyn.lercwales.org.uk/>) to see how many "new" species I could add to my local square. There were 487 species listed for my postcode area. Despite not being particularly good at recognising bugs and flowers, I still managed to add a lot of "new" species to the list. If you fancy trying this, go to Aderyn and type in your post-code or map reference to see what has been recorded to date. I used the LERC Wales app on my phone to add new records and grid references.

Editor: The "What's in my Area?" tool on Aderyn can be used to see a list of species for any 1km square in Wales. Simply type in a grid reference or postcode at <https://aderyn.lercwales.org.uk/public/search>.

You can also use Aderyn to view the Welsh distribution of any non-sensitive species at <https://aderyn.lercwales.org.uk/public/distribution>



Garden Spider Drama (Taken from a post on the SEWBRc Facebook Group)

Stephen Murray

Bit of drama in my garden today with this pair of garden spiders. This male, red brown in colour, was attempting to mate with the female. This is quite a dangerous affair for the male. He needs to enter her web and convince the female that he is not food. He does this by rhythmically plucking at a line on her web - a code for I'm not food I'm a prospective mate - while approaching very slowly. If it all goes wrong and she decides he is food or not her idea of an excellent mate she will attack. The male will revert to plan B, as he approached the female he laid down a dragline of silk, this now becomes a life line as he lets go of the web and bungees to freedom.

The male is not one to give up easily, I watched this guy make 15 unsuccessful approaches to the female while I watched. I also noticed another male sitting off to one side waiting for his chance.

Editor: The SEWBRc Facebook group has been particularly active in 2020 and is a great way to connect with other recorders during these strange times. Join in at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sewbrec>

Photos: Garden Spiders Araneus diadematus © Stephen Murray



A New Garden Visitor

Jonah Jones

This may be one of those common-as-muck sightings but it's new to me. My garden pond, close to the Ogney Brook, in Llantwit Major regularly gets Common Darter, Emperor, Southern Hawker and Broad-bodied Chasers but the Golden Ringed (male) was a first for me.

I was intrigued by the first photo I took [lower left photo], because of the pink protuberance from its tail-tip. Although the body shape suggested a male, I wondered whether I was looking at an ovipositor. The British Dragonfly Society assured me it was male and that the pink was probably "poo". Maybe it had been eating ladybirds.



SEWBRc Business Update

Adam Rowe, SEWBRc Manager

We are now into the ninth month of dealing with the **impacts of the global Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic!** I am delighted that SEWBRc still appears to be successfully fending off whatever the Covid storm throws at us. Through UK-wide lockdown, the relaxing of restrictions in the summer and then the local and Welsh national lockdowns, all SEWBRc staff have continued to work remotely and are now fully adjusted to the new ways of working. This has been a testing time for us all, but staff have remained well and have all proved remarkably resilient in dealing with this adversity, whilst continuing to deliver the full range of SEWBRc services to our usual high standards.

Our initial fears of a significant drop in commercial and public sector income thankfully seem to have proved unfounded. In fact, somewhat surprisingly, **commercial sales have continued to exceed even our most optimistic expectations**, with record sales in quarter one (April-June) and a new monthly record sales total in October 2020. The buoyancy of our business meant that there was no need to make use of the government's Job Retention Scheme (furlough), but rest assured that SEWBRc management and board continue to closely monitor the situation regarding both short-term and the inevitable longer-term financial impacts of the pandemic.

The only aspects of our work which were put on hold at the start of the pandemic were the provision of training courses and recording events, but even these soon began to reappear in virtual form. You will read on page 29 about the great success of the LERC Wales-led **Wales Garden Bioblitz** which was the lead event for Wales Nature Week 2020 back in May. We have also moved online for a whole series **of Zoom-based species identification workshops** (majoring on moths and butterflies, but with a grasses course included too), as well as **virtual Introduction to Wildlife Recording training sessions** for the [Local Nature Partnerships Cymru project](#) and the [Lost Peatlands Project](#). We also moved online to deliver virtual training sessions to launch the [Living Levels Wild Watch 2020](#) initiative. Despite the success of online formats, we are really missing the face-to-face contact with our recorders, but we remain positive that we will be able to resume the delivery of actual, real-life (Covid-secure) field recording days and training sessions during 2021.

As well as providing our usual data services to existing public and private sector users, negotiations are also underway with two further potential organisational users (one infrastructure company and one local authority). We



are also pleased to report that Welsh Government has agreed to extend an agreement to access data from the four Welsh LERCs to inform the development of the **new national Wellbeing Indicator 44 on the “status of biological diversity in Wales”**. SEWBReC staff have also been involved in workshops to review the selection of Priority Species identified in Section 7 of the Environment Act (Wales) 2016. In addition, SEWBReC staff represent LERC Wales on a number of national committees and groups including the Nature Recovery Action Plan Implementation Group, the Biodiversity and Planning Forum and the Ecosystem Resilience and Restoration Working Group. SEWBReC staff have attended and presented at a range of national virtual conferences including the National Forum for Biological Recording (where [Elaine Wright presented on the Wales Garden Bioblitz](#)) and will soon be presenting at the [Wales Biodiversity Partnership conference](#).

We are also continuing our efforts to improve engagement with the Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) across our region, via our involvement in the [Local Nature Partnerships Cymru project](#). We are delighted to see that almost all LNPs in the region are now active, with several that have been inactive in recent years now re-launched. With support from the project, SEWBReC is engaging with LNP partners by attending meetings, providing access to data and arranging training for the LNPs in our region. In addition, we are working on an innovative pilot project for Swansea LNP to **map ecosystem resilience at the local level**. Outside the LNP Cymru project we are also working in partnership with West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre on a contract that we have won to deliver a further ecological network mapping project for the Brecon Beacons National Park LNP.

2020 has certainly proved a challenging (and at times exceptionally busy) year for SEWBReC, but thanks to our customers, supporters, the board of directors and our flexible staff, we continue not just to survive but to prosper. As always, I would like to **thank every single recorder for every single record submitted** (whether via paper forms, spreadsheets, [SEWBReCORD](#) or the [LERC Wales app!](#)) Our statistics show that 2020 has been an outstanding year for recording, if not so great a year in other ways. The whole SEWBReC team have everything crossed for a much more straightforward 2021 and we look forward to seeing you again (when we can).

SEWBReC Membership and Governance

If you would like to become a member of SEWBReC, please complete and return an [application form](#).

Current SEWBReC board of directors: Steve Bolchover (Chair), Alison Jones (Vice Chair), Sinead Lynch (Treasurer), Paul Seligman, Kate Stinchcombe, David Clements, Vaughn Matthews, Andy Karran, Mark Pavett, Stuart Bain*. **Observers:** Karen Wilkinson. **Company Secretary:** Rebecca Wright-Davies.

*New director since last newsletter.



Wales Garden BioBlitz

Elaine Wright - SEWBRcC

On Saturday 30th May 2020, SEWBRcC and the other Welsh record centres ([BIS](#) , [Cofnod](#) & [WWBIC](#)) joined

together to run Wales Garden BioBlitz as part of Wales Nature Week <https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Wales-Nature-Week>. A traditional BioBlitz is a location based event, where experts and the public meet at a site to build a species list on a single day. As we were unable to meet in person this year, we decided to run an online event, asking individuals to record all the wildlife in their own garden on a single day.

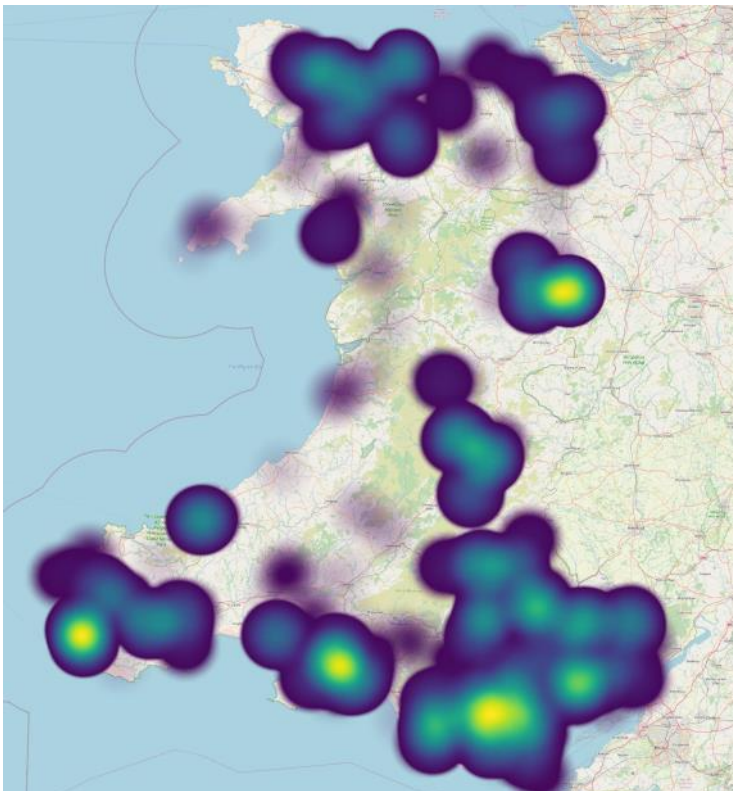


Figure 1: Heat map of records received (brighter colours show higher density of records).

The event proved very popular, with over 250 recorders getting involved across Wales. On a national level to date we have received over 7,000 records of nearly 1,600 species. **Figure 1** shows a heat map of records received. As you can see, we had a great geographic spread, especially in highly populated areas (such as Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham and Bangor), plus some

Photos: clockwise from top left: Starlings © Howard Burt Swollen-thighed Beetle © Mike Cram, Hedgehog © Christopher Jones, Green Sheildbug Eggs © Suzanne Wilson, Maidenhair Spleenwort © Gareth Farr, Woodlouse *Armadillidium depressum* © Tara Okon.

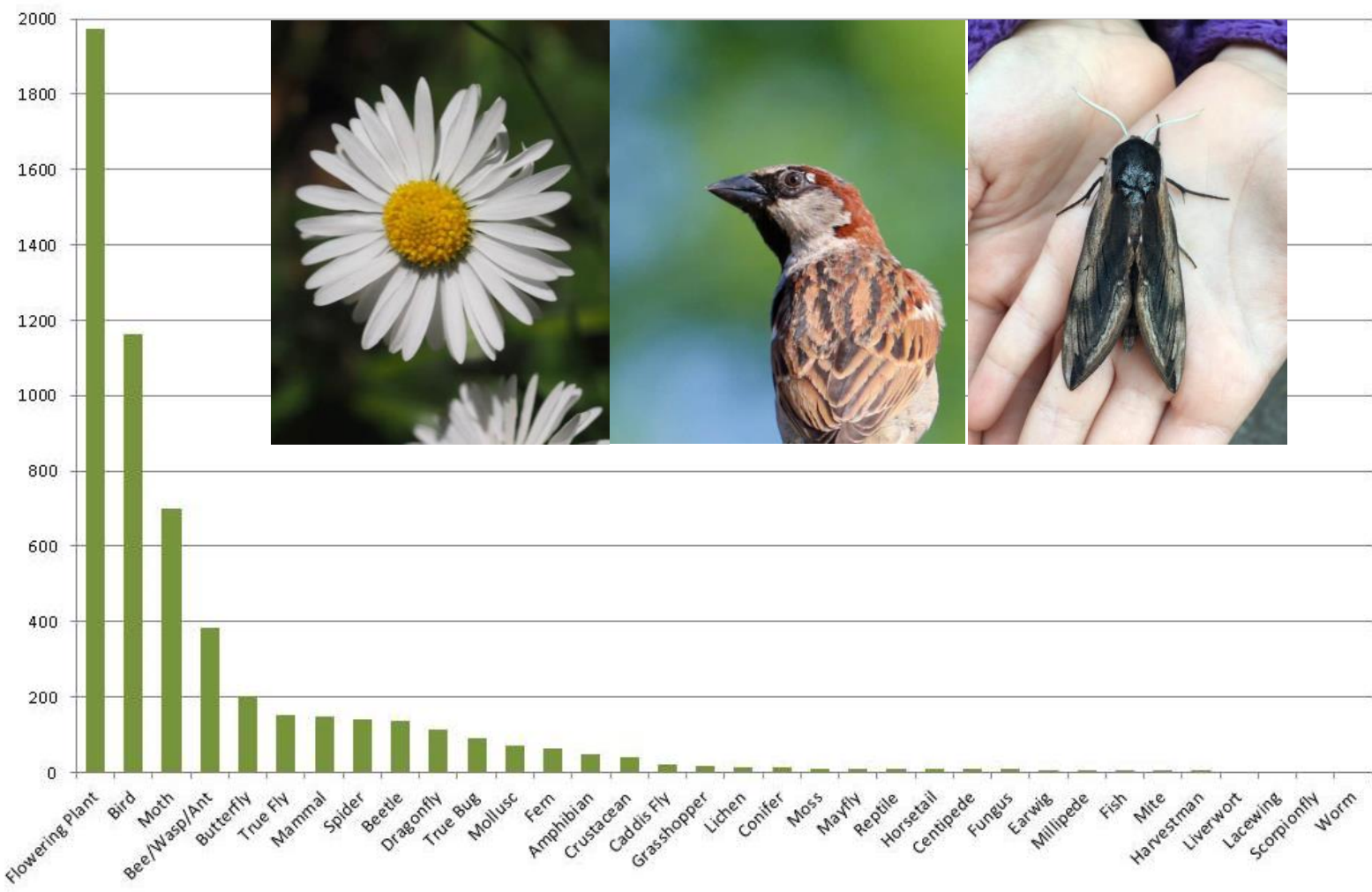


Figure 2: Numbers of records of different taxon groups recorded during the day. The top 3 groups were flowering plants, birds and moths [photos: Daisy © Gareth Farr, House Sparrow © Pip Gray, Privet Hawk Moth © Adam Rowe]

individual recorders in mid Wales and Pembrokeshire built up impressive species lists.

We also had a great range of species recorded, with 34 taxon groups included. **Figure two** shows the number of records per taxon group –plants, birds and moths were a clear top 3 as we would expect, but it was brilliant to get such a diverse range of species recorded. **Figure three** shows the national top ten species list – heavily weighted towards birds as is often the case, but it is always useful to get a snapshot of how commoner species are faring in wales.

You can find the full national list on the SEWBReC website [here](#).

Species	National Total
Blackbird	84
House Sparrow	82
Heart & Dart	69
Blue Tit	64
Dandelion	63
Robin	60
Jackdaw	59
Wood Pigeon	57
Great Tit	50
Daisy	50

Figure 3: Top 10 species recorded across Wales during the event

Continued on page 30...

On a local level, SEWBRc received 2772 records of 879 species. You can explore the SEWBRc data on the single day analysis on Aderyn [here](#) and view the SEWBRc species list on our website [here](#). **Figure Four** shows the SEWBRc top ten species – this is even more bird heavy than the national top ten, but at least it includes two moth species!

We were also very please with the amount of engagement via Twitter and Facebook, both from established recorders and from newcomers. At the time it was impossible to meet in person, so we felt it was very important to encourage interaction between recorders as well as from LERC staff. You explore photos and comments on the Twitter hashtag [#WalesGardenBio-Blitz](#). It was great to get feedback such as this comment from Kate Stinchcombe:

“Knowing that I was recording at the same time as my friends and colleagues across Wales was a great experience.”

Kate Stinchcombe via Twitter (@KEStinch)

We are very grateful to everyone who contributed records to the Wales Garden BioBlitz – or at any other time this year – and watch this space for details of Wales Garden BioBlitz 2021!

If you would like to learn more about the Wales Garden BioBlitz 2020, you can watch a presentation given at the National Forum for Biological Recording <http://www.nfbr.org.uk/> conference online [here](#).

Species Name	SEWBRc Total
House Sparrow	41
Heart and Dart	38
Blackbird	33
Treble Lines	28
Woodpigeon	27
Blue Tit	24
Robin	24
Magpie	24
Jackdaw	23
Goldfinch	22

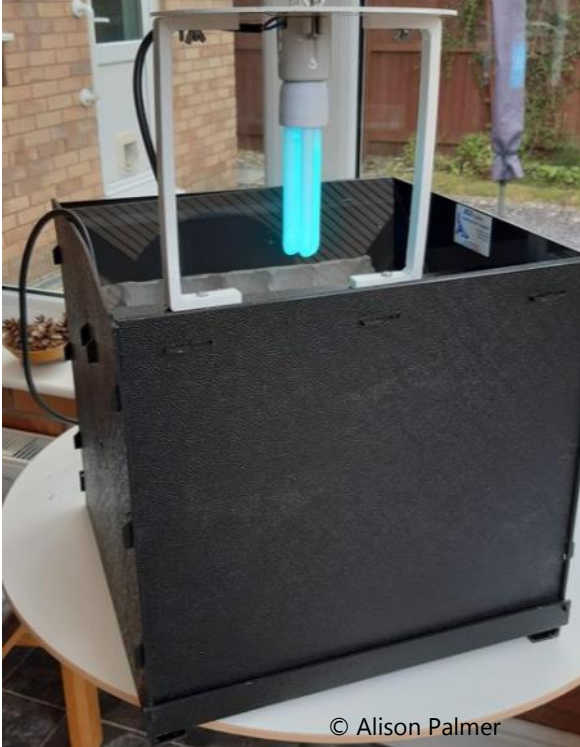
Figure 4: Top 10 species recorded in south east Wales during the event

Home-based Wildlife Resources

In the Spring issue of this newsletter we included a list of suggested resources and activities to help stay connected to with nature at home during the first Covid 19 lockdown. Throughout the year we have continued to update the online list of resources on the [South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre webpage](#). As the days shorten there are still plenty of ideas to keep you busy.

Our latest suggestions include:

- Checking out one of our curated [Youtube playlists](#) of online courses and lectures
- Reading all back issues of Nature Cymru for free on the [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#)
- Identifying those specimens you have been saving for a rainy day
- Taking part in the [RHS Cellar Slug Survey](#)
- Digitising your old records, for example by entering them on [SEWBRcCORD](#)
- Writing newsletter articles, e.g. for the Spring 2021 issue of the Recorders' Newsletter
- Staying connected on social media, perhaps by joining the [SEWBRc Facebook group](#)
- Attending the **online Gwent & Glamorgan Recorders' Forum** on Saturday 16th January



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SEWBReC Recorders' Grant Scheme

Elaine Wright – SEWBReC

Summer 2020 saw the launch of the SEWBReC Recorders' Grant Scheme, which aims to remove financial barriers to the recording efforts of individuals and groups. The scheme has garnered a lot of interest and we are delighted to have funded four projects so far, which will both enthuse newcomers to recording, and enable experts to expand their skills.

Porthkerry Wildlife Group have received moth trapping equipment to learn about the Lepidoptera in Porthkerry Country Park and Cosmeston Lakes Country Park Wildlife Group have a range of botanical books and hand lenses to increase knowledge of plants in the park [both pictured above]. Christopher Jones has received a microscope [pictured below] to enable him to expand his fungi identification skills. We have also funded a very interesting project lead by Jessica Dangerfield, which will carry out DNA analysis of bat faecal samples from Cardiff, Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan to produce reliable species records for Whiskered, Brandt's and Alcatheo bats.



Grants up to £500 are available for expenses such training courses, travel costs and equipment.

You can learn more and download an application form on our [website](#).



SOUTH EAST WALES BIODIVERSITY RECORDS CENTRE
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