



# Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

Issue 8—Spring  
May 2013

**Welcome** to the eighth issue of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter. The new SEWBR<sup>e</sup>C **Square of the Month** scheme (p.3-5) is now under way and records have already been coming in, filling the geographical gaps in data for Gwent and Glamorgan. The results of a questionnaire about a possible **Mentoring Scheme** (p.6) have revealed that there is a great demand for such a scheme in South East Wales, so watch this space for further details!

Once again the weather is proving challenging for wildlife recorders with a long cold winter and a delayed spring. Spring plants are still flowering now, and many insect groups have delayed emerging. See **page 9** for an account on moth trapping in recent weeks. Fingers crossed for some decent weather for all the **biodiversity blitzes** planned for this year (p.13). Make sure that you get involved if you can. Enjoy the newsletter!

**Rebecca Davies, SEWBR<sup>e</sup>C  
(Editor)**

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## Orange Underwing *Archiearis parthenias* at last!

For many years I have searched in Dorset and Wales for this day-flying moth. It flies amongst Silver Birch, the larval food plant, on heathland on those clear, bright, sunny spring days around the end of March.

I have been reasonably confident that I have seen it flying fast around the tree tops 10 metres up in past years, both here on Gower and in Dorset, but I have not seen one low enough to net and photograph for confirmation before release again.

There are old records of sightings on Kilvey Hill on the outskirts of Swansea, so, on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, I thought I would try there this year. I'd just arrived at 3pm at what looked like suitable habitat when, amazingly, one flew past me at eye level close enough to see the orange hindwings! A few minutes later what I thought was a second came towards me at knee level, just above the heather.

I was able to net this one which turned out to be a Yellow Horned *Achlya flavicornis* moth, whose caterpillars also feed on birch. This was a great surprise to me on two counts. Firstly, I had no idea that this moth flew in daytime



Male Orange Underwing © Chris Manley

(though later research confirmed that it does occasionally fly by day) and secondly, after six years light trapping in Wales without ever seeing Yellow Horned this was my second sighting this year, and I saw 4 more one night, a week later!

Over the next half hour or so in the same area I saw, netted and photographed two more Orange Underwings, both males. These were also flying around head height and, when put on cool, shaded ground obligingly posed for photographs.

Three days later, with the weather still the same (bright sunshine and a stiff north-easterly breeze), I saw no moths at all during an hour in the same area.

However, on my way back to the car on the track just 5 metres from the road something flew out of a low Silver Birch at waist height which turned out to be a female Orange Underwing! She was also happy to pose in the shade for pictures, even sitting on a twig so I could photograph the underside.



Female Orange Underwing © Chris Manley

**Chris Manley**

## SEWBReC News

### Data holdings – May 2013

The SEWBReC database now contains over 2.5 million records. This latest milestone was reached with the importing of historic Glamorgan Bird Club records, and updates from Gwent Fungi Group and the Monmouthshire Wildlife Sites Survey (GWT).

Along with records from various unitary authority partners, we have had major updates from Cardiff and Blaenau-Gwent Councils. We have also received records from some of the consultancies that are active in our area - most notably Sturgess Ecology, Wildwood Ecology, SoltysBrewster Ecology, and Merlin Bio-Surveys.

All, bar three, of the 10km squares within the SEWBReC area have had over 1000 different species recorded from them. The exceptions are: SS38 (Worms Head - 744 species), SS39 (Burry Holms - 339 species) and SS77 (Sker Point - 837). The most diverse square is, of course, on Gower - SS58 (Oxwich - 6859 species)!

Four species have been recorded over 10,000 times - Blackbird, Mallard, Large Yellow Underwing Moth and Robin; and we have records in the database of over 10,000 different types of insect.

Thanks to everyone who has submitted a record to SEWBReC in the last few months - keep sending them in!

**David Slade, SEWBReC**

### SEWBReC Funding News

In February 2013 SEWBReC was awarded and commenced work on a small contract to digitise paper records held by Swansea Council. Upon completion of this work, SEWBReC will be able to supply a true one-stop-shop service to the Council's Ecologists by combining the Council's own data with our existing, extensive data holdings for the Swansea area. It is our shared aim to move towards a full Service Level Agreement (hopefully during the current financial year).

In March 2013 a new contract was agreed with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council for SEWBReC to undertake a number of data management and collation tasks, including work on digitising information relating to commercial surveys undertaken within the County Borough, the creation of a pilot enhanced habitat GIS layer and work with key local recording groups to improve data flows. This contract represents a significant increase in funding over and above the on-going Data Licence Agreement between SEWBReC and Neath Port Talbot Council. As in the case of Swansea, it is hoped that this project may be a pre-cursor to a longer-term funding commitment to SEWBReC.

Interim, transitional funding arrangements have been established by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) which will provide vital, on-going support for SEWBReC and the three other Welsh LRCs during the first year of its existence. Whilst pre-existing agreements are being honoured until their expiry, our funding agreement with the former Environment Agency Wales (EAW) ended in March 2013. NRW have now confirmed that they will amend the pre-existing Agreement with the former Countryside Council for Wales to cover a further year of supply of products to the former EAW. It is vital that effort is put in by all parties to secure longer-term funding by NRW for the vital work of the Welsh LRCs. We still retain the ambition to aim for a single Pan-Wales LRC funding agreement which would also include direct support from Welsh Government.

Although not all agreements for 2013/14 are yet signed and sealed, we should soon have Service Level Agreements, Data Licence Agreements or project contracts in place with eleven out of the twelve local authorities in the region, in addition to agreements with South Wales Trunk Roads Agency and Gwent Wildlife Trust. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our funding partners for their on-going support during trying economic times.

A dip in commercial sales in the period between November 2012 and January

this year meant that our total sales for the 2012/13 financial year reached around £47,000 and therefore fell about £4,000 short of our previous best total from 2011/12. However 2013/14 has got off to a flying start with April pipping August 2011 to the title of 'best month ever' for commercial sales ... and things are showing no sign of easing off during May!

A further boost to sales will hopefully come in the next few months, with the planned launch of a lower-cost data product, aimed specifically at providing background data in support of projects, such as bat assessments of small-scale developments.

**Adam Rowe, SEWBReC**

### Local Records Centres Wales Customer Satisfaction Survey 2013

During Spring 2013 we set about achieving a long-standing target to conduct a survey to enable us to gauge levels of satisfaction amongst our commercial customers (i.e. the environmental consultants and developers who utilise our data search services). The need for this survey was first highlighted in the SEWBReC Business Plan 2010-12. It was initially due to be a SEWBReC-focused survey, but in the spirit of co-operation, we agreed to broaden its remit to enable the generation of useful feedback for customers of all four Welsh Local Records Centres (LRCs).

Adam Rowe and Rebecca Davies of SEWBReC planned and designed the survey (in consultation with the other Welsh LRCs) and the final survey was launched online in early February. By the time the survey closed in late March 2013, a total of 105 responses had been received, with 86 people (81.9%) completing the whole questionnaire.

The survey, which was circulated to all customers of the four Welsh LRCs, contained sections examining all aspects of the relationship between the LRCs and

## SEWBRc News

their customers, at all stages of the enquiry process, from initial contact (finding the right LRC, completing the data enquiry process and receiving quotations), through how well the enquiry was dealt with (response times, quality and range of data products available data) to payment processes and sharing of commercially gathered data with LRCs.

The full results of the survey are still being analysed but are providing a wealth of incredibly useful insights and data, which are already influencing development and refinement of the products and services we offer to our commercial customers, as well as identifying improvements we could potentially make to many aspects of our service.

Whilst much of the data gathered is of a sensitive nature, the following results may be of interest:

Responses were received from 60 customers who typically use SEWBRc more than twice a year, including 15 who typically use us 10 or more times per year.

Out of 67 SEWBRc customers, 50 were 'very satisfied' and 16 were 'satisfied' with the initial contact they had from our staff via telephone or email. Nobody was dissatisfied.

Out of 64 SEWBRc customers, 61 were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with our website.

Over 60% of SEWBRc customers were 'very satisfied' with both how quickly they receive quotations for work, as well as with the speediness of receiving their full reports from us.

In all measures of customer satisfaction included in the survey, SEWBRc came out with the highest scores of the four Welsh LRCs.

Worryingly, 63 respondents Wales-wide use the NBN Gateway as a source of data. Unless permission is being sought from individual data suppliers, such usage contravenes the NBN Gateway terms of use.

61% of SEWBRc customers think our

basic charges represent either 'good' or 'very good' value for money. Several comments suggest that in the case of some smaller jobs our charges represent too high a percentage of overall project costs. It is clear that some customers are choosing not to undertake LRC searches for this reason. As a result SEWBRc will be launching a new cheaper data search in an attempt to plug this gap.

54% of all-Wales respondents share occasional data with LRCs, whilst only 20.7% share all data with LRCs. Client confidentiality and time constraints were cited as the main reasons for not sharing data with LRCs.

83.8% of respondents are aware that the code of professional conduct of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) (the most popular professional body in ecology, and now a Chartered Institute), promotes the sharing of data with LRCs.

**Adam Rowe, SEWBRc**

## Square of the Month Project

As a Local Records Centre, one of our main purposes at SEWBRc is encouraging the recording of the overlooked – either in the form of an under recorded species, or an under recorded place. This is always at the back of our minds whilst planning our events, whether organising training courses in obscure taxonomic groups, or seeking out a hidden gem for our Biodiversity Blitz Days.

This year we have started up a couple of projects which should help local recorders to continue to target their efforts on the under recorded – with an added level of autonomy. The Mentorship Scheme was the next logical step on from our yearly training courses, allowing amateur recorders to expand their knowledge at their own pace, outside of a classroom environment. The project is still at a very early stage, but should hopefully help to share the impressive level of skill and knowledge currently held by a select few in South East

Wales (more information on the project in Adam's article on page 6).

The other new project, which is well underway, is our Square of the Month feature. I have always been fascinated by seeing the bigger picture of recording effort reflected by large scale analysis of our database. For the past couple of years, we have been creating maps for each Recorders' Forum, showing density of recording for our whole area at a tetrad level. At every forum, we would generally get one or two keen recorders expressing an interest in targeting those areas with a low number of records. In 2013 we created a map showing the record density at a higher resolution – namely 1km squares. At this level, it became much easier to provide a manageable target area for our recorders to aim at, and thus Square of the Month was born.

At the start of each month, an email is sent out to our contacts list with location

information and maps for two empty squares – one in Gwent and one in Glamorgan. We have sent out details of six squares so far, and we know at least five have since been visited by local recorders (luckily for us, Bob and Gill Roome have whole heartedly embraced the project and have visited all three Gwent squares, as detailed in their article on pages 4-5). Details of previous squares are also available on our website: <http://www.sewbrec.org.uk/biological-recording-folder/sewbrec-square-of-the-month.page>.

We have fifty-five squares remaining, twenty-five in Gwent and thirty in Glamorgan. This is broken down further in the table overleaf (half squares are those

## Square of the Month Project

falling on the border between two counties).

County	Empty 1km Squares
Monmouthshire	23
Neath Port Talbot	16
Rhondda-Cynon-Taf	8.5
Vale of Glamorgan	4
Newport	1
Caerphilly	1
Merthyr Tydfil	0.5
Blaenau Gwent	0.5
Bridgend	0.5
Cardiff	0
Swansea	0
Torfaen	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55</b>

The number of squares is unsurprisingly linked to population density and land area, meaning the relatively small and very densely populated Cardiff County is already fully recorded. Favourite sites also make a difference – so although there are some sparsely populated areas within Swansea Council, it is all fully recorded due to the popularity of the Gower with local recorders.

Hopefully the project will continue to be a success over the coming months, and help to fill in the gaps in our maps, whilst bringing enjoyment to recorders discovering new places during the process. Although the empty squares are unlikely to hold anything extraordinary, at SEWBReC we like to hold the motto

that “all records are created equal”. If we can gather records from mountain tops, city centres and deep caves, then surely there is something worth recording in a 1km square in South Wales. Biodiversity is all around us, and our database should be a reflection of this.

If you would like more information on the project, or would like to be added to our email contacts list, please email me:  
elaine.wright@sewbrec.org.uk.

**Elaine Wright, SEWBReC**

## Empty Squares

We visited the environs of square ST4598 in March and having driven round all the wonderful, narrow lanes in “Cobblers Plain” we had only managed to find one possible way in, a footpath through the wood starting around ST445984 which would take us into the square. We left it at that, intending to visit again.

We live in Cwmbran so the April Gwent square, ST3196 was designed for us. We parked on the roadside verge, just past the turn to Sor Brook picnic site on the Treherbert Road which links Cwmbran with the Caerleon to Usk road. The fingerpost opposite pointed roughly south-west and we walked a field side past the origins of a spring in a deep gully. Crossing this gully and sunk deep, but visible, were two massive pipes, presumably water from Llandegfedd Reservoir. At the bottom of the slope a footbridge crossed a stream that the spring fed. On the map all looks flat but this land undulated and we climbed away from the stream, cutting through a field corner copse with lots of standing and fallen dead timber - should be good for fungi in the autumn! The footpaths and fields were reasonable underfoot, the sun shone and we found ourselves thoroughly enjoying a piece of lovely countryside, right on our doorstep, that we had nev-

er walked before. We recorded lots of trees and plants, a few butterflies and birds, nothing unusual but we will almost certainly go again.

Next was SO3824 for May, near Grosmont. Still blessed with good weather we travelled via Abergavenny and up the Hereford road before turning off near Llanvihangel Crucorney. We travelled the lanes until about 1 mile from Grosmont where we found the start of a footpath into the square opposite some farm buildings. The stile was wrapped in bramble and the fingerpost, rotted at its base, was thrown in the hedge. We walked field sides, through a relatively newly planted orchard and then across fields badly churned up by cattle, though mercifully dry. The views across towards the Llanthony valley and Hatterall ridge were very fine but the species we recorded were all what would be expected.

Our return to ST4598 was on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May, a lovely day weatherwise. We parked in a gateway, a grave country-



© Bob Roome

side sin, so I spent the whole walk imagining an irate farmer waiting for our return. We walked along a woodside and found a gate into the wood onto a barely discernible path through lots of alder and willow saplings. It was obvious that we were not the first to pass that way with lots of fairly recently broken branches bent aside. A piece of yellow tape tied very obviously in a tree where I judged the square to start convinced me that recording colleagues had preceded us. My dislike of bram-

## Empty Squares (cont....)

bles increased with every step and, in many places the path became a quagmire to be skirted by walking on the tufts of dried rushes. A pair of ravens scolded us and we watched a pair of buzzards circle almost below us where the land fell away steeply into *Cobblers Plain*. Not one butterfly on this lovely sunny day, but the views were delightful. We escaped the wood and turned south, up the slope, stumbling across fields where the cattle had grazed in the winter. A small herd of young heifers proved not to contain a bull but they stood their ground before losing their nerve and trotting off down the hill. Over a stile took us up a field and into a farm yard, all the while waiting for the dogs to start barking. Over a locked gate took us out of the yard, fortunately not spotted, and on to the road back to the car. Four hours of difficult walking - I was

wacked!! There was no irate farmer at the car and the cup of coffee was very welcome.

I guess these squares are, by chance, unrecorded because they are off roads and the footpaths through them are largely unused. No one goes to work, to the shops or to the church that way anymore. They are poorly marked once you get away from the fingerpost on the roadside. With no one treading them regularly it is impossible to discern the direction to take across a meadow, hence our ending up in a farm yard. But, the empty squares are full of life though not always very diverse and



it gets us out into some lovely places and getting some good exercise!! So, thanks SEWBRc, keep it up and we'll try and do the same.

**Bob and Gill Roome**

## WBP—Book Award Fund

The Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) is offering a small grant to **all** Vice County Recorders in Wales. This can be used towards the purchase of identification books, keys, CDs, or other small equipment.

A claim can be up to £25, and may only be claimed once in each financial year. The invoice date must match the financial year in which the claim is made. To claim, please send the form below together with your receipt(s) to the following address:

Bioamrywiaeth Cymru  
Biodiversity Wales

PARTNERIAETH BIOAMRYWIAETH CYMRU  
WALES BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

**Sean McHugh,  
WBP Communications Officer,  
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07817 148524 (mobile)

**Sean McHugh, WBP Communi-  
cations Officer**

Name:		
Address:	Line 1	
	Line 2	
	Line 3	
	Post Town	
	Post Code	
Email address:		
Contact telephone number		
I am the VC Recorder for:	Vice County Name	
	Taxonomic Speciality	

Item (s) grant claimed for	
Receipt attached?	

## Mentoring Scheme

### Nurturing new expert recorders: a proposed biodiversity recording mentoring scheme for South-East Wales

One of SEWBRReC's key roles is to provide support to the voluntary biodiversity recording community. For almost a decade since SEWBRReC's establishment, this support has taken the form of producing Recorders' Newsletters (such as this!), organising annual Recorders' Forum meetings, arranging and running biodiversity recording days and (since 2009, with the generous support of Wales Biodiversity Partnership) providing an annual programme of species identification and recording training events.

These latter training events have always been enormously popular and well-received and are almost always oversubscribed. In late 2012 we undertook a brief online questionnaire survey which targeted all who attended one of the four courses held in 2012 to evaluate their success in terms of how many people have gone on to make and submit records as a result of these courses. The results were perhaps a little disappointing with only 32% of participants having gone onto submit records to SEWBRReC (with several others promising that data was on its way!) Results did show however that the majority had taken steps to further improve their knowledge, such as acquiring reading material or identification books (65%) or practising field skills independently (55%).

A further question asked respondents 'How can SEWBRReC improve the courses, or help you develop your species identification skills further?' This question yielded many supportive comments about the continuation of courses, but several made suggestions such as further refresher or follow-up courses to hone skills, or the opportunity to form a small team led by the course mentor at a biodiversity blitz event.

These responses, along with SEWBRReC's wish to look at new ways of nurturing the next generation of voluntary biological recorders, led to the idea of organising some form of mentoring scheme, to match those who wanted to

develop those skills to those who are able to share their knowledge with others (including those experts who may not wish to lead a formal training course).

In February 2013, Wales Biodiversity Partnership kindly provided SEWBRReC with some funding to explore the possible development of a Biodiversity Recording Mentoring scheme for the region.

After initial research, we formulated two online questionnaire surveys, one for potential mentors and the other for potential mentees. Summaries and findings of these surveys are given below:

#### Potential Mentors Survey

Sent to a targeted distribution list of local recorders and experts, drawn from SEWBRReC's contacts directory. 33 responses received.

97% of respondents (32) agreed that the outline of the proposed scheme sounded like a suitable format.

94% of respondents (31) said they would possibly, probably or definitely be interested in becoming a mentor.

31 respondents provided details of the taxonomic groups that they may be prepared to mentor in.

The vast majority of respondents would like to take on either 1 or 2 mentees.

93.5% of potential mentors would prefer a completely flexible arrangement rather than agreeing a fixed number of days of mentoring.

All unitary areas had at least 4 active potential mentors, with some areas having up to 15 potential active mentors.

#### Potential Mentees Survey

Sent to everybody on SEWBRReC's contacts directory. 74 responses received.

100% of respondents agreed that the outline of the proposed scheme sounded like a suitable format.

100% of respondents indicated that they would possibly, probably or definitely be

interested in becoming a mentee.

Results show that the following groups made up the top ten most popular for potential mentees:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Vascular plants (37)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Birds (27)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Butterflies (25)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Fungi (23)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Mammals (non-Bats) (23)
- 6<sup>th</sup> Dragonflies & Damselflies (21)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Amphibians & Reptiles (20)
- 8<sup>th</sup> Mosses & Liverworts (19)
- 9<sup>th</sup> Mammals (Bats) (19)
- 10<sup>th</sup>=Lichens (16)
- 10<sup>th</sup>=Moths (16)

73% of respondents would like between 3 and 10 days contact days with their mentor per year.

88.7% of respondents would prefer a completely flexible arrangement rather than agreeing a fixed number of days of mentoring.

100% of respondents would be prepared to participate in a simple application process, to allow us to assess their suitability as a mentee and to enable us to match them with a suitable mentor.

Potential mentees are well spread across the region with between 29 and 47 potential mentees in each Unitary authority area.

#### Project experiences and lessons learnt

It is clear from the responses that there is a great appetite and indeed demand for a biological recording mentoring scheme in South East Wales. This has been an incredibly useful exercise to assess and analyse that demand and leads to the clear conclusion that we must press on and implement a mentoring scheme as soon as possible. Please watch this space for future developments!

Adam Rowe, SEWBRReC

## Jackdaw – The Commuting Corvid

Familiar to most people, the Jackdaw is a common member of the crow family through much of the British Isles, being absent only from parts of north – west Scotland, the Hebrides and the Shetland Isles. The species' total range takes in much of Europe and on into parts of western and south-western Asia, but it is noticeably absent from the colder northern regions. In the south Jackdaws occupy the islands of Crete and Cyprus, as well as the most southerly parts of the Spanish mainland. They are also found locally in parts of northern Morocco and Algeria.

Jackdaws are merely vagrants to the Canary archipelago but on La Palma their niche is filled by the Red-billed Chough (of the sub species *barbarus*) which, like the Jackdaws here in Gwent, commonly occur in pairs. In Gwent, Jackdaw numbers do not appear to have changed much over many years, Ingram and Salmon (1) as early as 1937 described the bird as 'a common resident breeding species'.

As a boy I was familiar with the breeding colonies of Jackdaws in both Caerwent and Ifton (Rogiet) Quarries. Later I was to rescue a young bird which had fallen from a nest-hollow high on the quarry face (Caerwent Quarry) and cared for it at home. Initially the young bird occupied a cloth-lined basket in our living room, but when it fledged and began to fly around the house, mother banished it to the chicken shed. As a gregarious species the young jackdaw didn't seem to mind this at all. It helped itself to the chicken's food and roosted among them on the perch at night. Since the chickens were Light Sussex, a predominantly white-feathered breed, spotting the little black jackdaw jammed in among them at night with the aid of a torch was no trouble at all.

In common with some other species whose total range is extensive, the behaviour of the Jackdaw varies from one region to another. In Gwent we

are used to Jackdaws nesting in chimney-pots, church towers, holes in trees or in rock-faces, but Gavin Maxwell informs us (2) that in Galloway Jackdaws nest in conifers, and goes on to describe their nests as vast, and added to year on year.

Consulting *Birds of the Western Palearctic* (Volume 8: Crows- Finches) (3) this behaviour is also known from parts of Finland, Poland and the Netherlands. In the latter some nests are roofed, presumably making them similar in structure to the roofed nests of the Magpie.

As my bird-watching activities extended into other areas of Gwent it became clear that some parts of the old county had more Jackdaws than others. Large feeding flocks comprising some 1000+ birds were found in the Usk Valley near Bettws Newydd, and I became aware of roosts at Usk Castle and Llanfoist while engaged in nocturnal amphibian surveys with Graham Harris. We found roosting jackdaws (along with other corvids) in the willow thicket occupying the centre of Llanfoist Pond. Graham also became aware of a large corvid roost (mostly jackdaws) in the woods above Llanfoist Village.

On moving into the Wye Valley village of Llandogo in recent years I noted the presence of a resident flock of some 60-70 jackdaws. At the time I didn't give much thought to their roosting behaviour but, during the winter months, the arrival of the flock soon after first light raised the question of where their roost might be. In order to find an answer I had to witness the time and direction of their departure from the village. To this end, late in the afternoon of the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2011, I walked up the flank of the valley and settled at a suitable vantage point. My diary records – 'At 5 o'clock the birds (c.60 or so of them) gathered in a tree near the Priory (nursing home). Within minutes they were as a 'dread', climbing higher and higher in the sky. Circling and gaining

height all the time, they drifted up the valley for a while before moving back down the opposite flank and eventually away to the east over the Hudnalls. The time was now 5.13pm and I was able to follow their flight until they disappeared beyond the range of my binoculars'.

Since this occasion I have witnessed the Jackdaw exodus from Llandogo on several occasions. It tends to be a feature of the winter period, or more correctly the post-breeding period. When nesting the birds roost at the nest-site. Non-breeding birds tend to use the communal roost and so vacate the village as usual at the end of the day.

To date I have yet to locate the roost-site on the Gloucestershire side but this is probably not important in a Gwent context. The fact is that Llandogo Jackdaws commute almost daily across the border and into the adjacent county. They are truly the 'commuting corvids'.

### References

- (1) Geoffrey C S Ingram, MBOU and H Morrey Salmon, MC, MBOU. *The Birds of Monmouthshire, Reprinted from the Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists' Society, Vol. LXX, 1937.*
- (2) Gavin Maxwell, *The House of Elrig. Longmans Green and Co, Ltd, 1965.*
- (3) Stanley Cramp et al. *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic, Volume VIII: Crows to Finches. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Oxford University Press, 1994.*

Colin Titcombe

## Spongy Mazegill (*Spongipellis delectans*)

In February, a new species of fungus was spotted on a tree at the newly designated Aberbargoed Grasslands National Nature Reserve by the site ranger, Mark Allen. A specimen was sent to the Gwent Fungus Group and was confirmed by one of the UK's top mycologists at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The specimen has been kept at Kew Gardens, as they don't have any previous collections from Wales.

There are no previous records of this fungus in Wales on the national database run by the British Mycological Society. This is an extremely rare species previously known only from a few locations in the southeast of England and the New Forest.

Spongy Mazegill grows on the rotting wood of broadleaved trees, either on damaged standing trunks or large fallen branches. It grows in hoof-shaped brackets, which are smooth on top and porous underneath. This fungus has a

strikingly patterned lower surface, which has maze-like pores at first that split into irregular plates and teeth with age.

It is one of 30 fungal species used as indicators to define British Beech woodlands of high conservation value. It has also been recorded on Sycamore, Ash, Horse chestnut and Poplar.

**Melanie Dodd**

**(Ecologist, Caerphilly County Borough Council)**

*Editor's note: Those eagle-eyed amongst you will notice that there is a dot on the map in South Wales. However, the record is thought to be an anomaly!*

**NBN Distribution Map:  
*Spongipellis delectans***



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## Dr Mary Gillham OBE (1921-2013)

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Dr Mary Gillham.

Mary passed away at around 9:30 Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March having been taken into hospital from the nursing home she had been in for the last few weeks.

We all mourn the loss of such an inspirational person. I remember in my younger days as a member of the [Cardiff Naturalists'] society and clearly just a beginner, when it came to things botanical I would be taken by the arm and shown plants of many different types and the insects upon them. She never failed to be able to educate and inform in a manner that was also entertaining and inspiring. I never tired of hearing her tales of adventures in Antarctica and such places and I know she enjoyed hearing all our talks of adventures during member's evenings and the like, once her travelling days were over.

I know that she was still enjoying her old travels until recently because in the last year I had to help out when her slide projector packed up and she wanted to borrow one so she could keep looking at them.

Mary contributed so much to the society over the years as president, editor and speaker and leader of so many walks, and of course as an expert, being able to identify so many unknown plants that were put up as pictures in many of our talks. I know she will be sorely missed. Of course it was not just to our society that she contributed, but to Merthyr Nats, the Wildlife Trust and many other groups, and it was for these reasons she was rightly recognised in the 2008 Honours, with the MBE for Services to Nature Conservation in South Wales.

Mary never married, wildlife was her first love, but that did not stop her having many close friends and I know many of you also remember Mairead Sutherland who she shared many adventures with. Even up into their 80s they were exploring and causing mayhem wherever they went, of course always with a smile between them.

Her books were a feast of information and the fact she was writing and publishing them into her 90s was simply incredible.

To those who do not know Mary so well, you will find a page about her on the

CNS website at <http://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/maryg.htm>. On that page you will find a link to a biography and celebration some of our members prepared for her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party. We showed some of this again at her 90<sup>th</sup> celebration, which we combined with our Christmas celebrations in 2011.

**Andy Kendall**  
**Cardiff Naturalists' Society**  
*Article originally published on the Cardiff Naturalists' Society blog*



© Shenstone

## Where are all the moths?

I have been running a light trap in our garden in Llanishen since the middle of 2005. This spring feels as though it has been the worst. The following tables report the number of moths recorded in February, March and April respectively, with the cumulative total of species recorded up to the end of that month, the number of nights that the trap was operated and the number of moths per night for that month.

### February:

Year	Moths in Month	Cumulative Species	Trap Nights	Moths / Night
2007	10	7	10	1
2008	26	15	17	1.5
2009	28	11	10	2.8
2010	2	3	8	0.25
2011	23	12	6	3.8
2012	17	10	12	1.4
2013	1	2	1	1

### March:

Year	Moths in Month	Cumulative Species	Trap Nights	Moths / Night
2007	182	17	15	12.1
2008	34	20	9	3.8
2009	46	20	6	7.7
2010	34	16	12	2.8
2011	139	31	11	12.6
2012	163	24	16	10.2
2013	6	8	7	0.9

### April:

Year	Moths in Month	Cumulative Species	Trap Nights	Moths / Night
2007	516	55	22	23.5
2008	136	39	16	8.5
2009	60	34	9	6.7
2010	129	32	10	12.9
2011	219	73	13	16.8
2012	19	28	7	2.7
2013	69	17	11	6.2

From the results, it looks superficially that February was a poor month but given that there was only one trapping session it is difficult to really know. Surprisingly, April was not actually as bad as it had been in 2012, and was more or less the same as 2009 had been. March on the other hand was poor and although the relatively low recording effort could be a factor, I caught more moths in 2009 with less effort.

In a 'normal' year (whatever that is), things would be beginning to pick up now that we are into May. So far that has not been the case, and with these cold wet nights, it looks as though trap numbers are going to remain low for a few weeks yet. One wonders how many more poor summers our insect populations can handle?

**David Slade**  
VC41 Lepidoptera Recorder

## Habitat, Fauna and Flora Surveys in Parc Taf Bargoed

For the past few months the warden team and a number of local volunteers and volunteer groups have been working alongside ecologists from *Merlin BioSurveys*, participating in surveying the fauna and flora of Parc Taf Bargoed, Merthyr Tydfil.

Stephen Lloyd, a volunteer and the parks resident bird spotter, said: 'we had an absolutely wonderful time with the surveyors. I learnt so many new things and with the help of Geri Thomas (*Merlin BioSurveys*) I was able to identify two new species of bird. As a disabled person the park gets me out of the house and has helped greatly with my independence. Being a park volunteer has improved my self-esteem. I enjoy seeing nature, and one of the best parts for me is that I get to meet all different people during

*my visits to the park*'.

A big thank you to all those who participated in the surveying of the park.

**Paul Virgin, Environmental & Heritage Warden, Parc Taf Bargoed**  
[www.visitmerthyr.co.uk/attractions/parc-taf-bargoed.aspx](http://www.visitmerthyr.co.uk/attractions/parc-taf-bargoed.aspx)



## Calling Welsh Recorders, Recording groups and other Wildlife Enthusiasts!



iSpot is the Open University's award winning website which was launched in 2009 to help remedy the gap in wildlife ID skills using a unique combination of social networking, informal access to expertise and accredited learning opportunities. We would like to invite our Welsh Recorders, and other Wildlife Enthusiasts to find out more about this unique resource and how it can work to support engagement in biodiversity and wildlife recording in Wales.

### *What can iSpot do for you, your local recording group or organisation?*

**Sharing of knowledge** – the iSpot maps feature allows you to view observations in your area (or further afield) and keep an eye out for interesting sightings and potential new records. You can also provide identifications, help others to learn and engage with local users.

**Badges** – your group representatives can be badged with your logo, and every time they add anything to iSpot the badge appears and links back to your website, putting local iSpot users directly in touch with the activities of your organisation. We know that the badges can provide significant traffic back to recording group websites. Over 90 schemes and societies are registered. To see who, have a look here: <http://www.ispot.org.uk/representatives>

***As of December 2012 iSpot has 23 000 registered users and well over 7000 wildlife observations have been made in Wales to date.***

**Learning and engagement** – as iSpot's Biodiversity Mentor for Wales, I am able to support your organisation in using iSpot as a tool for engagement in identification, both for new recruits or for more knowledgeable volunteer groups. I can deliver talks, workshops, attend events or provide online support. We can also support a particular survey or project by providing a forum for publicity, communication and a follow up support system for participants and their observations.

**Data** – although iSpot is primarily an identification tool, observations made on iSpot do form biological records, which can make a valuable contribution to recording schemes.

**iSpot for mobile** – we now have an updated iSpot app for Android, allowing you to upload observations from your mobile device and have access to the iSpot online community whilst in the field. Visit [http://www.ispot.org.uk/app\\_launch?nav=no\\_likely](http://www.ispot.org.uk/app_launch?nav=no_likely) for more.

**iSpot keys** – these are a novel approach based on Bayesian statistics and are available for mobile. New keys can be developed by users and currently range across a variety of taxonomic groups, covering a range of complexity, from keys aimed at beginners to those only braved by the experts – have a look here: <http://www.ispot.org.uk/webkeys/>



Velvet Shank observed by Graham Cox in Cardiff (<http://www.ispot.org.uk/node/310807>)

### **How else can we help?**

We are constantly looking at new ways in which iSpot can be utilised by expert schemes, societies and local groups and individuals. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss any of the above – we'd really like to increase our support of and engagement with the biodiversity community, at all levels, across Wales.

**Clare Flynn**  
iSpot Biodiversity Mentor for Wales  
[Clare.Flynn@open.ac.uk](mailto:Clare.Flynn@open.ac.uk)



The Open Science  
Laboratory  
An initiative of The Open University  
and The Wolfson Foundation



The Open  
University

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## Mammal Monitoring Network, Wales (MaMoNet)

I would like to introduce a new, one-year project that has become possible via funds from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) (formerly The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)), and The Mammal Society.

The name of the project is **Mammal Monitoring Network, Wales (MaMoNet)**. I have been fortunate enough to be offered the post of Project Officer for this new venture and my main aim is, as it says on the tin – to create a Mammal Monitoring Network across Wales!

The focus will be on harvest mouse and hedgehog initially.

We are looking for volunteers to help us gain valuable data on the population of these species in Wales so that conservation plans can be built around sound science.

In case you have already heard about the Mammals in a Sustainable Environment (MISE) project in Wales, MaMoNet aims to run alongside, with both projects supporting each other. (See below for MISE details).

### HEDGEHOG SURVEY METHODS

The method we will be using for collecting data on hedgehogs is to use footprint tunnels designed by The Mammal Society and which have proved very reliable and popular with users so far. These tunnels can be purchased from The Mammal Society, or alternatively why not have a go at making your own! Instructions for purchasing and making can be found here: <http://www.mammal.org.uk/node/66>.

The tunnels look like this:



If you are a member of a local group, perhaps you could share one or two tunnels amongst yourselves?



Cyfoeth  
Naturiol  
Cymru  
Natural  
Resources  
Wales



As well as data from these footprint tunnels, any ad hoc sightings will also be useful.

### HARVEST MOUSE SURVEY METHODS

The harvest mouse survey will take place during autumn/winter 2013/2014 and will consist of carrying out nest searches and possibly bait pot analysis. A similar survey took place in the 1970s and again in the 1990s so by ensuring those 1km squares are monitored again, we will be able to compare data. We also hope that volunteers will be willing to take on new squares that have not been surveyed before. If you were involved in either or both of these previous surveys, it may be possible for you to survey your original sites.

We will be organising a training session in early autumn and then volunteers can survey their assigned squares.

If you wish to be included in a distribution list to receive further information on the harvest mouse surveys as it becomes available, please do get in touch and let me know.

### WHAT TO DO WITH RECORDS?

We ask that all your hedgehog and harvest mouse records (or indeed any other mammal sightings) be entered onto the online National Mammal Society Atlas which can be found here: <http://www.mammal.org.uk/nmap>

The National Mammal Atlas Project (NMAP) has been running for over a year. The aim of the project is to determine mammal distribution and abundance across the British Isles which will in turn facilitate appropriate mammal conservation. We have had a great response from the public so far with over 7,500 mammal records being submitted via the quick and easy online form!

We realise that not everyone has access to the internet so you are welcome to send your records by post to

The Mammal Society in Southampton (The Mammal Society, 3 The Carronades, New Rd, Southampton SO14 0AA ).

Should you be keen to get involved in either or both surveys please do get in touch for further information. Alternatively, please go ahead and order or make your footprint tunnel to start recording straight away!

### Rebecca Clews-Roberts

Project Officer MaMoNet Wales

Email: [r.clews-roberts@themammalsociety.org](mailto:r.clews-roberts@themammalsociety.org)

Tel: 07743085374

Web: [www.mammal.org.uk](http://www.mammal.org.uk)

Web: [www.mammal.org.uk](http://www.mammal.org.uk)

*(The Mammals in a Sustainable Environment Project (MISE) is a partnership between Natural Resources Wales, The Vincent Wildlife Trust and Snowdonia National Park Authority, in Wales; and Waterford Institute of Technology, Waterford County Council and the National Biodiversity Data Centre in Ireland.*

*The project aims to monitor mammal species of conservation interest, with the help of novel genetic techniques, working with volunteers to raise awareness, and engage the public in mammal survey and conservation work. MISE is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Ireland Wales Programme (INTERREG 4A).*

## Advanced Professional Training (APT) Bioscience

*APT Bioscience is part of the Work Based Learning programme based at Swansea University and funded by the European Social Fund. Our courses aim to equip bioscience professionals with practical experience and specialist knowledge to enhance and supplement their existing laboratory or field skills.*

*We deliver a range of short (2 or 3 day) ecology based courses; from identifying protected species to managing invasive species such as Knotweed. Courses are fully funded subject to eligibility. See [www.swansea.ac.uk/aptbioscience/](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/aptbioscience/) for further details. For more information or to enrol on a course contact Jenni Weston on 01792 29 5379 or email [J.J.Weston@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:J.J.Weston@swansea.ac.uk).*

### **5th to 6th June – Invertebrate Identification**

This Swansea University accredited (10 credits) short course is aimed at environmental professionals or learners aspiring to work in the environmental sector that wish to learn how to identify the major groups of invertebrates. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **18th to 20th June – Techniques in Ecology**

Swansea University accredited (10 credits) short course aimed at environmental professionals who wish to improve their fieldwork and ecological survey skills. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **25th to 27th June – Understanding Protected Species**

Swansea University accredited (10 credits) short course aimed at professionals in any sector that may encounter protected species or need to understand the issues surrounding them for their work. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **3rd to 4th July – Protected Species: Terrestrial Mammals**

This Swansea University accredited (5 credits) short course will provide a detailed account of the ecology, survey techniques and legislation for protected British terrestrial mammal species. Learners will also perform a survey and learn to recognise their signs. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **23rd to 25th July – Invertebrate Identification: Terrestrial**

This Swansea University accredited (5 credits) short course aims to provide learners with the skills to identify the major groups of terrestrial invertebrates and undertake appropriate survey methods. It will focus on easily recognised and familiar insect groups such as butterflies and dragonflies. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **30th to 31st July – Protected Species: Invertebrates**

Protected invertebrate surveys are increasingly a requirement for development. This Swansea University accredited (5 credits) short course provides a detailed account of the ecology, survey techniques and legislation for protected British invertebrate species. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **6th to 8th August – Wild Plant Identification**

Swansea University accredited (10 credits) short course provides basic plant identification training for environmental professionals or learners aspiring to work in the environmental sector. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **27th to 29th August – Techniques in Ecology**

Repeat event. See details for 18th June.

### **4th to 5th September – Protected Species: Amphibians and Reptiles**

Amphibians and reptiles are some of the most frequently encountered animals in Wales. This Swansea University accredited (5 credits) short course provides learners with both theoretical and practical information on their ecology, survey methods and mitigation techniques. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **11th to 12th September – Protected Species: Invertebrates**

Repeat event. See details for 30th July.

### **18th to 19th September – Protected Species: Bats**

This Swansea University accredited (5 credits) short course is aimed at environmental professionals or learners aspiring to work in the sector that wish to learn about the ecology, survey techniques and legislation for bats. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **1st to 3rd October – Marine Ecological Surveys**

A Swansea University accredited (10 credits) short course providing learners with the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to design and conduct basic marine ecological surveys or monitor conservation areas. Course fully funded subject to eligibility.

### **9th to 11th October – Understanding Protected Species**

Repeat event. See details for 25th June.

### **23rd to 24th October – Protected Species: Terrestrial Mammals**

Repeat event. See details for 3rd July.

### **12th to 14th November – Invertebrate Identification**

Repeat event. See details for 5th June.

**View the 2013 timetable online at [www.swan.ac.uk/aptbioscience/files/Prospectus\\_English%202012\\_lab2\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.swan.ac.uk/aptbioscience/files/Prospectus_English%202012_lab2_FINAL.pdf)**

## SEWBRc Biodiversity Blitzes 2013

### Coity Wallia Commons, Bridgend

Thursday 13th June, 12 noon to 12 midnight



Coity Wallia Commons encompasses over 1,000 hectares, from Sarn to Pencoed and back to Blackmill and Glynogwr, north of Bridgend. The commons include a wide variety of habitats such as lowland wet and dry heath, purple moor grass, acid grassland, mixed deciduous woodland, upland oak woodland, rivers, streams, ditches and ponds.

Bird species include barn owl, red kite, snipe, and skylark; whilst mammals such as brown hare and otter are also known to use the commons. Plants such as round-leaved sundew, bog bean, and bog pimpernel have been recorded in the damper areas; whilst insects including small pearl bordered fritillary, bog bush cricket and golden ringed dragonfly have also been spotted around the site.



### Llantarnam Abbey, nr Cwmbran

Saturday 17th August, 10am to 4pm

This is a unique opportunity to visit the privately-owned Llantarnam Abbey, located near Cwmbran. The present Abbey is built on the site of a medieval Cistercian Monastery, and the property was used as a family home, until it was bought by the Sisters of St Joseph in the 1940s.

The site encompasses c.35 ha of land, and comprises a variety of habitats including wet pasture, deciduous woodland, ponds, wet woodland, marshy grassland, hedgerows, and a small orchard within a walled garden. The Afon Llwyd and Dowlais Brook border the site to the north and south. The grounds are not particularly well recorded but records of white-clawed crayfish, dipper and kingfisher are known from the river; whilst pipistrelle bats, nuthatch, song thrush, and great spotted woodpecker have been noted on the site. Insects such as short-winged conehead, elephant hawkmoth, and meadow brown have also been spotted within the grounds; and in 2012, ten species of waxcap fungi (*Hygrocybe*) were recorded on the Abbey lawns.



© Dan Read

The sites are sure to contain a wealth of interesting species which are as yet un-recorded. Join us on the biodiversity blitzes and help us add to the existing knowledge about the sites. These FREE events are open to all wildlife recorders. Please ensure you register your interest with us so we can send you further details of the events.

## Other Bioblitzes...

### Caldicot Castle & Grounds Bioblitz 'We Count for Wildlife' (Monmouthshire) - 31st May & 1st June

The site is 55 acres of parkland with mature trees, woodland, grassland, wet meadows, a lake and river. The castle walls are home to rare plants, and are a roost site for bats. Base camp will be outside the entrance to Caldicot Castle, and parking is available at the Country Park. The bioblitz will start at 8.30m on Friday 31st May, and end at 4pm on Saturday 1st June. If you would like to attend the bat and moth events on Friday (8.30pm to 10.30 pm), please make sure you book a place. No need to book for Saturday. For further information and to book a place, contact Sue Parkinson [sueparkinson@phonecoop.coop](mailto:sueparkinson@phonecoop.coop)

### Rhose Point Bioblitz (Vale of Glamorgan) - 29th June

Look out for further details on the SEWBRc events calendar <http://www.sewbrec.org.uk/event/events-calendar/>

### St Julian's Park Bioblitz (Newport) - 3rd August (10am start)

Meet at 10am at the Christchurch Viewing Point Car Park. There will be books and ID sheets for people that require them. We will reconvene at set times throughout the day for briefing on what species have been found. Any moth recorders who fancy setting up a moth trap overnight would be very welcome. For further information please contact Lucy Kelly on (01633) 656656 or email [lucy.kelly@newport.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.kelly@newport.gov.uk).

## Glamorgan Botany Group

The newly-formed Glamorgan Botany Group has already held its first excursion, which was very successful despite the late start to the spring season and some rather inclement weather!

Four more excursions are planned over the summer, with a focus on collecting comprehensive site records for the BSBI and other databases, initially at least in the eastern half of vice-county 41. It is also hoped that the Group will provide a friendly forum for the swapping of identification tips, and learning more about the flora of the county generally. If you would like to receive details of this year's excursions and be added to the mailing list, please contact:

David Barden, 91 Newbridge Road, Llantrisant, Mid-Glamorgan, CF72 8EY; Email: [dbarden77@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dbarden77@yahoo.co.uk).

**David Barden**

## Odds 'n' Ends

### Allt-yr-yn Nature Reserve Walk, Newport Thursday 13th June 10am-12 midday

As part of Wales Biodiversity Week, join us on a nature walk led by ecologist Mr Pete Williams. Come and discover the flora and fauna that is on your doorstep. Please be advised that suitable footwear and clothing should be worn. Meet in the bottom car park from 9:30. There is limited parking so please car share or walk down to the car park if you are able. For further information please contact Lucy Kelly on (01633) 656656 or email [lucy.kelly@newport.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.kelly@newport.gov.uk)

### USEFUL WEBSITES

**Do you need to know which Vice County you are recording in?  
Want to find out the elevation of the area you are surveying?**

Try this excellent mapping tool, devised by Charlie Barnes, the VC53 & VC54 coleoptera recorder: <http://www.cucaera.co.uk/grp/>  
Zoom in on the map or alternatively enter a grid reference into the search bar.

**Do you need help finding a grid reference.** Try these websites:  
<http://gridreferencefinder.com/>  
<http://www.bnhs.co.uk/focuson/grabagridref/html/index.htm>

### UK FUNGUS DAY

**13th October 2013**

The idea for a UK wide fungal event stems from the success of the 2012 event at the National Botanical Garden Wales. The main date for the inaugural UK Fungus Day event is Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2013 but there are many events, lectures, science displays and outreach activities planned under the 'UK Fungus Day umbrella' that will run over the weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> October and in the weeks preceding and following the day. The aim of the event is to raise the profile of fungi and fungal research throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

### Swansea Garden Wildlife Survey

If you live in Swansea, the Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales want to know what species you have seen in your garden. Get involved and report your garden sightings online [www.welshwildlife.org/where-i-live/wheres-swanseas-wildlife/](http://www.welshwildlife.org/where-i-live/wheres-swanseas-wildlife/)

### Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

**SEWBReC**  
13 St Andrew's Crescent  
Cardiff, CF10 3DB

**Telephone:** 029 20 64 1110  
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[@sewbrec](https://twitter.com/sewbrec)

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