



Gwent - Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

Issue 12—Spring
May 2015

Welcome to the twelfth issue of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter!

The past couple of years has seen a growing interest in the mycology of south east Wales, and there is plenty of sightings news from Gwent and Glamorgan Fungi groups (p4-5). Local recorder Colin Titcombe also writes on the subject of fungi, and shows how repeat site visits can help increase our understanding of the mysteries of this oft overlooked taxonomic group.

There are lots of new online resources becoming available as the technical world develops; the launch of the online East Glamorgan Bird Atlas (p8) is a highlight, but there are also new blogs, social media presences and SEWBR^eC data tools all becoming available to aid wildlife recording. Why not try out these new resources, and see how they can help you.

The newsletter also highlights the many events, surveys and projects which are providing opportunities to get out recording this summer. Here's hoping for a sunny one. Enjoy!

Elaine Wright, SEWBR^eC (Editor)

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The One that Got Away:

Dealing with the Fleeting Unidentified and Unrecordable

A couple of weeks ago I was strolling through the park in front of National Museum Cardiff when I spotted something glittering and shimmering low through the air: it was unmistakably a micromoth! I have a particular interest in micromoths – to my eyes the most exquisite of creatures woven from earthly matter – but am really only a beginner. Naturally I gave chase and followed as it sped past an ornamental cherry tree, over a patch of speedwells and celandines and alighted in the deeply-grooved bark of a Scots Pine, not far from a cluster of the curious speckled lichen cones of *Luffia ferchaultella*.

As I drew closer it gave off a dark bronze iridescence and there appeared to be two pale markings on each wing. It was a bright day, and when my careless shadow whispered over the moth, it took off again and blundered evasively down into a spider's web. Luckily it wrested itself free just before the murderous fangs could take hold and flitted onto a nearby patch of bare ground. I fumbled in my pocked for a trusty sample pot, to be able to examine the moth in a scientific fashion back in the requisite calm of the SEWBR^eC office, and after glancing away for not more than 1.5 seconds, realised that this wondrous insect had gone.

I searched the environs repeatedly, beating the undergrowth, shaking branches, watching for the glinting truth of that tiny moth coming back, but despite concerted looking then and on subsequent lunch breaks, I was unable to locate it or its kind again.

There are several candidates for what the micro could have been. Was it *Esperia sulphurella*? The dorsal blotch seemed wrongly placed. One of the *Micropterigidae* perhaps? But its metallic sheen was of

more base elements. Or *Lampronia luzella*? Surely too early in the year ... In that case what about a *Glyphipterix*? No, not right, it lacked their guppy-tail punctuation on the wings. I consulted Dave Slade and after extensive discussions we drew a blank; without hard evidence my sighting of that moth would never be more than a partially-formed story, one with no proper end.

It is always frustrating not knowing. All those who go after flying things will surely have experienced their uncanny ability to melt away in the flicker of a moment, to disappear around invisible corners and just as well cross into another dimension. That dimension is mystery – unaccountable, unreckonable, unrecordable. Maybe these tantalising glimpses of half-recognized creatures – full of possibility and uncertainty – keep spurring us on, reminding us that so much in nature is still beyond our understanding. And they show us that the job of biological recording is a joyous but bottomless task, one that can never be complete.

David Hawkins

LEMUR+ Biodiversity Information Management Trainee, SEWBR^eC



A fleeting glimpse © David Hawkins

East Glamorgan Wildlife Blog

Many of you may not be aware that the East Glamorgan Wildlife Blog; it covers the whole of the eastern side of the county and is intended to complement the 'sister' blog *Gower Wildlife* (<http://gowers.blogspot.co.uk/>), which covers West Glamorgan.

The East Glamorgan blog was set up by Adam Mantell in 2013, but since Adam moved to Northern Ireland last year I have taken over the small role of blog administrator. The blog covers anything wildlife-related as long as it concerns the East Glamorgan area, including identification queries, interesting discoveries and details of forthcoming events.

So far there have been 156 posts on the blog, covering a diverse mix of taxonomic groups from slime moulds to crane-flies. However, as is often the case, there are

just a handful of regular contributors. We would really like more contributions from other local naturalists to increase the diversity and frequency of posts on the blog.

It is easy to sign up if you have a Blogger account. If you'd like to post something on the blog, please email me at the address

below and I'll add you to the list of authors. The web address is:

www.eastglamwildlife.blogspot.co.uk georgetordoff@hotmail.com



A beautiful slime mould, possibly *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*, which featured on the blog in 2013 © Mark Evans.

George Tordoff

georgetordoff@hotmail.com

Monmouthshire Meadows Group appeal for Kingcoed Meadows



2014 Open Day at Kingcoed Meadows © Jon Dunkleman

MMG is hoping to raise £96,000 to secure the purchase of 12 acres of wonderful hay meadows at Kingcoed near Raglan. An appeal was launched in March and already we have had some very generous donations. The campaign to raise the funds and safeguard two fields is supported by two TV personalities.

Kate Humble wrote:

"The Kingcoed Meadows are a real Monmouthshire treasure. Well managed meadows are hugely important for countless species, for insects like butterflies, birds, small mammals and, of course, for some of Britain's most beautiful wild flowers. But wildflower meadows have be-

come increasingly rare and the work of the Monmouthshire Meadows Group to preserve these wonderful assets to our countryside and give people access to them is crucial. The Kingcoed Meadows are now for sale. Please do all you can to help the Monmouthshire Meadows Group buy this land and keep it as the very special place it is for the people and wildlife of Monmouthshire."

Welsh presenter Iolo Williams said:

"When I was a young lad growing up in mid-Wales, flower-rich hay meadows were a common sight throughout the land. Today, however, we have lost over 98% of this wildlife-rich habitat and it is vital that we do everything possible to protect the few that remain. The Monmouthshire Meadows Group is hoping to buy Kingcoed Meadows, 12 acres of flower-rich grassland that supports adders' tongue fern, birds' foot trefoil, southern marsh orchid and a colourful array of other plants. Safeguarding these fields will

ensure that they can be enjoyed by future generations. Please give generously to help this worthwhile appeal."

Details of the appeal are on the Meadow Group's website

www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.

Any donation however small will be greatly appreciated.

If the fields were to be sold for intensive agriculture the work of the current owners in restoring the meadows would be undone. Moreover they received Tir Gofal payments for 12 years to help in the restoration process. What is, after all, tax-payers' money could be wasted if the meadows were to be agriculturally improved. Flower-rich meadows are vital for our bees and other pollinators, and the purchase of these wonderful meadows is supported by local Kingcoed members of the Meadows Group.

Steph Tyler

VC35 Joint Plant Recorder

Loose Ends

A few years ago, while walking in the Highlight area of Wentwood Forest, I found a tree that was unfamiliar to me. Initially, it looked like a Sweet Chestnut with small leaves but further scrutiny suggested a 'chestnut leaved oak'; however, there are a number of oaks that have leaves similar to those of Sweet Chestnut. By keeping an eye on the tree I was able to establish a number of crucial identification features: 1) The tree was completely deciduous; 2) the buds were surrounded by 'whiskers'; and 3) the twigs were ornamented with pale (whitish) lenticels. So far so good, these features indicated that this tree was a Chestnut-leaved Oak (*Quercus castaneifolia*), but I could find no acorns to aid a satisfactory identification.

During the autumn of 2014 I visited the site again hoping that acorns had been produced during the warm summer, but no, there were still no acorns. This visit did, however, have one benefit, as I found a second tree of this type within ten metres of the first tree – but this one had not produced acorns either.



Spray of 'Chestnut-leaved Oak' foliage © Colin Titcombe

There is unfortunately, one further twist to this story. The Chestnut-leaved Oak occurs naturally in the Caucasus Mountains and parts of Iran. A one-time variety (sub-species) named *incana* also occurs in North Africa, but has now been accepted as a distinct species - *Quercus afares* - and with no identification details available to me at present, I would be unable to tie the species

down even if the trees produced acorns.

My second loose end concerns a fungus, but first a few broader observations. The 'larger fungi' come in a whole host of different forms and are generally present in the environment all of the time. We, however, only notice them when they produce their sporophores (mushrooms, Brackets, spindles etc.).

The production of these sporophores varies considerably from one species to another. In some, spore production and release via these sporophores is seasonal, with examples typical of the winter, spring, summer or autumn. In other species these structures may appear whenever the conditions are suitable. Close to my home a lime tree was felled several years ago and the rotting stump was colonised by at least two distinctive fungi. One of these is the Winter Fungus (*Flammulina velutipes*) which produces its sporophores late in November or early December, with them often persisting through the winter period into early March. They are well-

named. The second species is Disappearing Inkcap, also well-named. After developing en masse the 'caps' disappear again very quickly. Because I walk past this particular lime-stump on most days of the year, I have been able to record the fact that this species produces its sporophores (fairy caps) whenever the right conditions prevail. In 2014 that was on nine separate occasions – 2nd May, 30th May, 7th June, 18th August,

13th September, 25th October, 9th November, 24th November and the 4th December. This species then is certainly not seasonal in the formation of its sporophores.



Sporophores of Oak Polypore (*Buglossoporus pulvinus*), photographed on 'Curley Oak' in Summer 2005 © Jim Pitcher

On the 27th July 2005 I found the rare bracket fungus known as the Oak Polypore (*Buglossoporus pulvinus*) growing on the inside of the hollow Curly Oak in Wentwood Forest (the first record for this species in Wales). Positive identification did not come until a year later, when the mycologists Shelley Evans and Martha Crockatt collected specimen material (under licence) from the brackets which developed again in 2006. The brackets of this species tend to be produced seasonally (beginning in late July) and in subsequent years I tried to make annual visits in order to record the regularity of sporophore production, but didn't always succeed in this aim. Nonetheless, I was able to ascertain that the species does not produce brackets every year. My findings are as follows; Sporophores (brackets) were present in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2013. Brackets were not produced in 2010, 2011, or 2014. I did not visit the site in 2008 or 2012.

Continues overleaf...

Loose Ends *cont.*

Another bracket fungus of only sporadic sporophore production occurs on the Pant-y-Goitre Oak, a veteran oak standing in the parkland between Pant-y-Goitre House and the A471 (Usk to Abergavenny road), but closer to the road. The dense cluster of brackets were first noted in October 2009 and photographed in 2010, but the species was not identified. After consultation it was accepted that the brackets were probably those of the Sulphur Polypore (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) which had, in the aging process, lost their sulphur colour. The brackets did seem, howev-

er, to be quite fresh, so I resolved to observe them when newly emerged. This has, unfortunately, been easier said than done, and now, five years later, I have yet to achieve this aim. The problem is that I live some distance from this site and do not travel this way regularly at all. If anyone does witness the sulphur-coloured stage brackets on this oak I would be very pleased to know about it.

Colin Titcombe



Brackets on the Pant-y-goitre Oak 2010
© Colin Titcombe

Mycoparasites in the Mist



Powdercap Strangler (*Squamanita paradoxa*)
© Mike Bright

On a damp and murky morning last November Glamorgan Fungus Group visited Mynydd Y Gaer (near Bridgend) in search of a Mycoparasite, the rather sinister sounding Powdercap Strangler (*Squamanita paradoxa*). This murderous mushroom is a rarity, with only 27 confirmed British records. This was not the first time that group members had searched this site for the strangler. Rich Wright had been keeping an eye out for it for the last 4 years but had drawn a blank on each occasion. This made it all the more

special when we stumbled across two specimens within the space of 100 yards!

Powdercap Stranglers are parasitic on the Earthy Powdercap (another fungus – *Cystoderma amianthinum*). They take over their host, so the Strangler grows out of the stem of the Earthy Powdercap - literally strangling off the top part of its poor victim - producing a two-tone fungi (an orange lower stem with a blue grey upper stem and cap - see picture).

Mike Bright

Glamorgan Fungus Group Update

We recently held our 2015 AGM at Parc Slip Visitors' Centre with 23 attendees. The following Officers were elected:

Chairman Mark Steer
Treasurer Graham Cox
Secretary Mike Bright
Vice Secretary Mark Steer

Professor Lynne Boddy of Cardiff University gave a fascinating talk on Fungi and Global Change after the AGM.

Further information about the group is available from Mike Bright (email: glamorganfungi@gmail.com).

Mark Steer

Glamorgan Fungus Group Foray Programme

- Sat 30th May Merthyr Mawr, near Bridgend
- Sat 20th June Castell Coch Woods, near Cardiff
- Sat 25th July Margam Park, near Port Talbot
- Sat 8th August Hensol Forest, Vale of Glam.
- Sat 22nd August Mynydd y Gaer, Pencoed
- Sat 12th Sept Penlleger Forest, Swansea
- Sat 26th Sept Llantrisant Common & Forest
- Sun 11th Oct National Fungus Day, Parc Slip Visitors' Centre, Near Bridgend
- Sat 31st Oct Wern Ddu, near Caephilly

November/December events to be confirmed; we may also run additional ad hoc mini Forays during the year.



Crepidotus cesatii © Mike Bright

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/GlamorganFungusGroup

Twitter: www.twitter.com/GlamorganFungi

Fungi 'Lost and Found Project'

Glamorgan Fungi Group is involved in a project being run by Kew, to try to find a Priority target list of 100 rarely recorded fungi. More information at: www.kew.org/discover/blogs/kew-science/rare-british-fungi-genuinely-uncommon-or-simply-ignored

There are some Rusts and Smuts on the list which are fairly host specific and Glamorgan Fungi Group would like anyone finding the host plants with a Rust or Smut to get in touch.

Mark Steer

Lost & Found Target Species

Yellow Star of Bethlehem *Gagea lutea*
Smut *Vankya (Ustilago) ornithogali*
Viper's-grass *Scorzonera humilis*
Rust *Puccinia scorzonerae*
Cowbane *Cicuta virosa*
Rust *Puccinia cicutae*
Lonicera spp.
Ascomycetes *Lasibotrys loniceriae*
(Black spots on living leaves)
Meadow Saffron *Colchicum autumnale*
Leaf Smut *Urocystis colchici*
Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*
Rust *Polystigma rubrum*

Gwent Fungus Group Recorders' Report

This is a short report on interesting things recorded mainly by Gwent Fungus Group, but with the addition of any other records which have come my way during the year.



Nitschkia confertula © Sheila Spence

We started the year with a visit to Llantarnam Abbey in Cwmbran, our second visit to this site, which in Autumn 2012 proved to be excellent for waxcaps and other grassland fungi. On this occasion it proved it was worth the revisit: not a huge haul of species, but some unusual ones did turn up, including *Nitschkia confertula*, for which I can only find a few sites in Wales, such as at Mawddach Estuary and Llanishen Reservoir Embankments, but none in VC35. Likewise, although not especially rare and probably under-recorded, we found *Hypoxylon petriniae*, which does not appear to have been recorded in VC35 before.

At Wern Fawr, Llanover: *Cudoniella clavus* var. *grandis* had only been recorded once before in VC35, in 1999 at Coed y Cerrig, whilst *Chaetosphaeria callimorpha* had been recorded by Gwent Fungus Group at Priory Grove in June 2013 plus two other records on the Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland (FRDBI) in 1992 in Fedw Wood and in 1997 again at Wern Fawr.

Anthostomella appendiculosa had not been recorded at Coed y Cerrig, or indeed VC35 before, although back in May 2013 Shelly Stroud also recorded *Anthostomella rubicola*, also on *Rubus*, at Silent Valley. *Psilachnum chrysostigma* has changed its name from *Pezizella chrysostigma*, and whilst it is not uncommonly found on *Dryopteris* there are only 14 other records for it on FRDBI for VC35.

The foray at The Skirrid provided a larger list of specimens including *Crocicreas dolosellum*, a small cup fungus found on nettle stems. Again, not particularly rare but certainly under-recorded in this county as there are only two other records going back to 1997 at Coed y Cerrig and Wern Fawr.

Veronica Beynon's interesting discovery of *Lepiota pseudolilacina* is a first for VC35, and I can only find a couple of other records across Wales, Colwyn Bay in 1978 and Prestatyn in 1983.



Lepiota pseudolilacina © Sheila Spence

Cefn Ila near Usk was a new site and only a small area proved to be good for fungi; following a very dry spell there was not a huge amount around anywhere though. Having a stream running through the lower area of the small

wood helped. Interesting finds included Ergot on grass flowers (*Claviceps purpurea*), *Inonotus radiatus*, the Alder Bracket and *Rhodotus palmatus* or Wrinkled Peach on fallen *Ulmus*. I could find only two previous records for this now unusual fungus, one in Lady Park Wood in 1977, the other found by Bob Roome in 2012 at Llantarnam Abbey. St Julian's, Christchurch was quite a productive site, despite its steepness. *Aleuria aurantia*, the Orange Peel Fungus, is certainly not uncommon but has only been recorded 8 times before in VC35, at just 6 different sites. Roger James' *Apignomonium veneta* seems to be a first record for Wales.



Fomitopsis pinicola © Mike Kilner

Mike Kilner found a rare bracket fungi, *Fomitopsis pinicola*, sometimes referred to as the Red Belted Bracket. Several fruiting bodies were found on fence-posts in Griffithstown during February 2015. The fungus was determined by Sheila Spence and confirmed by Dr Martyn Ainsworth from Kew's mycology department.

Overall some 222 records have been added to the Gwent Fungus Group database this year, we lost one foray due to bad weather so not a bad haul.

Sheila Spence
VC35 Fungi Recorder

Margam Bat Project Update



Lesser Horseshoe Bat © Margam Bat Project

Margam Country Park is confirmed as one of the best bat sites in South Wales, with 11 species known to be present. The Margam Bat Project has been set up to find out how bats use the park, combining scientific research with regular public events. The project is run by volunteers with support from Margam Country Park, Neath Port Talbot Council's Countryside and Wildlife Team and several local consultancies.

In 2014 a group of volunteers got together to form Margam Bat Project with the aim of finding and studying all bat roosts in the park. The project has already made new discoveries.

There are 18 species of bat in the UK and 11 have been confirmed in the park, with further surveys expecting to find three more soon. Work over the winter has included a scientific study of roosting Lesser Horseshoe bats in the castle cellars – one of the rarest species in the UK. A surprise find during this work was two Greater Horseshoe Bats, their larger cousins and even rarer in this area.

The group have been working with the production company filming Da Vinci's Demons at Margam Park, to help them work alongside the bats that are using their set as a roost. They have also

trained Council staff and volunteers on a variety of topics including how to run a bat walk and how to assess trees for bat potential.

Events are planned throughout 2015, including public bat walks, free training and surveying. On 29th August,

International Bat Night will be celebrated with the biggest ever survey of the castle.

All of the finds are collated by the Council's Countryside and Wildlife Team, who use them to inform other projects and essential work to the historic buildings and structures. All UK bats are protected by law, therefore all work of the Margam Bat Project is done under licence.

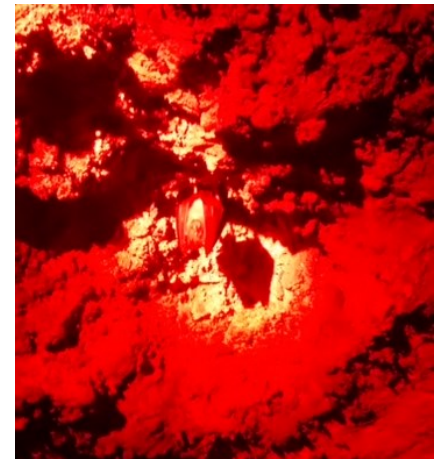
"It's been incredibly helpful having such a knowledgeable group of volunteers working in partnership with Margam Park Staff. The information already collated has provided evidence of at least one new species that we were not aware of. We are looking forward to seeing what else can be found." Alison Lloyd, Duty Officer, Margam Country Park.

"Having a site with so many bat species, that we can come back to time and again, is going to really help with long term studies of bat behaviour. Linking with Swansea University on student projects will help us achieve this." Rebecca Sharp, Ecologist, Neath Port Talbot Council.

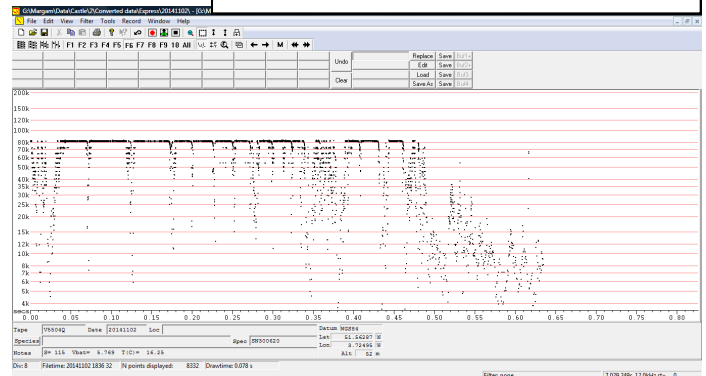
Laura Palmer, one of the founders of the Margam Bat Project commented *"It's great that this project is in such a public place. We are able to run bat walks throughout the year and keep everyone updated via Facebook."*



Anyone can get involved with the free, basic training provided. All events, including public bat walks, will be advertised on the facebook page.



Greater Horseshoe Bat found roosting in Margam Castle (above) and a sonogram of a Greater Horseshoe call (below) © Margam Bat Project



Training event © Margam Bat Project

Laura Palmer
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www.facebook.com/margambatproject

Pwll Waun Cynon Nature Reserve Project



Grass collection © Carys Solman

Nature Reserve, near Mountain Ash, thanks to a Biffa Award Grant.

The site is bordered by the Cynon River and comprises a large pond and marsh, meadows, and woodland, all of which were given to the Trust by Lord Aberdare in 1986.

Important tasks over the next couple of years will be to bring the meadows back into management, clear the site of invasive non-native species, and encourage greater positive use by local communities. The Valleys Volunteer group will

be on-site every Tuesday and Wednesday, to carry out a variety of management tasks and wildlife surveys, and they need your help!

Get in touch with the Valleys Officer on 07896 798 371 or c.solman@welshwildlife.org if you would like to come along and help to manage the reserve or offer your skills as a naturalist.

Carys Solman
WTSWW Valleys Officer



The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales have begun a two-year management project at Pwll Waun Cynon

Parc Taf Bargoed Events

Over 20 members of the public, both adults and children, took part in a fun activity making nest boxes as part of National Nest Box week (14th—21st February). The participants were given a talk on the importance of providing nesting opportunities for some of our smaller cavity nesting birds. The children also helped the warden install some of the constructed nest boxes around the park as well as being given the opportunity to take some of the brightly decorated nest boxes home with them to install into their gardens.

Paul Virgin
Environmental and Heritage Warden



National Nest Box Week © Paul Virgin

Parc Taf Bargoed will be running free family events throughout the school summer holidays (all 1pm—3pm):

- 21st July: Woodland People
- 23rd July: Nature Artwork
- 28th July: Wildlife Safari
- 30th July: History of Taf Bargoed Park
- 4th Aug: Big Butterfly Count
- 6th Aug: Grasshopper Hunt
- 11th Aug: Dragonfly & Damselfly Hunt
- 18th Aug: Minibeasts
- 20th Aug: Wildflowers & Friends
- 27th Aug: Bird Spotting

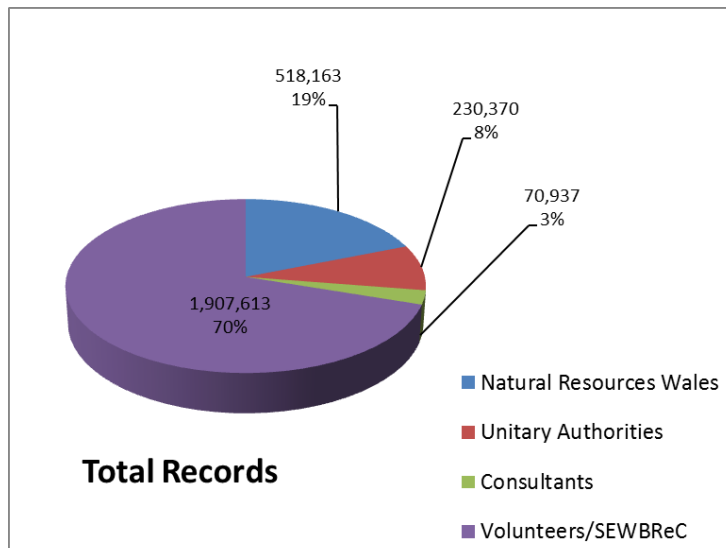
Booking essential, call Paul on 07515189844.

The Source of SEWBReC's Records

During SEWBReC's formative years, whilst trying to secure support from both funders and the recording community, we would regularly quote:

"It is estimated that 70% of all biological records in existence are gathered by voluntary recorders"

I forget now where we originally got that figure, but we've been running long enough now to pull our own figure from the database, and the results were a pleasant surprise!



What this chart does not show however, is that much of the data assigned to Natural Resources Wales and the Unitary Authorities were also generated by volunteer recorders. To unpick these figures will take a bit more work but for now, many thanks to everyone that has submitted a record over the past 11 years to help prove one of our favourite statistics!

David Slade

Rudi's Tarka Challenge Update: Lampreys!



Rudi with Lampreys © Mike Bright

For the last 4 years I have been searching for our elusive Lamprey and at the end of April (with the help of Greg Jones) I finally managed to see some.

We have 3 species of Lamprey in the UK: Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) and the baby of the bunch, the Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*). The scientific name *Petromyzon* means 'stone suckers', they have a circular disc structure around their mouth which they use to attach themselves to stones like an anchor to stop them getting washed away. In Henry Williamsons story 'Salar the Salmon' Salar is attacked by *Petromyzon* the lamprey whilst living at sea but manages to get away.

The River and Brook Lamprey are catadromous (they spawn in fresh water). But only the Brook Lamprey spends its whole life in fresh water and it was this species that Greg helped me find during April. The eggs of the Brook Lam-



Lampreys © Mike Bright

prey hatch into larvae which live in the mud and silt of the cleanest of our brooks, rivers and streams. The eyeless larvae live for 3 to 5 years feeding on detritus before metamorphosing into adults. During this process they develop eyes and teeth and a sucker pad but lose their intestinal tract (strange how it loses the ability to eat once it has

developed its teeth!). The mature adults can be up to 15cm long but die soon after spawning. The larvae are much smaller. They may be under recorded as they can be almost impossible to see unless you are lucky enough to witness them spawning in Spring.

Rudi Bright
Age 11

East Glamorgan Bird Atlas Goes Live

No doubt you've already heard about (or seen) the East Glamorgan Bird Atlas. Following the BTO survey of 2007 - 11, the Glamorgan Bird Club had amassed a large amount of information that was fed in to the National Atlas. It was decided that we should produce our own local Atlas. The National Atlas maps data at a 10km² resolution, whilst the local Atlas is generally at 2km² level. Initially we aimed to produce a book but after much deliberation it was decided to publish a web-based production. This has some ad-

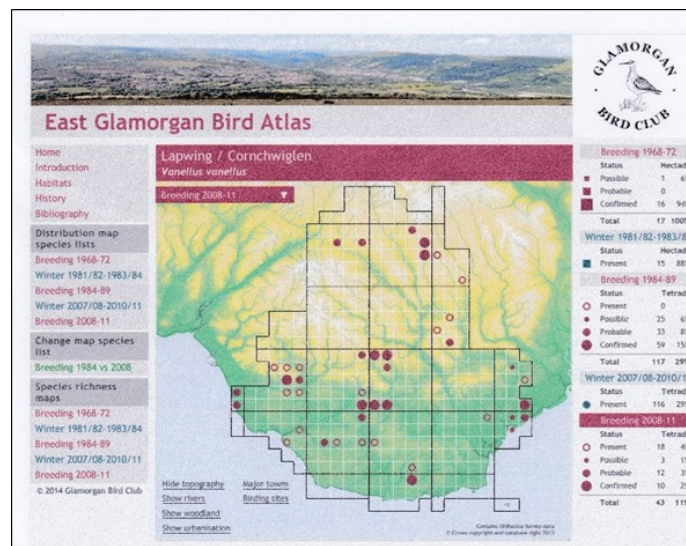
miss out and I know that many still prefer to have the hard copy.

The web address is:

www.eastglamorganatlas.org.uk

There is a link to it from both the Glamorgan Bird Club and SEWBRc websites.

Many thanks must go to the following people: Dave Slade from SEWBRc for handling all the data; Wayne Morris, the BTO Regional Representative; Daniel Jenkins-Jones, the BTO WeBS co-ordinator; Rob Nottage, former BTO Regional Representative; and Chris Dee from Garganey Consulting, who designed the website. It's been a long haul but we got there in the end.



vantages, notably the fact that we could include all our data, including past surveys. It is much cheaper to produce and is in full colour. It will be possible to edit data and make additions later. Conversely those that haven't got access to the web will

The above image is a screen shot of the Atlas. It is impossible to highlight all the features here. Why not visit the site and try it out? I know that some research has also been undertaken using the data provided.

Alan Rosney
Glamorgan Bird Club Committee

We Count for Wildlife Monmouth BioBlitz



© Sue Parkinson

Vauxhall Fields, the River Monnow and Drybridge Nature Park where there is a pond and woodland. Further activities will take place in the River Monnow and along its banks. The area is a well-used open

space. Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Board is organising its third public BioBlitz event in Monmouth this June. In previous years, the event has focussed on a single site, but this year will incorporate several sites to make the most of a variety of habitats and species experts. The idea behind the event is to raise awareness of the importance of green spaces on the edge of town, provide opportunities to explore habitats, and find out more about species with experts, as well as increasing public understanding of the importance of wildlife identification and recording.

The first day, Friday 26th June, will offer a range of activities to schools, with Overmonnow School booking all of the available places. The day will focus on

On the Friday evening a 'bats for beginners' talk and walk will be provided with members of Monmouthshire Bat Group, using an Anabat recorder to identify species as well as providing hand-held bat detectors for members of the public to use. We will also be running a moth trap if the weather is suitable, to be opened the following morning.

Saturday 27th June will be our public BioBlitz day "We Count for Wildlife", with a wide range of activities taking place. Canoe safaris will be available down the River Monnow, looking for aquatic species, and kick sampling will take place in the river shallows looking for invertebrates. Pond dipping will be available

throughout the day at Drybridge Nature Park pond, just call by to take part. There will also be various walks and talks taking place, led by experts, including a talk on the fascinating life cycle of salmon and a display of poaching equipment with retired water bailiff George Woodward. Ben Rowson, Molluscs expert from National Museum Wales will also be present with information on the remarkable world of slugs and snails. More activities will be available at Two River Meadow, with Gwent Wildlife Trust's Andy Karran leading walks to identify a wide range of species including birds and plants at this interesting site where the River Monnow joins the Wye. Barbara Brown from OPAL (Open Access Laboratories) will be running bug hunts and invertebrate surveys through the day.

All records collected throughout the event will be submitted to SEWBReC. If you would like to receive a programme for the day, or would be interested in helping as a volunteer, please contact Sue Parkinson.

Email: sueparkinson@phonecoop.coop
Phone: 01989 770828.

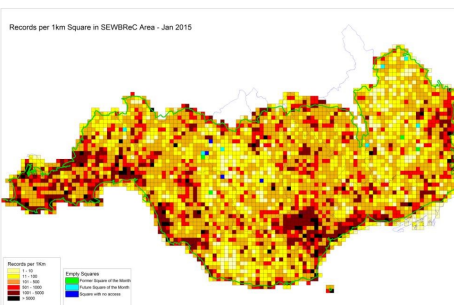
Sue Parkinson
Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Board

SEWBReC Square of the Month update

It's been just over two years since the start of the SEWBReC "Square of the Month" initiative, a project aiming to fill in all the empty 1km squares (i.e. those devoid of wildlife records) in South East Wales. During this time, we have promoted 46 squares, 39 of which now contain wildlife records. An amazing 5,000 records have been added to those 39 squares, a fantastic achievement in just 2 years!

There is a single remaining empty square yet to feature in the project, which will be our June Square Of The Month. But don't worry; we will be continuing the project by moving onto squares containing ten or fewer records.

Our Species of the Month project, targeting common yet under recorded species, is also going well, with just over 400 records



Species density map for SEWBReC area

added for the eight species we have targeted so far.

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to the project. A special gold star mention to Kate Stinchcombe, Aislinn Harris et al, who managed to find

the April Species of the Month (Rabbit) in the April Square of the Month for Gwent (ST3593)!

Previously featured Squares and Species can be found on our website www.sewbrec.org.uk.

If you are interested in receiving updates about the Square / Species of the Month, please get in contact to be added to our distribution list.

Email: info@sewbrec.org.uk
Phone: 029 2064 1110

Elaine Wright
Communications & Enquiries Officer

SEWBRcC'S Online Data Tools

SEWBRcCORD

SEWBRcC's online data entry portal (which can be found at www.sewbreCORD.org.uk) continues to prove an extremely popular tool to enable recorders to share their sightings and photos with us. The number of records has been growing rapidly with over 1,000 records per week being captured in recent weeks. The total number of records on SEWBRcCORD now stands at a very impressive 41,400.

Thank you to everybody who has taken the time to enter their records which are rapidly incorporated into our main database where they will be frequently used to inform decisions that may affect biodiversity.

If you have not yet tried using SEWBRcCORD, please visit www.sewbreCORD.org.uk and click on the 'Create new account' link. You will then receive an activation email. If that doesn't arrive in your email inbox, it may have been moved to your junk or spam folder. If you have any difficulties registering, or if you have registered in the past but never activated your account, please contact Dave Slade (david.slade@sewrec.org.uk) who will issue you a new password and help you get up and running.

LOCAL RECORDS CENTRES WALES DATA ACCESS TOOL (DAT)

This tool (which can be found at www.lrcwalesdat.org), allows users access to the combined wildlife records held at the four Welsh Local Records Centres (LRCs), including SEWBRcC. Some recent system improvements have greatly sped up the whole website and so, if you haven't visited before, it is well worth a look!

There is no need to register to use the site. Simply visit www.lrcwalesdat.org and click on either of the following two options:

See species records we hold around a given point which returns a summary of species records we hold for a 1km grid square. Please note that sensitive species records will not be returned in summary lists, but the number of sensitive species records found will be shown.

See a distribution map for a species – this option will produce a 10km square Wales distribution map for a given species. Zooming allows you to see a 1km square distribution, although sensitive records will only ever be shown at 10km square resolution.

Any feedback would be very gratefully received as your views will be taken into account in the future development of the DAT! Please pass your comments to Dave Slade at the SEWBRcC office (david.slade@sewrec.org.uk).

Adam Rowe

SEWBRcC Manager

Brief SEWBRcC News

FUNDING UPDATE

The impacts of austerity and public sector cuts are still being felt at SEWBRcC and 2015/16 is going to be another challenging year for us financially. At the time of writing we are busy finalising all of our funding agreements for the year, but it seems inevitable that despite increasing overheads, we will have to make do with a reduced income from our public sector partners. Despite the recent and very welcome confirmation of continued support from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for 2015/16, there are further doubts about where our funding will come from looking further ahead, especially as the Welsh Government (WG) is in the midst of restructuring its environmental funding packages (see: <http://gov.wales/funding/grants/environment>). We know that the Welsh Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) make a vital contribution towards the evidence base that is required for WG and NRW's integrated natural resource management agenda, but we continue to push for recognition of this fact at every opportunity. Watch this space for further news!

As has frequently been the case in recent years, commercial sales have been SEWBRcC's saving grace financially. As predicted in the last newsletter, 2014/15 broke all previous records for sales of our data products and services to commercial users. 2015/16 may well be the first year when income from the private sector surpasses public sector income. A key task for this year and coming years is to cement our role as an indispensable and good-value source of quality biodiversity data for both sectors, as well as for our NGO customers.

RECORDERS' FORUM EVENTS 2015

You may recall from the last newsletter that during 2015 we are trialling new formats for our Recorders' Forum events. The trial is being conducted in a bid to identify the most effective ways of providing information and support to our local recording community within the confines of the limited staff and financial resources available to us.

The first part of this trial was the joint Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Forum which took place in Caerleon in January. The second stage will be a second joint Forum event which we will be combining with the SEWBRcC AGM. The date has been confirmed as Saturday 21st November 2015, although the venue has not yet been fixed. It is most likely to be a suitably accessible venue in Cardiff or the A470 corridor. Full details will be publicised nearer the time, but please put the date in your diaries, as we already have a number of interesting presentations lined up.

In late 2015, after both events have taken place, we will seek detailed feedback from participants and choose the most popular format for future events.

Adam Rowe

SEWBRcC Manager

Garden Recording Challenge

For the majority of people, gardens are the little pockets of nature which we will spend the most time in, visit most frequently, and gaze at most often. But are we taking the next step, and recording all the wildlife living out there under our very noses? Since moving to a new house last year (complete with the small patch of concrete which passes for a garden in central Cardiff), I have been making an effort to record every flying crawling and sprouting species which has appeared in this, my local "patch".



My small garden, and the car park "extension area"



The obvious starting point for any garden species list is also the taxon group which most wildlife recorders start with - birds. As my garden consists literally of a few paving slabs surrounded by gravel (now heavily disguised by a variety of plant pots), I allowed myself a little cheat and included the small courtyard / car park behind my house as part of the "garden". This area has a few shrubs and a voracious flock of House Sparrows willing to consume all the sunflower seeds I can provide, plus the occasional visiting blue tit. Luckily flyovers are also allowed, and I have gradually built up to a small bird list of sixteen species.



Zebra Spider (*Salticus*) © Elaine Wright

I have tried, and failed, to run a moth trap in the garden, but sadly the surrounding street lights prove too much of a draw for any moths to be interested. Fortunately, the unofficial trapping method of "lights on, windows open" has been much more successful, and I have recorded twenty-seven moth species so far.

As for my favourites, the creepy crawlies, I have found a very pleasing four species of ladybird (all native!), six snails, five spiders, two harvestmen, four woodlice, two orthoptera and five centipede species, plus various other bits and bobs. Most unexpectedly, one of the centipedes turned out to be *Henia vesuviana*, a species only recorded once before in Wales. Centipede expert and all round invertebrate recorder extraordinaire Greg Jones determined this specimen, and had it confirmed by national expert Tony Barber. Finding a second for Wales species in a Cardiff backyard seems like a shining example of what treasures can lie just beyond your doorstep (and is also a reflection on how under recorded much of our wildlife truly is!).



Henia vesuviana © Greg Jones

After a year, I am now mostly reduced to scrabbling around in gravel looking for new species; I've even started recording plants, which I have always shunned in the past. I am currently building up the courage to have a good rummage in the communal shrubbery (my neighbours have already concluded that I'm a bit odd), but with my species list now standing at a tantalising 92, I am determined to make it to my century before too much longer...



Woodlouse making use of the car park © Elaine Wright

Many thanks must go to the many species experts who have kindly determined various species for me; as with all wildlife recording, this project has been a great learning experience, but is not something which can be done single handedly. Online tools have also proved extremely helpful, including the DAT (<http://www.lrcwalesdat.org>), which can show the Wales wide distribution for any species, plus of course SEWBRReCORD (www.sewbreCORD.org.uk), which allows me to keep track of all my recording efforts (bonus side effect of the project, I have now crept into the top ten of the "recorders leaderboard" on SEWBRReCORD, wahey!).

If you would enjoy recording in your own garden, you might like to take part in the National Garden BioBlitz on 30th & 31st May 2015, more information at <http://www.gardenbioblitz.org>.

Elaine Wright

Communications and Enquiries Officer



Rosy Woodlice (*Androniscus dentiger*) © Elaine Wright

LEMUR+ Trainee Scheme

I am delighted to be working at SEWBReC until November as a LEMUR+ Biodiversity Information Management Trainee. The [LEMUR+ program](#) is an HLF-funded initiative run by Ambios Ltd and Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, designed to address skills gaps [that have been noted amongst people entering the conservation sector](#). The scheme is now in its eighth year, and more than 80% of trainees are in conservation jobs one year after finishing the course. Each trainee is given a placement (others this year are at Wye Valley AONB, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, the Marine Biological Association and Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust) as well as 'core' training in species ID and habitat surveying. LEMUR+ also places a strong emphasis on innovation and technology, therefore it is particularly lucky that I am stationed here at SEWBReC – the hub of so much thought on how to progress biodiversity data capture, collation and analysis. So far I have been examining data from a range of individual recorders, recording groups and ecological consultancies, then rationalising and importing it to the databases.

It is also a privilege to be based at the convergence point for such a remarkable

and varied amount of expertise. I am not a graduate of ecology and conservation or natural sciences, but rather a 'career changer' – a lifetime amateur naturalist who is now trying to introduce professionalism and rigour into their practice. LEMUR+ also aims to help people like me along the path to a sustainable career in the sector.



2014 LEMUR+ Trainees © Project LEMUR+

Charlene Davies, part time Biodiversity Information Assistant at SEWBReC, was a LEMUR trainee last year. She describes the LEMUR scheme as being 'the perfect way to bridge the gap be-

tween academic study and securing a career within nature conservation'.

She explains that upon graduating from Cardiff University with a BSc in Zoology she struggled to find a job within the environmental sector – even voluntary positions were difficult to come by. After 3 years of volunteering she finally had the break she needed when she was offered a place on the LEMUR training scheme as an ecological heritage trainee, based with Gwent Wildlife Trust, whom she still works part time for now.

She commented that "The LEMUR training scheme is a unique opportunity that allows participants to gain the skills and experience sought after by environmental employees whilst working toward a vocational qualification to compliment their degrees. Without the opportunities and support that I was given during my 9 month traineeship, I am sure that I would not be in the wonderful position that I am in currently, working for not only one but two environmental organisations!"

David Hawkins

LEMUR+ Biodiversity Information Management Trainee, SEWBReC

SEWBReC Membership

SEWBReC is run as a not-for-profit company and is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors which is drawn from its membership. By becoming a member of SEWBReC you will be automatically invited to attend our Annual General Meetings and you will be eligible to stand for election to the Board of Directors.

Subject to Board approval, SEWBReC membership is open to anybody who:

-Has read SEWBReC's Memorandum and Articles of Association* and supports the aims of the company;

-Understands that as a Member of the Company they accept a liability not exceeding £1 if the Company should be wound up.

We are currently very keen to grow our membership and to this end we have included a copy of our membership ap-

plication form with this newsletter mailing. Please consider joining and have your say in the future direction of SEWBReC – we need your expertise and enthusiasm!

* The membership form gives details of where to find the Memorandum and Articles of Association via our website. If you don't have access to the internet but are interested in joining, please get in touch.

Obituary: Steve Moon



As many of you will know, one of SEWBReC's founding members and its first Chairman, Steve Moon, sadly passed away in late March at the age of 65, following a long battle with Pick's Disease, a rare form of Motor Neurone Disease. Steve played a huge and important role in the establishment of SEWBReC. He successfully steered the SEWBReC board through its first five years and always brought a great sense of fun and adventure to the table, along with his wealth of experience as one of the UK's fore-

most local government ecologists. He will be very sadly missed by all who knew him and worked with him.

A tribute from Steve's wife, Madeleine Moon MP, was published in April and can be seen at: <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/madeleine-moon-tribute-husband-steve-8962771>

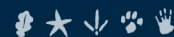
Adam Rowe

SEWBReC Manager

SEWBRc Events

Species Identification Training Workshops

PARTNERIAETH BIODIROGIAETH CYMRU
WALES BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP



Funded by Wales Biodiversity Partnership, the aim of these workshops is to stimulate recording interest and generate biological records. Help improve our knowledge of local species and habitats by learning how to identify species with local experts, and then submitting your records to SEWBRc. These events are **free** but **booking is essential** as spaces are limited. Please complete the attached form, and return it to SEWBRc.



© Mike Kilner

Introduction to Spiders

Date: Saturday 8th August 2015, 10am - 4pm **Available places:** 10

Location: Magor Marsh

Trainer: Mike Kilner (VC35 Recorder: Arachnids) **Level:** Beginner / Intermediate

Join us at Magor Marsh to uncover the world of Spiders! Mike Kilner, local Spider expert, will provide you with the identification features required to identify spiders to family level while out in the field. There will be a classroom based session followed by a practical field session.



© Rebecca Wright-Davies

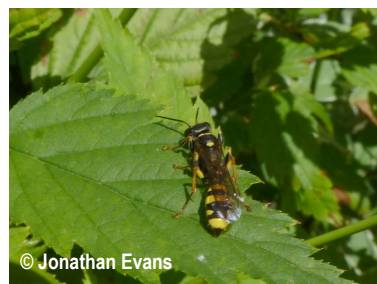
Introduction to Coastal Plants

Date: Friday 4th September 2015, 10am - 4pm **Available places:** 10

Location: Kenfig National Nature Reserve

Trainer: Julian Woodman (VC41 Recorder: Plants) **Level:** Intermediate

Join us at Kenfig to learn about the rich variety of flora adapted to life in Wales' beautiful but harsh coastal environment. This course will be entirely based in the field, where Julian will help us learn the main identification features of some of this habitat's key species. Some prior knowledge of plant identification required.



© Jonathan Evans

Introduction to Solitary Wasps

Date: Saturday 26th September 2015, 10am - 4pm **Available places:** 10

Location: National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

Trainer: Mark Pavett **Level:** Beginner

Join us at the National Museum of Wales to discover about the interesting and varied Hymenoptera group "solitary wasps" This course will be entirely classroom based, and will involve microscope work. Ongoing identification of this taxon group will require the taking of specimens and some dissection. Please only apply if you are comfortable taking specimens.

national
museum
wales
cymru

Details of a fourth training course will be announced shortly.

If you are interested in attending one of these free training courses, please complete the attached form, and return it to SEWBRc by noon on Friday 10th July 2015. Attendees will be chosen at random, and successful applicants will be informed by Tuesday 14th July 2015.

Return forms via email to: info@sewbrec.org.uk **or via post to:** SEWBRc, 13 St Andrew's Crescent, Cardiff, CF11 8HF

Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Forum

Our next joint Recorders' Forum will be held in Glamorgan on Saturday 21st November 2015. We are currently deciding a venue and are working on the programme, so please get in contact to suggest a venue, or if you would like to give a talk.

Join us for the Pollinators for People Biodiversity Blitz Day at Daerwynno Outdoor Centre!

SEWBRc are working with Natural Resources Wales on *Pollinators for People*, a project which includes a Biodiversity Blitz at Daerwynno Outdoor Centre, Llanwonno (ST024963) on Saturday 25th July, 10am– 4pm. It will be an action-packed day featuring local wildlife experts revealing the natural wonders present at this diverse site of beech forest, glades and ponds. The focus will be on pollinators of course, and their importance in maintaining a healthy ecosystem, but no doubt many more things besides will be discovered. Please contact Charlene Davies to book a place on this event.

Email: Charlene.davies@sewbrec.org.uk **Phone:** 02920 641 110

Recorders' Field Days

We will be holding our usual Gwent and Glamorgan Recorders' Field Days (formally known as Biodiversity Blitz Days) this summer.

Details are still being confirmed for the Gwent event, which will take place at Twmbarlwm in Caerphilly, hopefully during August.

The Glamorgan Recorders' Field Day is taking place at Grangemoor Park in Cardiff on Saturday 18th July, 10am - 4pm. Please contact Elaine to book a place on the Grangemoor event.

Email: elaine.wright@sewbrec.org.uk

Phone: 02920 641 110



2014 Glamorgan Recording Day © Libby Wilcox

The Last Page

BTO House Martin Survey

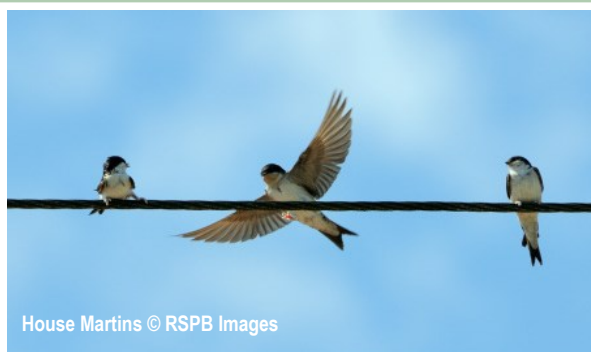
In recent years, the number of breeding house martin in the UK has fallen by two-thirds, prompting the BTO to launch a House Martin Survey in 2015. It is a first step to help discover more about this species, to identify why they are declining and to provide scientific evidence to help inform policy decisions that could reverse the declines.

BTO are seeking volunteers who are willing to carry out two or three visits to a randomly selected (i.e. pre-selected) 1-km square between late May and mid-July, to look for House Martins and their nests. Visits will involve walking round the square to look for house martins, and mapping any nests found. Each visit should take 1-2 hours, but may take longer in urban areas.

You can take part by registering at www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/house-martin-survey.

There are still vacant squares across south east Wales. If you need more information before you volunteer, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me for a 'no obligation chat'.

Daniel Jenkins Jones East Glamorgan BTO Representative **e-mail:** eastglamwebs@gmail.com **mobile:** 07828 093 613



Wales Biodiversity Partnership Book Award Fund

The Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) is offering a small grant to **all** Vice County Recorders in Wales of up to £25. This can be used towards the purchase of identification books, keys, CDs, or other small equipment. The grant scheme will be limited in scope this year due to funding uncertainties and will be offered over a reduced time frame. If you would like to claim please ensure all claims are submitted by 31st August 2015 - any claims submitted after this date will not be considered.

Please contact Sean McHugh for a claim form.

E-mail: smchugh@wtwales.org

Phone: 02920 480 070 (direct), 07946 469875 (mobile)

SEWBRc Partnership Events

SEWBRc are supporting and / or attending a variety of external events this summer. Check out the following:

- Sat 6th June - Go Wild! - Panside Community Woodland Park
Organised by Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Fri 12th - Sat 13th June - BioBlitz - Banwen Ponds
Organised by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- Fri 26th—Sat 27th June - BioBlitz - Monmouth (various sites)
Organised by Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Board
- Sun 28th—Mon 29th June - BioBlitz - Cwm Ivy, North Gower
Organised by the National Trust
- Sat 3rd October - Unknown Wales Conference - National Museum, Cardiff
Organised by Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

Details of these, and loads of other events are available on the SEWBRc website: www.sewbrec.org.uk/event/events-calendar

A big thank you to all who have contributed to this newsletter! We are always looking for content for this biannual publication, so feel free to send in articles any time. 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 send any comments, articles, events, species sightings etc to SEWBRc.

New Fungi Identification Forum

Since the demise of the Wild About Britain Web forum, a new forum site has been set up: www.fungi.org.uk.

Although initially just Fungi, it has been expanded to include plants as often it is important to identify trees and other plants associated with Fungi.

Happy SEWBRc Announcements

We are delighted to welcome the newest addition to the SEWBRc family - Rebecca's new baby Emrys Xavier Wright-Davies was born on 10th February. He has even attended his first staff meeting (but didn't get assigned any actions).

Rebecca got married in December, and has changed her name to Rebecca Wright-Davies. Elaine also got married in January (but isn't changing her name).

Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

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

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