

Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter

Issue 29

Autumn 2023



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Welcome to the twenty-ninth issue of the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter.

As winter starts its inevitable approach, this edition is packed with inspiration to get recorders through the colder darker months.

At SEWBRReC we are very excited about celebrating our 20th Anniversary during 2024. Things get underway with the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Forum, back in person for the first time in four years! [Book your free space now](#) to join us in Bridgend on 20th January. We hope to see many of you there.

Many thanks to all contributors to this edition.

Elaine Wright, SEWBRReC (Co-Editor with Rebecca Robinson)

If you ever want to contribute an article to our biannual newsletter, please get in touch on info@sewbrec.org.uk. Our next issue will be Spring 2024, but content is welcome year round.



Garden Recording 2023

Graham Watkeys

With a couple of months left of the year the total number of new species added to my garden list this year sits at a quite disappointing 32, with the grand total now at 1205. I think there are several reasons for this, the weather has been reliably unreliable (which is something we will all have to get used to as the new norm) plus the effect, disturbance and continued creeping habitat loss of the A465 dualling. I just haven't spent the same amount of time in the garden as previous years. Saying all this, the year hasn't been without highlights, and some truly interesting species have turned up to be immortalised as a record. It's been a good year for new Moth records (given I don't trap) with 6, followed by Flowering Plants with 5 (most being annuals), then True Bugs with 4. The others consist of Beetles (various), Birds (a distant Peregrine), Fungi (Rust) and a single Fly. The following are in no particular order.



A hot but otherwise perfect garden recording weekend in September:



Ant Woodlouse (*Platyarthrus hoffmannsegii*): this was quite a surprise as despite a lot of rock turning this species of blind subterranean myrmophile has seemingly evaded my attention until this year. These were with a small nest of *Lasius sp.* Ants and all of them disappeared back underground very quickly upon the removal of their stony roof.

Ant Woodlouse

Triple-barred Agent (*Argyresthia trifasciata*): first recorded in the UK in 1982 this species' larvae feed on Juniper so perhaps not such a surprise visitor as we have a mature one in the garden. Luckily I managed to pot up this adult as it did a rather gentle fly-by.



Triple-barred Agent

Bean Seed Beetle (*Bruchus rufimanus*): A rarely recorded species of Beetle that can be a pest of Broad Beans which was exactly where I found it. A classic case of see something interesting, pointing at it in a forthright manner saying "STAY!" and rushing to get a pot. After gently tapping it off the bean flower it was investigating a nice record was generated. (It was then replaced unharmed and no beans were harmed as far as I could tell).



Bean Salad Beetle

Rosemary Beetle (*Chrysolina americana*): An alien invader, albeit a stunning one. You can never tell when something interesting will turn up; this single individual was sitting just outside my front door right at eye level. You could call it genuinely unmissable.



Rosemary Beetle

Finally a couple of Shieldbugs: both **Gorse Shieldbug** (*Piezodorus lituratus*) and **Bishop's Mitre** (*Aelia acuminata*) made their debut appearances this year. I now have all three stages of the Gorse Shieldbug (eggs, nymphs and adult) so it may well now be resident but the clergy may have been passing through and our paths intersected for just long enough for some photos.



Gorse Shieldbug



Bishop's Mitre



Green Sandpiper on the river Ely—Photo © Tim Collier.

Green Sandpipers on the River Ely

Alan Rosney

Following regular reports of Green Sandpipers from the middle course of the River Ely in the Vale of Glamorgan, Glamorgan Bird Club, in partnership with members of the BTO, decided to undertake a detailed study to determine their status. A brief account of the findings are summarised here. A full account has been submitted to the Welsh Ornithological Society for inclusion in their *Milvus* journal and will be available to view in the near future.

The Green Sandpiper is a wading bird that breeds in the taiga forests of northern Europe and Asia, with just a couple of pairs breeding in the north of Scotland. Despite being named Green Sandpipers, they are predominantly black and white birds. Indeed, in flight they can resemble large House Martins. The majority migrate south in the winter to avoid the freezing conditions further north. It is estimated that around 290 choose to spend their winters in the British Isles and that they tend to return to the same wintering grounds year on year.

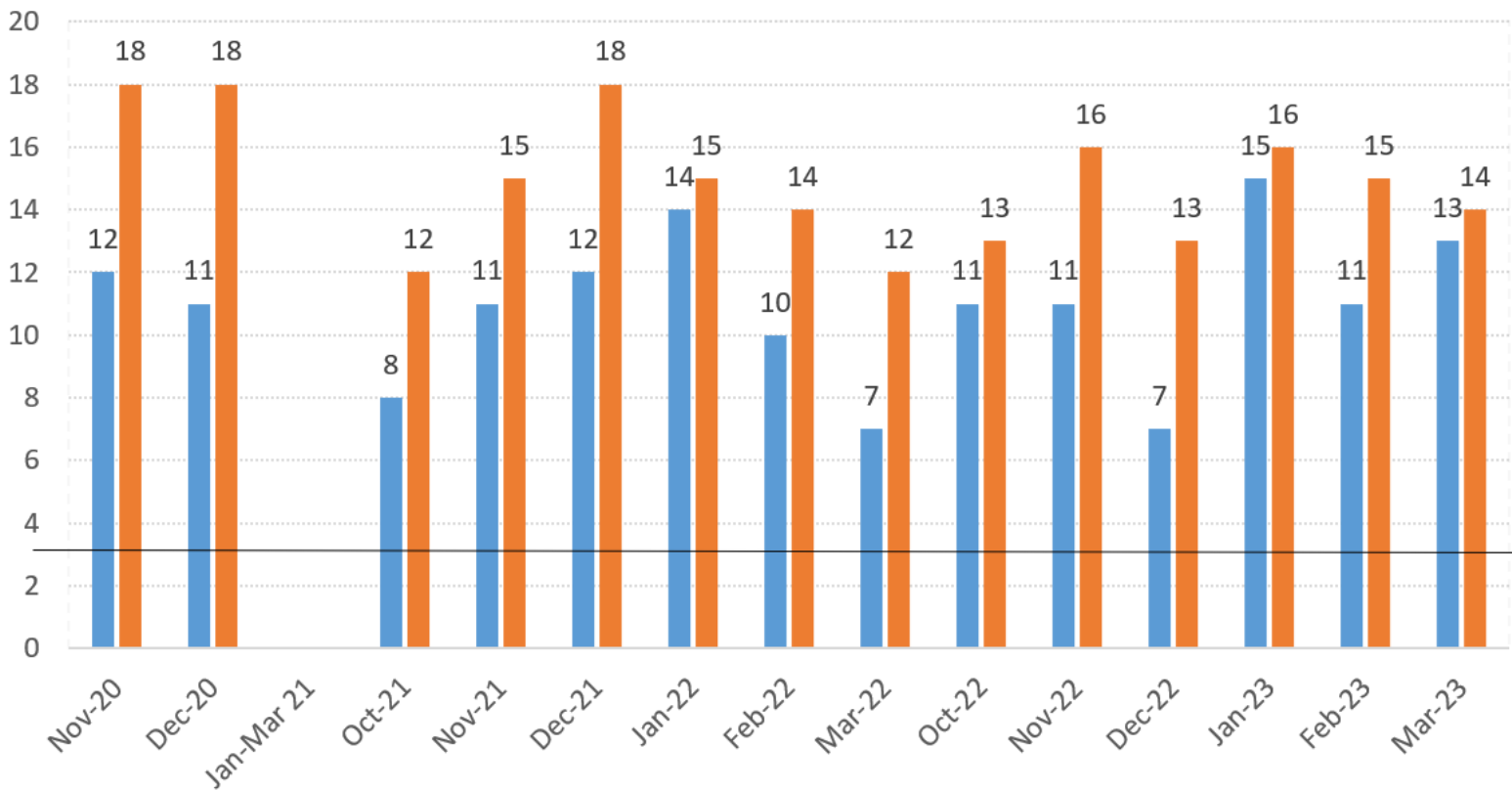
The River Ely is an ideal place for these shy birds to over-winter. They seem to like the broad meander bends, where their favourite food source, Gammarus shrimp, can be found.

Most sightings have been made from Miskin in the north down to St Fagans in the south, a stretch of around 13 km. To undertake the study, we split the river in to several short sections (there were a few



Meander on the Ely —Photo © Barrie Gardiner.

Min/max numbers of Green Sandpipers wintering on the River Ely during coordinated counts (Nov 2020 to Mar 2023)



stretches where we could not access the river) and a survey methodology was devised. They all began at the same time, half an hour after dawn, and walked slowly along their stretch. If a bird was located, the exact time was recorded, along with a precise 10-figure OS grid reference. Other factors were noted, such as the direction the bird went and whether it was seen to land etc. The survey was actually undertaken in pairs, as Green Sandpipers are extremely skittish, flush very easily and can be easily missed. We were keen to avoid double counting.

The survey was undertaken in the winters of 2020 through to 2022 (we couldn't survey during lockdown unfortunately) and produced some fascinating results.

The blue in the graph above represents the minimum (safe) count whilst the orange shows the maximum. As you can see we had regular double figure counts during the survey period. The black line in the graph is particularly important. For a site to be considered of significance and of national importance, it needs to reach a 1% population threshold - in other words, 1% of the over-wintering population of the UK. As stated earlier, the wintering population is thought to be 290. The 1% threshold is therefore 2.9 birds. Our graph shows that Ely held well above this figure in every one of our survey months.

Conclusion

The findings, we believe, show that the Ely is of national importance for this amber-listed species. Indeed, nowhere else in the UK has recorded anywhere near the number of wintering birds that we found in the valley. The middle section of the Ely is already designated as a SSSI due to the presence of a flower, Monkshood, in the valley. The study group believe that Green Sandpipers should also be afforded protected status there.

The Ely Valley Green Sandpiper Study Group

Many thanks to the 20 volunteers, who turned out in all weathers to undertake the survey.

A Diamond in the Rough – Cors Crychudd Reen

Steve Dixon

Cors Crychudd Reen, Cardiff, is not a place I particularly knew much about up to a few months ago. In fact, if you had told me at the start of the year it would become one of my favourite places to visit to find new and interesting species, I would probably have looked bewildered.

It was back in May I started exploring the mile-long reen, which is located off Wentloog Way, a busy stretch of road, with rumbling articulated lorries and speeding vans, sending up clouds of dust. There are just two parking spaces by the entrance, which is part of the south east Wales coastal path to Newport. As a friend encouragingly said: "it's a bit of a bugger to get there, but worth it."

My friend Andrew McGleish and I had spent months researching our Operation Lejops project to find the elusive marshland hoverfly, *Lejops vittatus*. So, part of my prep for mapping habitat and likely areas was checking out Cors Crychudd Reen, which is the most westerly edge of the Gwent Levels.

How can I describe the reen? Well, as my friend put it, it's like "a natural oasis between the two rumps of Lamby Way refuse tip". (He used a more graphic description than rumps.)

Now, after months walking this special place, I would look at its geographical location on the south Wales coast and say it's almost a unique 'stopping off' habitat for coastal species. I have found some really special Hymenoptera and Syrphidae along the stretch of waterway, which I haven't found along other parts of the coast in such close proximity.

Let's start at the beginning. With just a hedge separating it from the busy, noisy distributor road, you immediately stumble on a small meadow space, with Small Copper and, on one occasion, a Marsh Fritillary. Yes, you read that correctly. They are not supposed to be seen east of Lavernock, but myself and Andrew witnessed one metre from the road. There's a scruffy strip of undergrowth at the top of the reen, out of the wind, opposite the clanking recycling plant, with heavy machinery beeping away. Here, I have seen *Gymnomerus laevipes*, a scarce square-headed wasp, which feeds on Figwort, Angelica and Bramble. *G. laevipes* is a tube wasp predated by *Melittobia ichneumon* wasps.

In the same small patch, I have also had confirmed records of *Sphaerophoria rueppelli*, *Anasimyia transfuga* and Shrill Carders.



Araneus diadematus spider with immature damselfly



Shrill Carder Bee



Andrena labiata in clutches of *Xysticus* spider



Nomada bee sleeping



Anasimyia contracta male hoverfly



Cephidae species of stem sawfly

Further along the ree, on forays with Andrew and Tate Lloyd, there have been sightings of Lejogaster and Melanogaster hoverflies, *Eucera longicornis* (long-horned bees) and Bee Orchids (good spot, Tate!). I regularly bump into birders enjoying a stroll and they enthuse about their sightings, including Night Heron and other species, but there are few Diptera recorders (which looking at recent species records for the Gwent Levels is a common theme).

At the end of the ree, there is a lagoon with nesting swans before the drainage sluice emptying onto the foreshore. In this spot, I have recorded an *Andrena labiata*, another scarce species in Wales, Liam Olds informed me, in the clutches of a *Xysticus* spider. Close by, two small colonies of *Andrena barbilabris* (Bearded Mining Bee), one sheltered behind flowering Wild Parsnip and another frequenting flowering Dogwood. On the foreshore, you can find colonies of *Sphecodes* on Sea Lavender, Devil's Coachman and other species.

If you're particularly interested in hoverflies, then you can also find good numbers of wetland specialists, such as *Tropidia scita*, *Parhelophilus* and *Eristalinus sepulchralis*. I had a glimpse and long range photograph of what could have been *Parhelophilus consimilis*. It is supposedly can be found on the Gwent Levels, distinguished by the 'atomic' dots on the lower abdomen. Chris Sellen from the Hoverfly Recording Scheme hinted I really need to pot one to examine. Next summer, maybe.

Over the road from Cors Crychudd Ree, and of some interest, is Lamby Pond and Parc Tredelerch, where you can find populations of similar species, such as the *Gymnomerus laevipes* and elusive *Helophilus trivittatus*.

So, if you're thinking of taking a trip down to Cors Crychudd Ree, leave the car at Parc Tredelerch for a wander first around the wet meadows around the lake, first, before steeling yourself to walk down the roaring link road to Cors Crychudd Ree, a diamond in the rough.



Parhelophilus female hoverfly

Some plant records in Monmouthshire in 2023

Stephanie Tyler and Elsa Wood

The 2023 botanical field season has been fairly quiet, but nonetheless there have been some exciting new hectad (10km x 10km square) records and Tim Rich found an alien bittercress *Cardamine occulta* all over the ground at the Garden Centre just outside Usk; this plant, new to Monmouthshire and to Wales, seems to be too new an introduction to feature in the new 2020 Plant Atlas.

Lowri Watkins found a flowering spike of Greater Broomrape *Orobanche rapum-genistae* at Gwent Wildlife Trust's Springdale Farm reserve, only the second post 2000 record for Monmouthshire VC35 of this parasite on brooms and gorses.

Tawny Sedge *Carex hostiana* found by us in a boggy area on a hill farm on the Blorengge was also a new hectad record, as was the eyebright *Euphrasia micrantha* on a forest track on Mynydd Machen. Two plants of *Senecio sylvaticus* (Heath Groundsel) were found by us and Adrian Wood (AW) along a woodland ride on Mynydd Machen in mid-July, a new post 2000 hectad record for this apparently scarce plant in the VC.

A day in early September searching for Ivy-leaved Bellflower on the Cas Troggy Brook and in The Forest near Coedy-paen (where Trevor Evans had records) was fruitless, but a quick visit that day to Chain Bridge added a number of good tetrad records including Witch Grass *Panicum capillare*, and then driving back through Usk, Elsa spotted a finger-grass growing at the pavement edge so Steph stopped as soon as she could and Elsa raced back to collect a specimen. It turned out to be Smooth Finger-grass *Digittaria ischmaemum* and only the second post 2000 record for this species in the vice-county (the first we found in Abergavenny on an urban plants course organized by SEW-BReC in 2022). Yellow Bristle-grass *Setaria pumila* in Monmouth was also a new hectad record. Rough Bristle-grass *S. verticillata* and *S. pumila* occasionally turn up in maize crops and where bird seed is scattered with records in nine and eleven tetrads respectively.

We found some large patches of Sharp-toothed Mint *Mentha x villosanervata* on the bank of the River Usk and on nearby shingle in the river at The Bryn on 30 August, only the second vice-county record since 2000 of this triple hybrid between Spear Mint *M. spicata* and *M. x verticillata*, the latter a hybrid between Water Mint *M. aquatica* and Corn Mint *M. arvensis*.

Other hectad records were the hybrid between Osier *Salix viminalis* and Grey Sallow *Salix cinerea*, *Salix x holosericea* by the River Usk at Gobion on 30 August, determined by Elsa, and Purple Willow *Salix purpurea* found by Brian Mahoney and SJT in Manor Wood at The Narth, as well as Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine* which was locally frequent at the edge of a maize field near Norton, Skenfrith on 27 September, Rye-brome *Bromus secalinus* at the edge of a muck heap near Party Seal, Grosmont, Black Nightshade *Solanum nigrum* in the Grwyne Fawr valley, and in a pond in that valley three duckweed hectad records - Greater Duckweed *Spirodela polyrhiza*, Ivy-leaved Duckweed *Lemna trisulca* and Fat Duckweed *Lemna gibba*.

A less welcome hectad record among a patch of Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* on the banks of the Afon Hondduu near Cwmyoy was a plant of the alien Himalayan Honeysuckle *Leycesteria formosa*. The balsam was quickly eradicated by Patrick Lloyd of the Monnow Association which has done a fantastic job of clearing invasive plants all along that river and the River Monnow down to Rockfield.

Numerous tetrad records have been made in 2023 – too many to note here, but they included Sam Bosanquet's eyebright *Euphrasia nemorosa* at Talycoed, and his record of Killarney fern *Trichomanes speciosum* gametophytes on Manor Brook during the bioblitz there in June; Broad-leaved Helleborines *Epipactis helleborine* found by Steph in two tetrads in the Llanthony valley and in a tetrad near Chain Bridge by Anne Griffiths, and Bladder Sedge *Carex vesicaria* seen in profusion by Steph and Elsa in a drying pond at Y Graig pond on 26 July. The nearest other record in the Abergavenny area is at the Punchbowl lake on The Blorengge.

All the fragrant orchids that had been recorded to date in the county as at Henllys Bog were *Gymnadenia conopsea*. However, the species growing at Llanmartin SSSI has recently been determined by Richard Bateman as *Gymnadenia densiflora*.

Seven flowering spikes of Narrow-lipped Helleborine *Epipactis leptochila* were noted this year by Anne Griffiths and Ceri Goring at the site near the Wyndcliff where the species was re-discovered in 2022.

Steph Tyler and Elsa Wood have now finished updating Monmouthshire's Rare Plant Register with much help in editing the document from Marilyn Dunkelmann. The well-illustrated document will be available as a pdf on the BSBI website and through SEWBReC.

Rare Plant Register for v.c Monmouthshire
2023 edition



Pale pink form of *Anacamptis morio*

Compiled by Stephanie Tyler and Elsa Wood

Edited by Marily Dunkelman

Dedicated to Trevor G Evans
1924-2023

Recorder for v.c 35 for 40 years, whose commitment
to recording the plants of Monmouthshire
has made this task so much easier.



The Caldicot Level and Wilcrick Hill to the West of Magor

Wildlife Spectaculars

Colin Titcombe



Hemlock Water-Dropwort

The highlight of a visit to the Severn Estuary (Collister Pill - Rogiet) on the 8th of June this year, was the amount of Hemlock Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*), and the lush flowering of this plant. It struck me as being exceptionally healthy but it also reminded me of the very different situation which prevailed during June 2014. On a visit to this same area on the 9th of June that year these plants were found to have been decimated by vast numbers of micro-moth larvae, *Depressaria daucella*. Exactly what brought about such an explosion in the numbers of this species is unknown to me but such, apparently inexplicable, population bursts, are known in a wide range of animal species.

Not far away from this stretch of the Severn Estuary sea-wall, another sudden lepidopteran appearance took place. This time it was the larvae of the Brown-tail moth (*Euproctis chrysorrhoea*), the webs of which I first came across during August 2019. At this time my diary (of the 25th of August) records- 'once I had passed under the bridge [The Prince of Wales Bridge] and arrived at the Severn Estuary side, a mass of larval webs, nearly all of them on bramble (*Rubus sp.*), were to be seen. At one point I counted 8 webs on c. 1 sq. metre of bramble bush. The larvae inside these silken webs were tiny - less than a centimetre in length'. I was later to learn that this is a species currently expanding its range, and one of some concern because of its urticating hairs and their effect on us.

While on the subject of moth larvae a note in my diary of the 14th of April, 1981, may be worthy of a mention. While working on the embankment of the A449 Trunk road in the Kemeys area, along a stretch of c. 100 yards, I counted 81 Drinker moth (*Philudoria pottoria*) caterpillars - today I rarely see any.

Sudden population rises, and falls, is nothing new. Sometimes the cause may be apparent, at other times it is something of a mystery.

The mass movements of lemmings and the swarming of locusts are well-known features of the natural world. To a lesser degree large aggregations of rats are known to occur from time to time, usually caused by the sudden disappearance of a food-source, or the flooding of their nest-burrows.

Perhaps because of their small size and habitat preference, Field Vole (*Microtus agrestis*) eruptions may go unnoticed by us - but not by their predators. During January 1966 the vole population on the Caldicot Level in the Redwick-Goldcliff area became abnormally high and small-rodent predators such as Weasels, Stoats, Short-eared Owls, Barn Owls and Kestrels became correspondingly numerous, so making the rise in vole numbers so very obvious.

Another population explosion, this time a very visible one, came during the very hot summer of 1976. On this occasion the mass invasion was that of Ladybirds (mostly 7-spot Ladybirds) caused it seems, by the exceptional weather conditions.

On another occasion during the 1970s I noticed the very obvious large-scale defoliation of trees. The spring leafing of the deciduous species in the Usk-Raglan area seemed to go into reverse. One day the trees appeared lush and green, the next day they had reverted back into the winter shades of grey-brown.

The causers of this defoliation were the so-called 'winter moths' (the Winter Moth *Operophtera brumata* and the Mottled Umber *Erannis defoliaria*).

In another year another leaf-muncher became noticeably abundant - the Green Oak-leaf Roller Moth (*Tortrix viridana*). This time the damaged trees were the deciduous broad-leaves in Wentwood Forest, mostly the oaks.

More recently, in the 21st century, two other spectacles were seen here in Gwent. The first of these came on a pleasant September evening in 2002. On the 20th of September of that year I decided on a visit to the lower Wye Valley where I walked down to Martridge Meadow, opposite the Lancaut Peninsula on the Gloucestershire side of the Wye. Here the air was filled with uncountable numbers of Hirundines, mostly Swallows and House Martins. It was a delightful experience and one which, unwittingly, I shared with Jan and Tony Jenkins. On my return home a phone-call from Tony informed me of their similar experience, but in the Mounton Valley where they had been picking blackberries. Obviously, there had been a large-scale southward movement of these birds, the cause of which we can only surmise.

The only time that I witnessed comparable avian spectacles was during winter evenings in the 1970s. The more unusual of these took place while walking along the Severn Estuary Seawall at dusk. Vast numbers of Lapwings, estimated at about 10,000, were flying down to the mudflats from the north. Weather conditions are likely to have been responsible for such an incredible movement.

Of more regular occurrence, even in recent times, is the phenomenon of Starling murmurations coming in to favoured roost-sites. In the mid-1970s one such roost-site was on Wilcrick Hill, clothed as it is in woodland.

The most recent event to record here came about because of natural changes to our local avi-fauna. Whereas we have lost our Nightingales and Turtle Doves, other species, Cetti's Warblers and Little Egrets among them, have colonised without any help from us whatsoever.

The Little Egrets now have nest colonies at several sites in Gwent, and can be quite numerous where concentrated food-sources are to be found. One such place is the Neddern Valley where, on the 15th of July 2021, Chris Hatch and I counted a gathering of 81 Little Egrets- a very exotic sight indeed.



Drinker Moth Larva

Ergots - A Case of Poisoning

Marion Sweeney

I was interested in Colin Titcombe's article in the Spring 2023 edition of the 'Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Newsletter', in which he describes how ergot sclerotia can vary considerably in size. This mention of ergot reminded me of my late grandmother, who suffered a rare case of ergot poisoning in the 1970's.

She developed unusual symptoms, including delusions, and was unable to walk down the corridor in her home as she believed it 'came to a point'. As a result, she was confined to her bed for some time. Doctors believed her symptoms were consistent with ergot poisoning, and eventually traced the source to rye bread, purchased from a shop at the American airbase in Lakenheath, Norfolk, where my aunt worked as a typist.

The cause of the poisoning is toxic alkaloids from *Claviceps purpurea* growing on rye, which can lead to a variety of gastrointestinal, neurological and vascular symptoms which may be severe, occasionally leading to death. Ergot poisoning has been implicated in the Salem Witch Trials when individuals suffering the poisoning were said to be 'bewitched'. In medieval times the condition was known as Saint Anthony's Fire; and was relatively common as rye was then a staple food. In 1951, a mass poisoning event probably caused by ergot in low-quality flour, occurred in Pont-Saint-Espirit, France, when around 250 people became ill. It was reported that the whole village had 'gone mad', but today, such outbreaks are rare. I am glad to say that my grandmother made a complete recovery and lived until the ripe old age of ninety.



Recovered from her ordeal: my grandmother, Maud, in 1976



Rare beetle found on Flat Holm island

Sarah Morgan

A rare species of beetle has been found living a few miles off the coast of Cardiff, on the remote Flat Holm island and scientists believe it could be the last stronghold of the species in the UK.

Discovered by a visiting team of ecologists from the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre, it is the first time a *Dermestes undulatus* beetle has been recorded in Wales, and a sighting hasn't been recorded in England since 2020.

Flat Holm Community Engagement Officer, Sarah Morgan, said: "It's not for the squeamish, but these tiny beetles feed on the skin, fur and bones of dead animals - *Dermestes* literally means skin eater. It's a preference that makes them a bit of a pain in museum collections, but incredibly useful in forensic science to help determine how long a body has been in situ.

"Exactly how the beetle made it out to the island is a bit of a mystery, given that they appear to be completely absent from the mainland now, but it's possible they were brought by gulls carrying scavenged remains.

"Without the team at South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre we might never have known about the beetles, so a big thank you has to go to them."

Other notable finds during the bioblitz of the island included a rare Scarlet Berry Truffle, microscopic cup fungi, tiny moths that live inside bracken stems, and an amazingly well-camouflaged Burnished Brass Moth.

Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks and Events, Cllr Jennifer Burke, said: "We already knew that Flat Holm island was a haven for nature - it was the first island in Wales to achieve bee-friendly status, it's home to a colony of protected Lesser Black-backed Gulls, as well as Slow Worms, Wild Leeks and much more - but with recent research showing that one in six species is at risk of extinction, this new find makes it even more important that we continue our work to protect and conserve the island's unique habitat."

The bioblitz forms part of the Flat Holm - A Walk Through Time project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The Glamorgan Starling Colour Ring Project – we need your help

Andrew Bevan, Fledgemore Nest Recording Group

Ringling birds for conservation purposes has been happening in Britain and Ireland for over 100 years. Managed by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Ringing Scheme generates information on the survival, productivity and movements of birds, helping us to understand why populations are changing.

Ringing allows us to study how many young birds leave the nest and survive to become adults, as well as how many adults survive the stresses of breeding, migration and severe weather. Changes in survival rates and other aspects of birds' biology play a part in helping us to understand the causes of population declines.

Why colour mark birds?

When the Ringing Scheme began, the primary aim was to find out more about birds' movements. Attaching a uniquely coded metal ring to a bird's leg allows the individual to be identified if encountered at a later date, revealing the distance, direction and duration of travel.

Originally, survival was calculated using dead recoveries reported by members of the public. This works well for large birds that tend to die in obvious places, such as Barn Owls, but less well for smaller birds. Today, survival rates are increasingly calculated using recaptures or re-sightings of live birds by ringers.

Enter colour-marking

Using one of a variety of marks, such as a lightweight plastic leg ring, the identity of an individual bird can be established remotely, without the need for recapture. Individual colour rings can be fitted in unique combinations bearing a sequence of numbers and/or letters making it easier for birds to be recorded by birders and members of the public by reading and reporting the ring.

Colour-marking does require the observer to get a good view of the mark, so it is particularly suited to birds that visit open habitats (e.g., mudflats) or those where the birds can be viewed at close quarters (e.g., gardens).

Why Starlings?

Starlings are perhaps best known for their squabbling behaviour at our garden feeders and for spectacular murmurations in the winter. They are a Red-listed species in the UK as their numbers have fallen rapidly since the 1980s and there was a 54% decrease in the UK breeding population between 1995 and 2022 and a 64% decrease here in Wales over the same period. This fall was reflected locally too, with probable breeding lost from over 100 tetrads across East Glamorgan between 1984-89 and 2008-11 ([East Glamorgan Bird Atlas](#)).

Local members of the Fledgemore Nest Recording Group have been catching and ringing good numbers of Starlings in their gardens. The ringing sites are spread across our area from Caerphilly to the Rhondda and Porthcawl. Captured birds are fitted with a white plastic leg ring on one leg and a metal BTO ring on the other; the white ring can be on either leg. Each white leg ring will have a 3 black letter code on the rings starting T or V (TAA-TZZ, VAA-VZZ), see example picture above.

If you happen to see one could you please send details to starlingsightings@outlook.com including your name, e-mail address and the location, date and time of your observation (a grid reference and, if possible, a photograph would be very helpful).

Please share this information with friends and neighbours if you can.

We hope to develop the project to be a BTO [Retrapping Adults for Survival \(RAS\)](#) if we can achieve around 40 or 50 re-sightings a year. This should be possible, with plans already underway to erect nest boxes across the area for monitoring. BTO will be able to number crunch these re-sightings to produce some meaningful data on Starling survival rates. This would then become the first RAS project for Starling in Wales. Please keep your eyes peeled.



The Funky Larvae Awards 2023

Graham Watkeys

These are some of the winners of this year's prestigious funkiest larva of the day award. This award is handed out by the judge (i.e. me) to the funkiest larva recorded at Taf Fechan on any given day, the rules are highly arbitrary, but in the event of a tie more weight is given to species that have not appeared before or are new to the species list. The following award winners are not in any way exhaustive and are in no particular order.

Firstly some definitions:

Larva – the active immature form of an insect especially one that differs in form from the adult.

Funky – stylish often in a striking, weird or unconventional way.

Trichiosoma sp. (20/07/2023) – Ongoing taxonomic issues continue to plague this genus of Sawfly to the extent that we don't really know what species are present in the UK. It was thought that the larvae were more readily identifiable based on food plant but this is still tentative. Genetic testing is ongoing to establish a surer understanding.

Unknown Diptera (30/01/2023) – Funky as hell, so much so that nobody knows what on earth it is. Discovered under dead wood associated with Horse dung it has baffled the experts on several FB groups. If you have any suggestions please let me know.

Bronze Shieldbug (20/07/2023) – A classic case of the larva (or in this case technically a nymph) being WAY more funky than the adult which held a lot of sway with the judges on this particular day. They are predatory in nature and can often be found feeding on unfortunate larvae that were not funky enough to evade its piercing mouthparts.

Unknown Lacewing (22/09/2023) – talking of predatory larvae this one is not just funky but downright scary. Those oversized mandibles are what classify this as a "gardener's friend" as it voraciously munches through other larvae (it's a larvae eat larvae world out there) it comes across. After this photo was taken it ran over to my injudiciously placed thumb and had a nibble and it was quite difficult to persuade it to let me go.

Harpiphorus lepidus (26/06/2023) – Another Sawfly and one which is rarely recorded (4 Aderyn records). It feeds by grazing the upper surface of Oak leaves leaving a fairly distinctive if not diagnostic pattern.

Alder Moth (03/08/2023) – This moth larva has won multiple awards in the past and is practically guaranteed to win whenever it is found as there are very few others that challenge it for sheer levels of funky. It's the paddle shaped hairs that push it into this rarefied category of multiple winners. Wonderfully funky.

The Vapourer (13/09/2023) - Yet another Moth larva displaying effortlessly high levels of funk. The only reason it hasn't won multiple awards is the fact this is the first one I've seen at Taf Fechan.



Trichiosoma sp



Unknown Diptera



Bronze Shieldbug



Unknown Lacewing



Harpiphorus lepidus



Alder Moth



The Vapourer

The Puss Moth (13/06/2023) – Another debutant on the list of winners as it's newly recorded at Taf Fechan. It isn't even fully grown but the tails with extendable red flagellum make it eminently worthy of the award. It is also an example of the adult being just as funky as the larva.

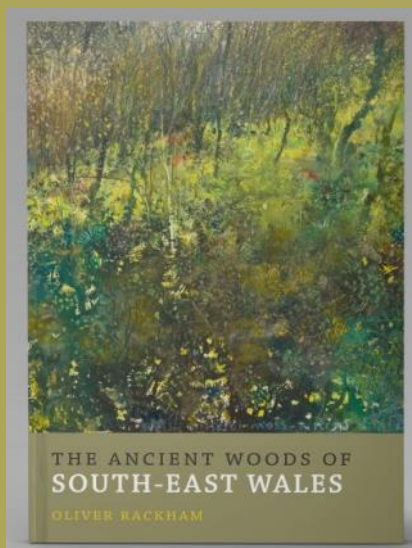
The Lobster Moth (01/08/2023) – The daddy of funk, the hardest working larva in funkdom, the James Brown of larvae. This larva pushes the boundaries of funky into strange new mind bending dimensions of quantum metafunk. It defies the concept of mediocre awards and just is funky.



The Puss Moth



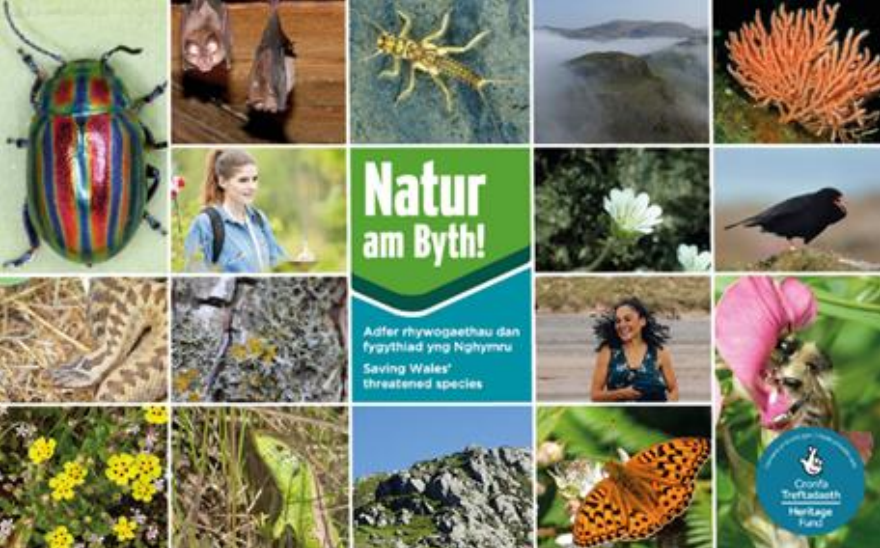
The Lobster Moth



The Ancient Woods of South-East Wales

The Ancient Woods of South-East Wales by Oliver Rackham (his final book, published posthumously) was reprinted in August 2023, having sold out quickly last year.

It is currently available to purchase online from [Little Toller Books](#).



Natur am Byth has officially begun!

Andrea Rowe

September saw the start of the delivery phase of Natur am Byth in Wales. This £8m funded, 4 year initiative brings together 10 organisations from across Wales to deliver the country's largest natural heritage and outreach programme in a bid to save Wales' most threatened species whilst inspiring the people of

Wales to reconnect with nature and boost their wellbeing.

Natur am Byth has been made possible through support of players of the National Lottery after we successfully received a £4.1million delivery phase grant from the Heritage Fund in summer 2023. Additional essential support has also been received from Welsh Government, the Landfill Disposal Tax Community Scheme (LDTCS) administered by Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Natural Resources Wales, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Arts Council of Wales, Banister Trust, Animal Friends Insurance and other generous donors.

10 partners, 11 projects, 67 species

The Wales wide programme is composed of multiple projects that are headed by each of the ten core partner organisations and governed by a programme board representing each environmental charity and Natural Resources Wales.

The species recovery work will focus on 67 target species, of which 42 are at risk of extinction in Wales, within 11 'place-based' projects and will build in work already achieved in the development phase. The projects that fall within the SEWBReC area are:

- **Swansea Bay Coast, Commons & Communities** (Buglife & ARC): focusing on Gower and the urban communities of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot to work with lesser seen audiences on 13 rare species on their doorstep.
- **Swansea Bay Stars of the Night** (Bat Conservation Trust): Wales holds 61% of the UK Lesser Horseshoe Bat population. We'll use citizen science to understand how the species' follow unlit corridors, so we can address and mitigate the effects of urban light spill in Swansea on this species.
- **Saving the Shrill Carder Bee in Wales** (Bumblebee Conservation Trust): with a south Wales stronghold in the UK, we'll target three Shrill Carder Bee population centres in Newport/Cardiff, Bridgend, and Pembrokeshire to train landowners and volunteers to manage and monitor in the long term.
- **Adder Action** (ARC): the UK's only venomous snake is sharply declining across Europe. We'll train volunteers to collect DNA samples from shed skins, working with Bangor University on a paid training placement to assess genetic fitness and distribution of the species.
- **High Brown Fritillary** (Butterfly Conservation): the UK's most threatened butterfly with a single colony left in Wales. We will open up areas of woodland to increase optimal habitat and upskill community members to monitor and manage habitat for the long term.

There will also be several national work packages, co-ordinated by the central programme team, focusing on cultural heritage, the arts and nature, and celebrating Wales' unique wildlife.

For more information on all the place-based projects, our target species list and national work packages please [click on this link](#) to download a programme briefing.

You can also support Natur am Byth by following and sharing project news and activities on social media.





High Brown Fritillary — Photo ©Frank Sengpiel



Belted Galloway grazing Old Castle Down
— Photo ©Alan Sumnall

Project Spotlight: the High Brown Fritillary in the Vale of Glamorgan

Butterfly Conservation has long been at the forefront of efforts to conserve the High Brown Fritillary in Wales, which is now confined to a single site at Old Castle Down and the Alun Valley in the Vale of Glamorgan, meaning that it is highly vulnerable to extinction.

Part of the area that supports the High Brown Fritillary is designated as Old Castle Down Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and supports a wonderful range of vegetation types (including calcareous grassland, humid heath and damp limestone heath) and species including Soft-leaved Sedge *Carex montana*, Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, Golden Waxcap *Hygrocybe chlorophane*, Black Oil-beetle *Meloe proscarabaeus*, Glow-worm *Lampyris noctiluca* and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene*. The land is privately owned and registered as Common Land with Commoners' Rights. Both overgrazing and undergrazing cause problems at the site – the High Brown Fritillary needs a mosaic of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* over Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana*. Undergrazing and lack of management leads to Bracken that is too dense to allow violets to flourish and allows scrub/woodland succession to take place, whereas overgrazing can lead to dominance by grass species and a lack of Bracken litter to provide the necessary microclimate for the larvae to thrive.

Already, Natur am Byth has started to make a difference to the site. Thanks to funding, project officers with the help of PONT, ran a series of successful workshops earlier in 2023 to show local Commoners 'NoFence' technology. The system consists of an app that works with a collar worn by each animal and uses GPS and the mobile network to communicate - allowing Commoners to keep animals within a designated area without the need of an actual fence. Following the purchase of collars and training in a safe environment off-site, six Belted Galloway cattle were brought on site and have become well-photographed local residents.

Over the next 4 years, habitat and species monitoring will form a big part of taking the management of the site forward using existing and new methods. We know many of you love the site and we would be delighted to get as many people out to explore the site as we can. Over the winter our focus is on practical conservation tasks but come spring we will once again be focusing on species and habitat surveys and would very much appreciate your help.

To find out more about the High Brown Fritillary project or register your interest please contact Andrea Rowe arowe@butterfly-conservation.org or Dot Williams dwilliams@butterfly-conservation.org. Follow us on Facebook on [Butterfly Conservation - Vale of Glamorgan High Brown Fritillary Project](#).



Biodiversity at Dyffryn Gardens

Jessica Dangerfield and Chris Flynn

The ecological value of gardens is becoming increasingly important to the landscape around us. The natural succession of a long flowering season and range of fringe habitats supported by gardens, replaces those habitats and plant species lost through the degradation of hedgerows, intensive farming practices and increasing urban sprawl. Dyffryn comprises 90 acres of beautiful gardens and historic landscape which in turn supports a wide range of flowering plants and varying habitats.

We know that we need to challenge many of our accepted practices to align with the changed world that we live in. We are presented with an opportunity to alter those practices to reduce some of the intensive tasks for a more gentle form of management that is as beneficial to nature recovery as it is to horticulture.

The past seven years in the gardens have seen management changes based on a combination of good intention and adapting established practices. However, we have never been equipped with the detailed knowledge and understanding of the rich tapestry of the property that makes it so valuable. Without truly understanding what we care for we can never hope to properly care for it. In 2022 we launched our three year biodiversity study, led by North-South Ecology, to start to answer these questions.

To date, the biodiversity study has revealed some incredible insights into the fauna and flora supported within Dyffryn Gardens. Surveys assessing multiple different groups are currently being undertaken to establish what species are present within the site and to inform future management of the site. Over the past two years, surveys for bats, hazel dormice, breeding birds, reptiles, fungi, lichens, plants and invertebrates have been underway.

A suite of fungi surveys were undertaken in 2022 which included field surveys and cutting edge genetic techniques using metabarcoding (in collaboration with Aberystwyth University) using soil samples. This involved taking soil plugs from various locations around the site to be sent off for genetic analysis. Genetic sampling was used as an additional survey method to traditional field surveys as some fungi species rarely fruit but live in the soil year round. The results of the survey found that Dyffryn gardens meets the criteria to be considered a "Site of Importance for Nature Conservation" for its grassland fungi assemblages and a number of rare species were noted such as the Ballerina Waxcap (*Porpolomopsis calyptriformis*). The results of this survey have allowed for sympathetic management of the site to protect and enhance the fungal assemblages present. Where small numbers of rare species such as the Ballerina Waxcap have been noted to occur, specific management such as protecting this area from car parking has been implemented to protect these rare mushrooms and encourage more to grow in this area.

Additionally a suite of invertebrate surveys have been carried out across the gardens. These surveys have identified important areas of the site for invertebrates including the ponds in the orchard area. During these surveys a number of notable invertebrate species have been found using the site including the Brown Banded Carder Bee (*Bombus humilis*), the nationally scarce Hawk's-beard Mining Bee (*Andrena fulvago*) and the nationally rare Long-horned Nomad Bee (*Nomada hirtipes*). Future management will look to control encroaching scrub in grassland areas where these rare invertebrates make their home.

As well as changes in habitat management, if you visit the gardens you may also notice features such as Barn Owl nest boxes have been installed to encourage nesting as Barn Owls are known to forage around the site.

To increase awareness and recording of biodiversity within the site, a number of training sessions have been held by independent ecologists for National Trust



staff and volunteers to increase the knowledge and awareness of those working within the grounds to identify and record the species they see. This summer we also held a "Biodiversity Day" (pictured right) for visitors which included a number of guided walks and surveys of species that can be found in the grounds including reptiles, butterflies, bats and pond dipping.



The Spread of the Wasp Spider in Torfaen

Vee Brannovic

This large, colourful spider is native to the Mediterranean region, but it has been spreading northwards. In recent years it has been found in southern and mid Wales, and as far north as Shropshire and Derbyshire. In Torfaen, records started appearing in Cwmbran and this summer two females were recorded on a roadside verge in Pontnewynydd, as well as new records on Henllys Local Nature Reserve.

The Wasp Spider is a good mimic of a Common Wasp, which helps to protect it. It is also a very effective predator, and its web can catch a variety of insects, including flies, bees, and butterflies.

There could be a few reasons why the Wasp Spider is spreading in south Wales - one possibility being climate change. Warmer temperatures are making it easier for the spider to survive and reproduce in new areas.

Another reason is the increasing availability of suitable habitats. The Wasp Spider likes to live in tall vegetation, such as grasslands and heathlands. These habitats are becoming more common in south Wales due to changes in land management practices. In Torfaen, since 2020, 200 sites have been converted to an annual cut and collect approach and so include areas of tall vegetation between April and September or October.



© Gavin Vella



© Mike Dodd



Welsh Floodplain Meadows Project

Caroline O'Rourke

The Floodplain Meadows Partnership is coming to Wales! We have secured funding from the Moondance Foundation for a two-year project to increase our knowledge of Welsh floodplain meadows, build connections with communities and organisations working in the floodplain, and expand our advocacy work to ensure floodplain meadows and the many benefits they bring are given their rightful place in the post-Brexit policy landscape.

The project is primarily focused on south-east Wales, Carmarthenshire, and the Wye catchment with three main objectives.

Increasing our knowledge

Our [inventory](#) currently shows only 27 hectares (ha) of species-rich floodplain meadow in Wales with a further 5 ha under restoration. We believe there must be more sites we are unaware of and would love to hear from anyone who manages a species-rich meadow in the floodplain or is involved in restoration projects.

We will also be investigating the historic extent of floodplain meadows in a target catchment using a method developed by [FMP in England](#). Work has identified that in some English catchments, floodplain meadows were the major land-use. We will pilot this approach in Wales, hopefully paving the way for wider research and mapping.

Alongside this we are aiming to model floodplain meadow restoration potential in Carmarthenshire and survey a sample of locations previously modelled in the Wye Catchment and south-east Wales to support a range of upcoming restoration projects.

Building connections

We will run a series of seminars on floodplain meadows to share our extensive research on this rare habitat, and hope to build a network of floodplain meadow collaborators including farmers, community groups, meadow groups and others working in floodplains to share information, case studies and experiences.

Advocacy

We will expand our work with Natural Resources Wales, the Welsh Assembly, and other policy groups in Wales, to supply evidence relevant to policy development and legislation that supports land managers to restore and manage floodplain meadows, particularly the post-Brexit Sustainable Farming Scheme expected to start in 2025.

The project will run until December 2024. If you know of species-rich hay meadows or restoration projects in the Welsh floodplain, are a floodplain land manager, farmer cluster, meadows group, or other organisation interested in meadows we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch with the project officer Caroline O'Rourke (caroline.orourke@open.ac.uk). Learn more on <https://floodplainmeadows.org.uk/>.



All images © Jon Martin

City Nature Challenge 2023

Jon Martin

The City Nature Challenge began in 2016 as a friendly competition between Los Angeles and San Francisco to see which city could record the most wildlife species in an 8 day period. The following year the event was rolled out across 16 cities in the USA and in 2018 it went international involving 69 cities over a 4 day period (Friday-Monday). Bristol/Bath, London and Plymouth were the first UK cities to participate that year.

This year the competition took place from April 28th to May 1st. It was the 3rd year for the Cardiff and Newport area (which includes Flat Holm, the Gwent Levels, Caldicot and Chepstow). Taking part for the first time was a project for the Swansea area, creating a bit of competition within Wales!

SEWBRc were involved on the Saturday at a BioBlitz at Tredegar House in Newport. We managed to record 110 species on the day including Adonis Ladybird (*Hippodamia variegata*), Lily Beetle (*Lilioceris lili*) and Acorn Weevil (*Curculio glandium*). A good day for beetles!

The final total for Cardiff and Newport was 879 observations of 404 species recorded by 61 observers over the 4 day period. Strongly influenced by the time of year the most commonly observed species was Cuckoo Flower (*Cardamine pratensis*) with 12 records. Interesting records included Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and Nosy Pill Woodlouse (*Armadillidium nasatum*) both from Hailey Park, Cardiff. There were also records of Tree Pipit, Hawfinch and Hedgehog.

The Swansea team fared considerably better with 1,737 observations of 538 species recorded by 75 observers. The most observed species in Swansea over the 4 day period was Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) with 22 records. Interesting records included Black Oil Beetle (*Meloe proscarabaeus*) from Llanmadoc, Chough from Southgate, Kittiwake from Mumbles, Spotted Skate (*Raja monagui* egg case) from Swansea, Thornback Skate (*Raja clavata* egg case) and Pygmy Pipistrelle from Clyne Gardens. There were also 5 records of Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), 2 records of Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), 2 records of Slow-worm, 2 records of Grass Snake and one record of Common Pipistrelle.

The best results worldwide were La Paz (Bolivia) with the highest number of observations (128,282) and Hong Kong with the highest number of species (3,769).

The City Nature Challenge is based around the iNaturalist recording website and app. Instead of a verification system, records can reach "research grade" if the record meets certain criteria including a majority verdict on the identification (anyone can contribute to identifications which can be both a strength and a weakness!). Records need to be supported by a photograph or sound file to reach research grade. Identification suggestions are also offered using an AI system: this can be mistaken if the image is unclear but is often surprisingly accurate at least for common species.

When an observation meets Research Grade in iNaturalist it is made available to GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility). Research Grade observations are now also entering the iRecord verification system, providing they match a taxon in the UK Species Inventory. They also need to have an appropriate licence that allows the information to be shared. Records with a CC0, CC BY or CC BY-NC licence can be downloaded by Local Environmental Record Centres but a CC BY-NC licence (the default licence) prevents LERCs from using the records in data services.

So although iRecord (and SEWBRcCORD) are probably still the preferred recording platforms for most people in the UK (both recorders and verifiers), iNaturalist is quite a fun and user-friendly system particularly for newcomers and events like the City Nature Challenge are very enjoyable to participate in.



10,176 species



A DECADE OF SEWBRECORD!



755 Recorders



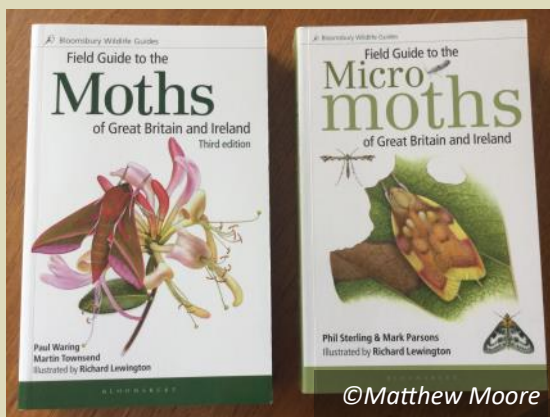
Most recorded species:
Speckled Wood



Most recorded taxon
group: Moths



First record:
Whiskered Bat



SEWBReC Recording Grant and Equipment Loan Schemes

Our grant scheme continues to provide equipment to enable recorders to expand or enhance their recording efforts. The newly launched Book Grant has also been popular, with Matthew Moore (quoted below) among those adding to their wildlife library.

Grants are available up to £500 (£75 for books); [take a look at our website](#) to see if the scheme can be of help to you.

We also have a range of equipment available to loan, for those who don't need to buy anything outright. This includes bat detectors, moth traps and microscopes. Our library of books is also available for loan or use at our offices. Please [take a look at our website](#) or [get in touch](#) with any questions and loan requests.

"Thanks to the SEWBReC book funding scheme, I was able to acquire two extremely useful books to help me with identifying the many moths and micro moths in my garden, as part of my own personal moth trap project. I was extremely lucky to pick up a copy of the highly sought after latest editions of Field Guide to Moths and Field Guide to Micro Moths of Great Britain and Ireland. These books come highly recommended for beginners, like myself and long time ecologists, with excellent illustrations and highly detailed explanations, including some caterpillar pictures, the index provides both scientific and English names for the many moths which one might discover. Thank you to everyone at SEWBReC who make this scheme possible." Matthew Moore

SEWBReC Business Update

Adam Rowe, SEWBReC CEO

Putting together this twice-yearly business update for the Recorders' Newsletter always gives cause to pause and to reflect on how SEWBReC is performing and what it has achieved over the preceding six months. A large amount of SEWBReC's work goes on behind the scenes and is not always celebrated enough - whether it's formatting a spreadsheet for import, writing code for a future enhancement of Aderyn, or copying data from a planning list in preparation for running a batch search - it's work that could be flippantly described as "boring, but important", but it's work like this that keeps SEWBReC moving.

To delve even deeper, some of the work that is the least lauded is that of our board of directors. They do sterling work, often in a voluntary capacity, advising and steering SEWBReC staff at quarterly board meetings, but most directors also sit on and contribute to other working groups (such as Finance Committee or Risk Management Working Group). On this occasion we are shining a light on the work of the Business Plan Working Group who met repeatedly over the past 1-2 years to help shape the document which we are now proud to launch ...

In summer 2023, the SEWBReC board approved the adoption of its new business strategy document: SEWBReC Business Plan Objectives 2023/28. This document, which is now [available via our website](#), will guide SEWBReC's activities over the next five years.

The plan is divided into four "Themes":

1. Improving Recording and Data;
2. Managing Data;
3. Improving Data Usage; and
4. Governance.

The core part of the plan centres around the identification of a series of "Objectives" under each Theme. Progress against each Objective will be tracked by a range of qualitative and quantitative metrics and measures that have been identified for each. Reporting of these metrics and measures will take place at quarterly SEWBReC board meetings, in Annual updates at AGMs and in written Annual Reports. All reporting will be collated over the plan period, so that longer-term trends can be identified. The aim is that these trends, plus all the detailed information reported will trigger actions to improve SEWBReC's business performance and will inform a refined set of objectives in future business plan iterations.

We also intend to develop a dashboard of examples of metrics and measures on our website and to use infographics to illustrate information and trends.

Theme 2 - MANAGING DATA	
Data flow	
2.1	Maximise potential data sources such as local recorders and groups, national schemes and societies, partner organisations, academia and consultants. Number of data flows from new sources established. Regular and effective data flows taking place.

Example of a Business Plan Objective with bullet-points showing the metrics and measures against which we will report progress.

Update continued overleaf.

SEWBReC Membership

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

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

There have been some recent changes to the SEWBReC board to report: Vaughn Matthews has decided to stand down after over three years' service. We are delighted that both David Lee and Kirsty Lloyd have agreed to join the board.

Another aspect of SEWBReC activity that also often goes under the radar is our work to ensure that all of the amazing biological records that are shared with us are put to work in the best ways possible to help contribute to biodiversity conservation and nature recovery. For this update, we are reviewing the reach of SEWBReC and its data via the routes of policy influencing, advising and collaboration. The table below summarises just some of the ways SEWBReC and its staff engage in this way.

UK	Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC)	Organisational member (large LERC). Adam Rowe (AR) is Vice Chair and a founding Director. Promotes good LERC practices and acts as a voice for LERCs in many UK contexts.
UK	National Forum for Biological Recording (NFBR)	Elaine Wright (EW) and David Slade (DS) have both been instrumental in the running of NFBR for well over a decade, as Trustee/Council members. NFBR exists to promote biological recording and the use, management and dissemination of biodiversity information.
Wales	Welsh Government Biodiversity Deep Dive Evidence & Monitoring Expert Group	AR represents LERC Wales on this task and finish group assembled to inform WG on its efforts to achieve the 30x30 target to reverse biodiversity decline.
Wales	Wales Nature Recovery Action Plan Implementation Group	AR represents LERC Wales on this standing committee which oversees Wales' performance against the national NRAP.
Wales	Wales Biological Data Group	Senior staff attend this working group of representatives from LERCs, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, National Biodiversity Network Trust and UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology to discuss all aspects of biological data.
Wales	Wales Planning and Biodiversity Forum	AR co-represents LERC Wales in this specialist group looking at how biodiversity issues are addressed within the development management (Planning) sector.
Wales	Local Environmental Records Centres Wales Limited (LERC Wales)	Corporate Director/Treasurer. Engagement at all levels from board level to attending all-Wales staff meetings to leading/participating in the following working groups: IT, Aderyn, Data Management, Data Exchange Agreements, Communications, Sites & Designations, Wales Recording Hub, Risk Management (Director-led).
Local	Local Nature Partnerships	A range of staff represent SEWBReC at meetings of the eleven Local Nature Partnerships across the region, including a role for AR on the LNP Steering Groups in Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan and Neath Port Talbot.

Other major work areas remain as a high priority for SEWBReC staff. Very brief updates are given below for a few selected themes. For any further information on any aspect of our work, or if you are involved in any partnerships or project you'd like us to contribute to, please drop an email to info@sewbrec.org.uk.

Finances: SEWBReC remains in a stable financial position, despite there being long delays in finalising our biggest single funding agreement (the newly-merged Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales funding package). We hope that this agreement, as well as a few, smaller, local Service Level Agreements (SLAs) will soon be tied up.

Data Flow: Staff across the Welsh LERCs have been collaborating to develop national data sharing agreements to improve data flows with national organisations including RSPB, Bat Conservation Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust and Butterfly Conservation. It is hoped that these agreements will soon bear fruit with simpler, faster data flows established. Intensive work continues to import data from a wide range of sources including LERC Wales app, SEWBReCORD and iRecord to achieve fast and efficient data flows from record capture to record use via Aderyn.

Data Use: Despite the ongoing cost of living crisis, our data enquiries service continues to be extremely well-used with enquiry income standing 4.5% above our target level for the year at the end of October 2023, although this masks a slight reduction in enquiry volumes compared to last year. The goal of delivering 1,000 enquiries in a year might not be reached this year, but we won't be far short.

Aderyn: Work on the total redevelopment of the [Aderyn](#) website has continued, with Lead Developer John Robinson at the helm, supported by Dave Slade. Huge strides have been made on the server-side and we are promised a superfast and efficient data retrieval system. Work will be accelerating now and we hope to soon be in a position to grow the Aderyn team and to start to see progress on the user-facing parts of the design as we move towards modules of the new website undergoing exhaustive testing before it goes live in due course.

Events and Outreach: Change is afoot as our Events and Outreach Officer, Emma Williams, is leaving us imminently. We are very grateful for the huge energy, enthusiasm and dedication she threw at the role during her time with us. We received so much positive feedback from the courses and events Emma ran and attended for us and her legacy of newly-enthused recorders will long outlast her stay with us. Her boots will be hard to fill, but fill them we must, so we can build on the wave of energy Emma has created for us. Keep an eye on SEWBReC social media and emails for details of job opportunities in the coming weeks.

As ever, I would like to repeat my plea to encourage as many of you as possible to continue to generate and submit records in the way that suits you best (whether via [paper form](#), [spreadsheet](#), [SEWBReCORD](#), the [LERC Wales app](#) or any other means) and remember to share any exciting finds or identification queries to the [SEWBReC Facebook Group](#). We love seeing the amazing things you find and are grateful to you for entrusting us with your records! Thank you for your ongoing support.

I look forward to seeing many of you in person for our SEWBReC 20th Anniversary celebrations in 2024. A year of events and activities kicks off with the Gwent-Glamorgan Recorders' Forum event at the SONY Theatre, Bridgend College on Saturday 20th January 2024 ([book a space here](#)).



GWENT-GLAMORGAN RECORDERS' FORUM



Saturday 20th January
2024

The Sony Theatre, Bridgend
10am-4pm



Celebrating 20 years
of SEWBReC!



Join us for this FREE event,
including wildlife talks, awards,
nature quiz & cake.



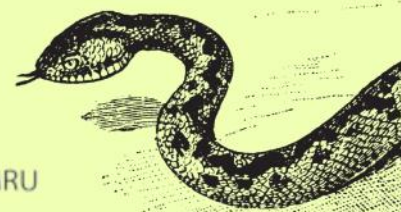
OPEN FOR BOOKING AT EVENTBRITE

<https://ggrf2024.eventbrite.co.uk>



SEWBReC

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





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

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