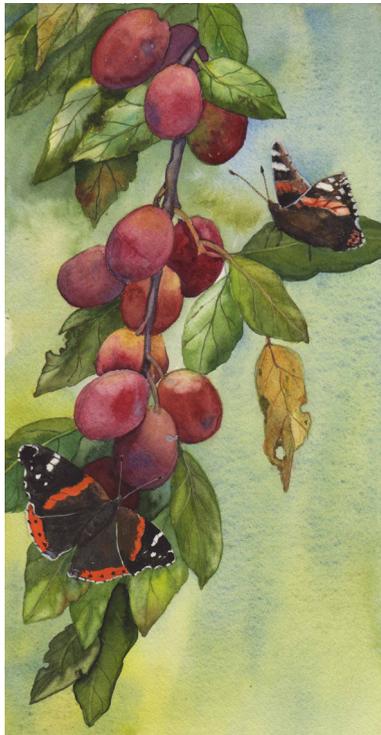




Butterfly Conservation Wales
Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Cymru

Butterfly News

The Newsletter of the South Wales Branch
of Butterfly Conservation



Autumn 2009

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Cover Image

Red Admiral - a painting by Julie Horner

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Editorial by Andrea Rowe

A warm welcome to the autumn edition of Butterfly News, which I hope you'll agree, makes very enjoyable and interesting reading. Don't forget to email me your news and articles and I will endeavour to include them in our next issue.

This issue includes several project updates, including the Mynydd Mawr project, the search for Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth caterpillars and a look at whether the Tir Gofal scheme actually benefits wildlife. There are also some fascinating human interest articles highlighting how wildlife links us all. Sadly this year has seen the loss of one of our hardest working Branch members, John Zehetmayr and we thought it fitting to include an obituary kindly provided by his son, Brian.

It's been another mixed bag of weather this summer, luckily with enough warm, sunny days to allow me to take part in the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey and to see some new species for me. A holiday to Norfolk rewarded me with my first Swallowtail sightings - a truly stunning species, and a trip to Somerset led to an unexpected encounter with a Jersey Tiger moth.

Finally, our Branch Members' Day is on October 24th at Kenfig NNR. Our speakers always manage to provide interesting talks, often with some amazing photographs. It is a great way to meet other members, so if you have never attended before, why not give it a try this year, especially if you are one of our steady stream of new members?

Welcome to New Branch Members

The Branch Committee once again has the pleasure of welcoming new members. We hope you enjoy your membership and look forward to meeting you at Branch events and our annual Members' Day and AGM.

A very warm welcome to: Mr P Watson, Treharris; Miss F Ross, Cardiff; Ms SA Watkins, Chepstow; Mr AL Thomas, Swansea; Miss CA Dooley, Narberth; Mr DA Wheeler, Presteigne; Mr T Parker, Saundersfoot; Mr J and Mrs S Wynn, Penarth; Mr CA Leitch, Cardiff; Ms CR Ward, Machynlleth; Mr PG Davies, Pontypridd; Miss CF Case, Pontypridd; Mrs MC North, Tregaron; Mr R and Mrs ED Williams & family, Kidwelly; Miss GL Glasier, Aberystwyth; Mrs J Hughes, Port Talbot; Miss DR Haynes, Abergavenny; Mrs NJ Hart, Maesteg; Mr DG Jenkins, Tonteg; Ms D Davies, Cardiff; Mr IR Coleman, Swansea; Miss K Thomas-Collins, Aberbeeg; Mr R Jenkins, Pontypool; Mr TM and Mrs AE Roberts, Bedwas; Mr M Hutin, Rhoose; Mr RE Mogg, Little Haven; Miss LK Broaders, St. Davids; Mr PM Seligman, Cardiff; Miss V Black & family, Cardiff; Miss A Heath, Penarth.

The Mynydd Mawr Marsh Fritillary Project: An Update

by Deborah Sazer

The Mynydd Mawr Marsh Fritillary Project in Carmarthenshire has entered its sixth and final year - although we're already planning a new wider landscape project to continue our work around Mynydd Mawr.

Half of all suitable or potential Marsh Fritillary habitat in the project area is now protected by management agreements with landowners. That's over 100 hectares (ha) of rhos pasture: 65ha in our purpose-built agreements, with the rest receiving agri-environment, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or other grants. These fields are being summer-grazed by cattle or ponies, to create the tussocky habitat needed by Marsh Fritillary caterpillars. Around 1½ kilometres of new fencing has been installed, along with new gates and water troughs to enable grazing. We've also cleared over 6ha of scrub, bramble and ragwort, to win back the grassland that has been lost through neglect.

This year, Richard Smith and Lyn Gander are searching for further Marsh Fritillary habitat within a 10,800ha area around Mynydd Mawr. This work, on behalf of Carmarthenshire County Council, will give us invaluable information about the entire Marsh Fritillary metapopulation and its prospects for long-term survival. This, in turn, will help us and the Council understand the butterfly's requirements in the context of continuing threats from development, mismanagement and neglect.

For more information or a copy of the project newsletter contact Deborah Sazer on 01792 642972 or email: dsazer.bcw@btconnect.com

New Blood URGENTLY Needed for Branch Committee

The Branch Committee is in desperate need of new members to help assist with existing roles and to help us expand in new directions. The Committee holds around four evening meetings a year, which are kept as short as possible. The Committee manages the budget for the Branch, makes decisions on site management and where the Branch focuses its energies, as well as organising the AGM/Members' Day.

Any member of BC can sit on the Committee. There are lots of different roles to get involved with, including website management, events organisation, publicity and education. We want the Committee to reflect your views, so please consider giving up a small amount of your time and getting involved. If you are interested, or want more information, please contact any of the Committee Members (see back page) or come along to the Members' Day.

The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey - a personal experience

by Andrea Rowe

After two years of pilot testing, the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) has been rolled out nationwide this year. This new survey aims to gauge the changing abundance of widespread butterfly species in those areas that have often received less recording attention in the past e.g. plantation forestry, farmland and urban green spaces.

Earlier in the year, Dr Katie Cruickshanks (the WCBS national co-ordinator) called for volunteers to undertake the WCBS ... so I got in touch. A series of randomly generated 1km squares had been identified for each Branch, so I checked the list and found one close by: SS8185 Margam Country Park.

The WCBS method involves making two core visits per year to the 1km square in July and August (with at least 10 days between visits) to count butterflies seen along two 1km survey lines running roughly north-south or east-west through the square. One or two further visits could also be made between May and August. Visits needed to be made at roughly the same time of day (10:45-15:45 or from 09:30-10:45 and 15:45-16:30 if the majority (>75%) of the survey area was unshaded and the following weather conditions met). For surveys to take place, weather conditions needed to be dry, with a wind speed less than Beaufort Scale 5 and temperatures of 13 °C or greater when at least 60% sunshine or 17°C if overcast. I was quite glad, therefore, that the survey site was close to home, knowing how much local weather conditions can vary.

Once survey permission was obtained (my thanks to Michael Wynne, Margam Park Manager for allowing survey access), I visited the 1km square to identify and map the exact survey lines (which needed, preferably, to be parallel to each other, 500m apart but 250 m in from the edge of the square) and then the 10 x 200m sections (which needed easily identifiable start and end points either at permanent landmarks or needed to be marked to enable re-survey in future years). I opted for permanent landmarks and must admit was quite relieved to have plenty of useful telegraph poles - I can imagine this may have been slightly more tricky in upland or forestry sites without the aid of GPS.

My survey route took in a lovely rural lane adjacent to Margam deer park, characterised by verdant roadside vegetation, diverse hedgerows and, on one side, the tall stone boundary wall of the deer park (which had lots of lovely butterfly-friendly vegetation growing on it). The survey route then headed into the deer park itself, characterised by a much more open grassland habitat with areas of wet flushes, rough grassland and some pools.

Although I had often visited Margam Park, I was not as familiar with the surrounding countryside, so the survey proved a great way of getting to know more of my local area.

Although my survey area did not unearth any rare or unusual species, it did give a good flavour of the area of countryside surveyed with Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Speckled Woods, Large Skippers, Large Whites, Green-Veined Whites, Wall Browns, Small Tortoiseshells and Painted Lady butterflies amongst those seen. The ivy-covered wall provided a lovely basking place for Gatekeepers and Holly Blues, whilst on my survey of the 25th of July a patch of thistles was home to 36 Gatekeepers!

My recording was not just limited to Lepidoptera though. Froglets, Common Lizards and an array of dragonflies including Golden-ringed, Keeled Skimmer, Common Darter and Broad-bodied Chasers were all seen - all valuable records for the area.

So now that all my data has been entered online, will I be taking part again? Definitely yes! I really enjoyed getting to know the survey area over the summer months and thoroughly enjoyed my walks with butterflies.

For more information on the survey, please visit www.ukbms.org/wcbs.htm.

Butterfly Conservation 6th International Symposium

Reading University, 26th-28th March 2010

The 6th International Symposium, to be opened by BC President Sir David Attenborough, will be on the theme: *The 2010 target and beyond for Lepidoptera*. The meeting will address the key target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010, which was set across Europe almost a decade ago. There will be reviews of progress from the UK and around the world, as well as the latest science on how to reverse butterfly and moth declines and conserve habitats. The programme provides opportunities for active members to present papers or posters on practical conservation work and contributions are welcomed. The Symposium will end with a forward look at future challenges, including the impact of climate change.

There are various booking options available and also an Early Bird Offer for those who book before 8th January 2010. For more information and to book please visit:

www.butterfly-conservation.org/text/2751/international_symposia.html or contact Neil Madigan on 01929 406 003 for any other queries.

John Walter Lloyd Zehetmayr

Lt Cdr (ret'd) VRD. OBE. BA (Oxon) FICFor
Naval Officer, Forester, Naturalist and Skier



24 December 1921 - 3 July 2009

John Zehetmayr, who died at his home in Penarth at the age of 87, was an outstanding forester who had a very considerable influence on the practice of forestry in Britain. He was a leader in research into upland afforestation, he transformed basic forest operations through his leadership in work study, and as Senior Forestry Commission Officer in Wales he guided forestry in the Principality for 15 years.

Educated at St Paul's and then Keble College, Oxford (although living in Wadham because of wartime occupation of Keble) where he took a botany degree, John responded to a call for science based graduates in 1942. This proved to be for training as a radar officer and John joined the Royal Navy as a RNVF Sub Lieutenant Special Branch. He served on HMS Ulster Queen, a Fighter Direction Vessel, throughout the war and was present at the Salerno and Anzio landings. It was while stationed in Belfast during a refit that he met Betty Neill whom he married in September 1945.

After returning to Keble and completing a degree in Forestry, John joined the Forestry Commission in 1947. In Scotland, he set up the first Forestry Work Study department in Europe and became Conservator West Scotland. He

was transferred to Wales in 1966 as Conservator South Wales and Senior Officer Wales.

In retirement John continued to influence conservation issues through a wide variety of activities until his death. He was warden of Lavernock Nature Reserve for over 30 years and his systematic butterfly recordings there and elsewhere provide part of the raw data helping us to understand the effects of climate change on wildlife. At various times he served on the Prince of Wales Committee, the Brecon Beacons National Park Committee, was vice chair of Glamorgan Wildlife Trust and Chairman of the Forestry Safety Council. In 1991, John was appointed OBE in recognition of his work in forestry and conservation. He was also awarded Wales Volunteer of the Year in 2007 and made honorary Vice President of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales in 2008.

John was a keen skier, taking up the sport in his mid 40's initially in Scotland and then on family trips to the Alps. His last ski trip was in Easter 2008! He was a long-term supporter of the Fairwater artificial ski slope in Cardiff and became a volunteer instructor in 1984 and remained so for 25 years. It was at Fairwater he fell and broke his leg in November 2008. After a short illness, he died at home on 3rd July.

In retirement, John cared for many years for his beloved wife Betty, who died a few months before him. He was an active member of All Saints, Penarth and it was in recognition of a life lived to the full that his funeral was attended by nearly 400 family members, colleagues, and friends. John leaves behind 2 sons, Brian born 1946 and Peter born 1951, 1 daughter Susan Pembroke born 1954, 6 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.



Russel Hobson, Head of Conservation BC Wales, sent me the following email and suggested reproducing the article he wrote on Lavernock Pont Nature Reserve for the BC Wales Newsletter in 2008 in memory of him:

"We were sad to hear about the death of John Zehetmayr. He was an active supporter of butterfly conservation through his many conservation activities, initially as a Forester of repute, then as a member of various public and charitable conservation bodies. Many of us will fondly remember stimulating discussions with John about the ecology of different species of butterfly and particularly his dedicated recording of butterflies at Lavernock Nature Reserve over the past twenty five years."

25 Years of Butterfly Recording at Lavernock Point Nature Reserve by John Zehetmayr (written in 2008)

Lavernock Point, about 8 ha of the Penarth Cliffs SSSI on the South Wales coast, has been a nature reserve since 1967. Acquired for its flower-rich limestone grassland and as a key point for bird migration, it is also a valuable habitat for butterflies, with 29 species recorded.

For almost 30 years, volunteers working by hand fought a losing battle against invasion by scrub, threatening both meadows (rich in orchids, scabious, Dyers Greenweed and Fleabane) and the grassland butterflies. From 1998, skilled staff with machines backed by a local team have cleared over one hectare of scrub and the grassland area has recovered.

Since 1970 I have kept a running list of the butterfly species and was delighted to find all five Vanessids, Skippers and Browns with the occasional Clouded Yellow. From 1982 I used the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme method.

Compared with national figures, which also showed many decreases in recent years, it would appear that Lavernock has done rather better than the country as a whole and our management efforts are not in vain.

Results of the 25 years of Monitoring (1982-2006)

Increase	Substantial	Orange-tip and Comma
	With recent slight decrease	Red Admiral, Ringlet* (first seen 1985), Brimstone, Small/Green-veined Whites, Painted Lady, Peacock, Speckled Wood
	With fluctuations	Gatekeeper*, Meadow Brown*
Little change	Peak in mid 1990's, some fluctuations	Small and Large Skippers, Small Copper, Common Blue and Small Tortoiseshell
Decrease	Slight	Dingy Skipper, Large White
	Substantial	Small Heath, lost in 1998
Casual sightings	Peak in 1990's	Wall, Grayling, Marbled White and Monarch

Only * species have numbers regularly exceeding 20

Editor's Note: More information on Lavernock Point Nature Reserve, including access and directions, can be found at www.welshwildlife.org/reservesGlamorgan_en.link

**Butterfly Conservation
South Wales Branch
MEMBERS' DAY and AGM
SATURDAY 24th OCTOBER 2009**

(Non-members are also very welcome)



**Kenfig NNR Visitor Centre
Kenfig, near Pyle**
*between BRIDGEND and PORT TALBOT
(less than 1 mile from M4, directions below)*

Programme

10:30 Arrival. Tea, coffee and biscuits. Welcome.

11:00 Garden Moth Scheme Cymru update - Norman Lowe
Two years ago Norman introduced this scheme to us. Now, with nearly three years worth of data, can any conclusions be drawn?

11.30 The Biodiversity of the post Industrial Landscape – Steve Williams
Steve is the Ecologist for Torfaen County Borough Council as well as the County Orthoptera recorder for VC35. He will show us how Man's use of the Valleys has had some very positive effects on the plants and animals that live there.

12.15 Conservation of Lepidoptera in Scotland - Tom Prescott
Tom is the Species Conservation Officer for Butterfly Conservation Scotland and will tell us about their projects, including the work they have been doing to protect the Burnet moths.

13.00 Lunch Break
An opportunity to mingle and chat with other attendees. Please note that you will need to bring your own food. There are outlets within 5 minutes drive. Teas and coffees will be available at centre.

13:45 Branch AGM, include reports of activities

The (hopefully swift) formal part of the day before moving on to some more informal updates on some of the projects within the Branch ...

14:15 Brief presentations on Branch projects and activities - Richard Smith

A brief canter through what we've been up to lately and how anyone can get involved with on-going projects.

14:30 Butterflies: Priorities for 2010 and beyond - Russel Hobson

15.00 Tea break & Networking.

A chance to have a final cup of tea/coffee and chat to speakers, other attendees and Branch Committee Members.

End 15.45 approx.

Directions to Kenfig NNR Visitor Centre

Leave M4 motorway at junction 37. At exit roundabout follow A4229 towards "**Porthcawl**". At first roundabout (after 400 yds) **turn right** onto B4283 towards North Cornelly. Go under motorway and carry on right through village until cross-roads just beyond. Turn **left** here, crossing motorway on an over-bridge and following this road for another half mile (past both "Angel" and then "Prince of Wales" pubs on your left) until you see the reserve car park on the **right**.

Is the Tir Gofal scheme benefiting butterflies?

by George Tordoff

The Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme has been in operation across Wales for 10 years – but has the scheme actually improved the fortunes of the wildlife it was intended to help? In an effort to answer this fundamental question, the Welsh Assembly Government has contracted Butterfly Conservation Wales and four other conservation organisations (RSPB, Plantlife Wales, Bat Conservation Trust and Wildlife Trusts Wales) to monitor wildlife on Tir Gofal farms over a three year period.

Butterfly Conservation's element of the project is focussed on three UK BAP Priority butterfly species: Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary and Brown Hairstreak. Each of these species has declined dramatically in recent decades and depends on suitably managed farmland habitats for its survival in Wales. A desk study carried out over the winter found that the habitat management prescriptions of the scheme have the potential to benefit these and other butterfly species; for example, the grazing restrictions placed on marshy grassland habitats could benefit both Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Marsh Fritillary. However, until now there has been no field monitoring of the scheme to see whether it is actually working for these species in practice.

Fieldwork for the three species is spread across the year, starting with Brown Hairstreak egg counts in the winter, followed by Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary adult timed counts in June and July, and finally Marsh Fritillary larval web surveys in August and September. Conventional farms and nature reserves will also be surveyed to compare butterfly populations and habitat condition with that on Tir Gofal farms.

The project commenced in May, and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary surveys have now been completed in north-west Wales. The excellent June weather meant that butterflies were active on most days, and the species was found on nearly all of the surveyed farms. Attention now turns to South Wales with the forthcoming Marsh Fritillary web surveys in Glamorgan, Breconshire and Carmarthenshire. Surveys for Brown Hairstreak will take place in its south-west Wales stronghold of Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact George Tordoff on 01792 642972 or email: gtordoff.bcw@btconnect.com

Editor's Note: In May, Rural Affairs Minister Elin Jones announced a major shift in approach to land management schemes in Wales. From 2012, existing agri-environment schemes (including Tir Gofal, Tir Cynnal and Tir Mynydd) will be replaced by one scheme: Glastir.

Elin Jones said “My decision to go ahead with one all-encompassing scheme will mean a reduction in red tape for farmers, lower administration costs, and greater environmental benefits.

“The current schemes have been effective, but were designed in a different context. The land management scheme for the coming decade must respond to the challenges of climate change, water management and bio-diversity. Glastir will help us to do just that. We are shifting to a culture in which farmers are paid for providing environmental goods and services.

“Glastir marks a major change. Farmers produce food and manage the land and they do so for their own commercial benefit and for the good of wider society. Glastir will pay farmers to manage the land in a way that will meet many of the priorities of today’s society.”

New paintings by artist Julie Horner

Julie Horner, artist and member of Butterfly Conservation’s Cheshire Branch, has produced some new butterfly paintings. Julie, whose watercolours have graced the front cover of Natur Cymru (and now our very own newsletter), lives in Cheshire but likes to travel to Wales and Shropshire for inspiration. Her paintings focus on the species in her garden or natural surroundings:



Painted Lady

Image size 150mm
x 225mm

Overall size 300mm x
240mm

Including cream
mount

Postage & packing
included

£25 each



Red Admiral

We can't do justice to Julie's paintings in this newsletter, but for more information and to see more of her butterfly and British wildlife paintings go to www.butterflypaintings.co.uk or www.britishanimalpaintings.co.uk.

Terence Parsons 1930 to 2009 – a remarkable story still unfolding

by Richard Smith

Some of you may recently have become aware that around 1950, a certain Terence Parsons was preparing final drafts of his forthcoming book "Butterflies of Wales", (he called it a "monograph" of "Welsh Rhoplocera") which to this day has never been published. We only know about this because Ian Morgan from Llanelli had, fortunately, made contact with F C Best, a couple of weeks before he (Best) passed away in 1987. Ian discovered from Best that Parsons had been writing to the then County Recorders to exchange information during 1949-50 and has obtained copies of much relevant correspondence with both Best and the other county recorders in Wales around that time. Ian then set about trying to discover more about Terence Parsons and, in his own publications including many for Llanelli Naturalists et al, paid tribute to and sought information about Parsons.

I became aware of Parsons around 1998, when Adrian Fowles put me in contact with Ian, when I was then looking to compile a "Butterflies of Glamorgan". I made several enquiries of Terence Parsons over the years, as his last known (then) address was (in 1950) in Ogmere Vale near Bridgend, however all had drawn blanks. Finally, in autumn 2007, I called at various houses in his village and to my amazement eventually discovered, by a series of cross-referrals, that he was still active and living in Cardiff. It turned out that Terence (Terry to his family) was only 20 years old at the time of his embarking upon the "Butterflies of Wales".

During early 2008, Terry very kindly responded to my & Ian's request for any relevant historical information and assiduously began the process of compiling records for each butterfly species, including a few that we don't normally think of as South Wales species. I initially received Terry's record sheets for South Wales counties for 15 species: Brimstone, Wood White, Purple Hairstreak, White letter Hairstreak, Brown Hairstreak, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Chalkhill Blue, Silver-studded Blue, Marsh Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Large Tortoiseshell & Marbled White. A couple of months later, he'd compiled the remaining fritillaries, skippers and metalmarks. All of these included both his own records and those of others with whom he had corresponded, particularly around 1949-50. As the sheets covered all South Wales vice counties and Terry only had an electric typewriter, I agreed to make photocopies to pass to all current county recorders in South & Mid Wales.

So far, two particular items stand out, to me personally, as rather special in a Wales context.

Firstly, amongst the correspondence, which Ian had copied to me in late 1990s, was a hand drawn map of the Silver-studded Blue and its apparent distribution in years up to 1950. It included three sites in Glamorgan and several others in parts of Wales where it is no longer known.

Secondly, as many of you know, we are down to one remaining population of High Brown Fritillary in Wales, whereas in 1950-1970 it was widely distributed. By 1995, only a handful of populations were known and then from 1995-7, at least three more were 'discovered' in Glamorgan apparently for the first time. We discovered from John Vaughan in Merthyr Mawr that the Alun Valley population was known in the 1940s and 1950s. Terry's records, sent to me in 2008, included descriptions of its regular occurrence around Cwm Dimbath (one of the above sites "found" in 1995) in the late 1940s, including reference to his own observations of the exceptional summer of 1947, when it was easily the commonest butterfly there and flew on well into September.

In April this year, I received an unexpected phone call from Terry's god-daughter, Lily, to say that sadly Terry had passed away. It seems that there may be considerable papers in boxes to do with Terry's passions of butterflies, local history and railways. Most of Terry's small specimen collection has already been made available to us and Lily is hoping to sort through the remaining papers and pass on to me anything butterfly related. Hopefully, more fascinating insights into Wales's butterfly past will thus be revealed in the coming months. The National Museum of Wales has kindly indicated a willingness, in principle, to be a repository of the material coming forward.

So far we still know very little detail about Terry, other than he was born and brought up in Glamorgan, although his father's family were originally from Devonshire. He told me last year that he was still an interested, if irregular, moth trapper around his home in Rhymney, on the eastern outskirts of Cardiff.

Thanks go particularly to Ian Morgan for bringing Terence Parsons existence to our attention. Otherwise, we may not have known anything of his contributions.

Editor's Note: Hopefully a further article will follow from Richard in due course, as more of Terence's treasures are explored.

Searching for Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth caterpillars

by Russel Hobson

For the past three years Butterfly Conservation (BC) staff have been trying to find Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth larvae at sites with only adult records. The aim is to find where the moth is breeding, determine the favoured type of breeding habitat and try to work out how best to manage the sites for the moth. This follows up work done by Barry Stewart on the Gower and John Harold on the Llyn.

The data has yet to be analysed but some observations can be made:

- 1) At two large sites the larvae are still to be found.
- 2) The painstaking searches are best not done in torrential rain or after heavy rain as this washes off the frass. The frass makes finding larvae much easier.
- 3) Compared to the Gower sites, the more upland sites had a high abundance of the Tansy Leaf Beetle (*Galeruca tanacetii*) larvae, which produce extensive and very similar feeding damage on most of the scabious leaves.
- 4) However, where larvae have been found, it is in broadly similar vegetation to the Gower and Llyn sites.

The work so far is helping increase our understanding of the moth's needs, but is still insufficient. We need to find more larvae on sites away from the Gower and Llyn.

If you would like to help search sites in 2010, please contact Russel Hobson on 01792 642 972 or email: rhobson.bcw@btconnect.com

National Moth Recording Scheme: Provisional Maps Online

Provisional distribution maps for all macro-moth species from the National Moth Recording Scheme are now available for all to view online. The provisional maps are based on records submitted so far to the National Moth Recording Scheme. To view the maps visit www.mothscount.org and click on the maps tab.

Butterfly sighting reunites family - a really heart-warming story!

by Richard Smith

Working with volunteers brings you into contact with people with all sorts of issues occurring in their lives. Often these are just the usual events probably typical of society generally. But just occasionally, something really positive comes along, however inadvertent. People often come across something special in the natural world, which they might not have, but for some problem arising. For instance, not so long ago, a lady on feeling unwell had dropped out early from a fun social weekend, so decided to take a quiet walk in her local village and was amazed to find a hitherto unknown Brown Hairstreak population.

Continuing the Brown Hairstreak connection, one of our regular volunteers, Gareth Tonks, who travels right across South Wales from Gwent to help with winter surveys, recently sent me the following e-mail in response to a regular news item:

“Thanks for the message Richard. I was wondering if you are doing any surveys of the adult Brown Hairstreak as you've done before? Also, I'd like to mention a startling e-mail I received from Martin Anthoney, a couple of months ago. Someone who was looking for me had seen my name in our local (Monmouthshire Butterfly & Moth Group) newsletter on the internet, and e-mailed Martin, who passed on the e-mail to me. It was my long lost daughter who I have not seen since she was a toddler 36 years ago. Thanks to a Red Admiral that I sighted in March 08, I am now reunited with my daughter. She loves butterflies too”.

Astounded by this casual mention (good job, I read all my e-mails!) I asked Gareth if he and his daughter were willing to share their story, which they were delighted to do.

“I forgot to tell you her name is Rachael, she was living in Llanberis up until a few weeks ago and has just got a degree in Psychology. She has just moved back to Brighton now. I think it would be a nice idea to give it a mention in a butterfly newsletter if you think it is fitting, I know she would be pleased”.

I'm sure all our readers would like to join me in wishing Gareth & Rachael all the very best. Perhaps we might even meet an extra volunteer at a future event!

A summer of weather

by Andrea Rowe

I know the British are supposed to be obsessed with the weather, but for us Lepidopterists, the weather is crucial to planning our weekly activities. It is all too easy to look back over the summer and remember generally what the weather has been like, but I thought it would be interesting to delve a bit deeper. So I visited the Met Office website (www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk) which provides some useful summaries and plenty of information to compare local and national weather (although the website should come with a health warning as it's a very easy site to spend a lot of time on!).

The following summary represents a provisional assessment of the weather experienced across Wales and the UK during summer 2009 (June, July and August) and how it compares with the averages for 1971 to 2000 (the period used for the seasonal forecast).

In Wales, June began with warm weather by day, but also a few heavy showers in places (Cardiff Bute Park recorded 78.1mm of rainfall in 24 hours on the 6th/7th). This was followed by cooler, more-unsettled weather, followed by a rise in pressure and largely dry weather and higher temperatures from the 22nd-25th. The last few days of the month saw a fall in pressure, with thundery troughs spreading from Biscay and France and the report of a funnel cloud over the Brecon Beacons on the 26th. Overall, June was warmer, drier and sunnier than average.

July's rainfall was significantly above normal in almost all areas, particularly in a broad swathe stretching from south-west England, through Wales, the Midlands and northern England into eastern Scotland. In south-west England, south Wales and parts of north-east England over three times the normal amount was recorded. The wettest areas were also the dullest, with south-west England and Wales recording typically 80% of normal sunshine, so not good Lepidoptera weather. Provisionally, this was the second wettest July on record, in a series from 1914 (only July 1939 being wetter). Temperatures were close to normal and sunshine was below normal.

August was a rather unsettled month but relatively dry with parts of east and south Wales recording less than 75% of normal rainfall. The frequent cloudy conditions meant that temperatures were somewhat below normal by day but slightly above normal at night. Overall, mean temperatures were close to normal. Sunshine totals were typically 10% below normal. There were some very mild nights, particularly 4th/5th, with temperatures not falling much below 15°C in many parts and the 16th/17th with the temperature not falling much

below 16°C along the south coast of Wales and a minimum of 17.2°C at Mumbles on the 19th.

So, this year has seen a summer of mixed fortunes and wide contrasts, weather-wise, across the UK and across the season. It has been warmer and wetter than average. The UK mean temperature was 0.6 °C above the long-term average at 14.7 °C, making summer 2009 warmer than both 2007 and 2008, with each summer month seeing temperatures in excess of 30 °C. UK rainfall reached 318.5 mm - 40% more than average.

I write this on another lovely late September evening, after a sunny day when Red Admirals, Painted Lady butterflies and Silver Y moths have been busying themselves flitting around the garden. I can't wait to see what weather the autumn and winter will bring!

EVENTS	
Winter weekdays	Brown Hairstreak weekly egg surveys in Carmarthenshire, starting late November. These are mainly weekdays, chosen a few days in advance for weather. If interested please register now with Richard Smith (see back page)
Winter weekends	For the more energetic, we have a couple of hedge and Blackthorn thicket restoration workdays for Brown Hairstreaks in the Cwmhuden area and around Drefach-Velindre.
	Habitat management tasks will take place on Marsh Fritillary sites in Carmarthenshire and Tonyrefail (Glamorgan); again if interested please register now with Richard Smith (see back page) who will email you details nearer the time.
October	
24	South Wales Branch AGM & Members' Day, Kenfig NNR Visitor Centre.
November	
21	41 st National BC AGM, Winchester University, hosted by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Branch.
2010	
Jan-Feb weekends	We have another year of fortnightly habitat management in the Alun Valley for High Brown Fritillary (probably starting 10 th Jan). Please register interest with Richard Smith (see back page).
March	
26-28	Butterfly Conservation: 6th International Symposium (see details on p.6)

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