



MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No 47 July 2007.

*A monthly newsletter covering
Gwent and Monmouthshire Vice County 35*

Editor: Martin Anthoney

National Moth Night – Newport 11th August

We are hoping (weather permitting) to hold a Monmouthshire Moth & Butterfly Group field meeting at Mescoed Mawr, Rogerstone, Newport as part of National Moth Night. This venue has produced a good species list in the past, though few people have recorded at the site in recent years.

The national targets for this year viz. Chalk Carpet, Cousin German and Jersey Tiger may be beyond our wildest dreams, although Four-spotted Footman was added to the county list last year, but the wood should provide an interesting range of species.

Mescoed Mawr is a Forestry Commission wood which we have permission to access. Parking is very limited so we will meet at 8pm at the nearby Fourteen Locks Canal Centre for possible car share. To reach this centre, head north from junction 27 of the M4 and after nearly one mile turn right at the signpost for Fourteen Locks Canal Centre.

If you intend coming, please let me know (phone 01633 215627) so that I can ring you to let you know should weather conditions force cancellation of the event. If you attend with guest(s) please make sure they are properly equipped for night time trapping and briefed of the potential risks.

Would all moth-ers please make an effort to trap as many sites as possible on the night of 11th August. We will coordinate the records and send them to the organisers, who publish the annual National Moth Night records in *Atropos* magazine. This helps put Monmouthshire on the map!

Roger James.

Books

The publication in 2003 of Waring and Townsend's "Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland" was welcomed by the mothing community as a practical guide to moths as they appear in the field. A new publication, essentially a potted version of the original, has now appeared. The description of the moths are opposite the illustrations, the book is wire bound and opens flat. Another practical feature is the plastic cover. Retailing at just £12.95 as opposed to £29.95 for the full edition this is an attractive proposition for mothers on a budget and its lightness reduces the load when working in the field. They have even managed to lose the "triple III" and spell "illustrations" correctly on the front cover [Editor's comment: you learn something every day – in four years of using the original book I had never noticed the error!].

Any field manual which gives details of status and distribution etc. can soon be out of date, especially with Lepidoptera which are often the first to be affected by climate change. It is rumoured that an updated version of the original book is in the offing. We await with interest!

I am sometimes asked to recommend a good book on flora for those lepidopterists interested in the foodplants of moths and butterflies. There are really only two books which are comprehensive and portable. The first, which I favour because the descriptions are opposite the illustrations, is "The Wild Flowers of Britain and Northern Europe" by Fitter, Fitter and Blaney. The second is a recently updated version of "The Wildflower Key" by Francis Rose. Both are excellent and it boils down to a personal choice.

Quite a number of moths have grasses and reeds as their larval foodplant. The most accessible handbook for these is "Grasses, Sedges, Rushes and Ferns" by Fitter, Fitter and Farrer. For a more detailed study of grasses you will need "Grasses" by G.E.Hubbard. This is more of a specialist book and the illustrations are in black and white.

The only flora of Monmouthshire giving a species and distribution list is A.E.Wade's "The Flora of Monmouthshire" written in 1970. This is now out of print, but hopefully it will be superseded in the near future when Trevor Evan's long-awaited book finally comes on sale.

Roger James

Newport Report **Butterflies**

Records of the wrong sort have been broken throughout this so-called summer with persistent troughs of low pressure assailing us from the Atlantic. With no airstream coming up from the Iberian peninsula there have been very few records of migrant butterflies or moths.

Visits to the Newport Wetlands Reserve have been on an as and when basis dependant on short breaks in the rainy weather. On 27th June we recorded just 70 butterflies of 8 species on our transect, most significant of which was six Ringlets that continue their presence in one particular area of the reserve.

On 7th July numbers increased to 146 of 12 species composed mainly of Meadow Browns. There was another slight increase to 159 on 11th July, the highlight being 14 Peacocks whose numbers have held up well this year despite the weather. On 19th July we recorded the highest number for the year so far (490 individuals, 14 species) including 177 Gatekeepers and 15 Peacocks. On 24th July numbers slipped to only 209 butterflies. Normally we would expect to be recording numbers in the thousands by now. The operative word is "normally" – this summer has been anything but.

Moths

There has been a steady trickle of new moth records for the year but again its been a case of dodge the rain. On 29th June, a good night at my garden in Melbourne Way, Coronet, Mullein Wave, Olive and Triple-spotted Clay were the highlights. Kevin trapped Lappet at Red House, Goldcliff on 2nd July. My site saw Yellow-tail on 4th July and Large Emerald on 5th together with Dingy Footman, Scarce Footman and Copper Underwing. On the same date, Kevin found ten first instar caterpillars of Small Ranunculus near Newport Velodrome. An Old Lady was discovered on St Julian's Road and confirmed by Sheila on 8th July.

On 9th July I had Poplar Grey with Kevin trapping Lunar-spotted Pinion at Red House on 10th and Bordered Sallow on 11th. My garden saw Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing on 12th July and Kevin had Bordered Beauty at Red House. On 14th July I caught Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing but Kevin had a great night at Red House where, as well as Cloaked Minor he had a nationally notable Crescent Striped and an adult Small Ranunculus. This is the first to be trapped away from my former

home in Summerhill Avenue. In view of the number of larvae we have found this reinforces the belief that the species is “trap shy”.



Small Ranunculus

Back to less exciting matters, I had Poplar Kitten on 17th July with Kevin trapping three Small Wainscot and a Crescent at Goldcliff on 18th. A Leopard Moth appeared at my site on 22nd followed by Dusky Sallow and Small Rivulet on 23rd. On the same night Kevin had Small Yellow Wave at Gaer Park Lane and Small Scallop at Red House, Goldcliff. This caused some excitement since the only other county record was in 1887!

Small Scallop
(Kevin Dupé)



Sheila produced two firsts for the year at Haisboro Avenue on 24th July with Marbled Green and Canary-shouldered Thorn. A Southern Wainscot appeared at Red House on 25th. I have a report of Humming-bird Hawk, date to be confirmed, at Friars Road opposite Belle Vue Park bowling green (pers. comm. per Margaret Renshaw and Jeremy Williams).

The last records I have for July are Brown-line Bright-eye at Gaer Park Lane and Black Arches, Grey Pug and Coxcomb Prominent at Melbourne Way. My thanks to fellow Newport mothers for their continuing efforts to provide data on time.

Roger James

Recent Highlights

Cold, windy and very, very wet describes July. Hardly surprisingly, interesting records were few and far between.

- 22nd June One Chimney Sweeper in flight over unimproved grassland. Spent three-quarters of an hour following this moth through the grassland in an effort to get a photograph, it failed to land long enough. Nr Whistle Inn, Blaenavon S0229103. The first county record for four years. (Steve Williams)
On the same day, three Six-belted clearwing taken via sweep netting of birds foot trefoil at Blaenserchan Valley, Pontnewynydd, Pontypool S0246023 (Steve Williams)
- 29th June Mullein Wave and Olive at Melbourne Way, Newport. (Roger James)
- 2nd July Lappet to light at Red House, Goldcliff. (Kevin Dupé)
- 3rd July The micro Phycitodes binaevella to light at Treowen (Dave Beveridge)
- 5th July 10 first instar Small Ranunculus larvae near Newport Velodrome
- 6th July Mines of Cameraria ohridella were found on horse chestnuts in Newport
3 mines at ST30628827 - Serpentine Road
4 mines at ST30588826 - Serpentine Road
4 mines at ST30218795 - corner of Oakfield Road/Westfield Road
c50 mines at ST30258800 - Oakfield Road
These sites are very close to where Sam Bosanquet had the first Welsh records in June 2005.
The species was first discovered in Britain at Wimbledon in south-west London in 2002, but possibly had arrived the previous year, as it was quite plentiful. It is thought that the species may be expanding partially due to accidental transportation by man, either by road or rail. It has now been found quite extensively in the south-east of England.
The larva mines the leaves of horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) causing noticeable brown blotches, often many to one leaf. There is however, a similar-looking fungus which can cause confusion. (Dave Slade)
Another horse chestnut with mines was found near Newport Cemetery. (Roger James)
- 6th July Fully grown Buttoned Snout larvae on hop in Llandogo (very near the church) (Jon Baker)
- 8th July The first second generation Holly Blue at Trostrey SO 36 04. (Bill Jones)
Old Lady at St Julian's Road, Newport (Sheila Dupé)
- 11th July Bordered Sallow at Red House, Goldcliff (Kevin Dupé)
Buttoned Snout larvae near Manson Grove, Monmouth SO4915. (Ian Smith)
- 13th July First Black Arches of the season at Risca. (Martin Anthony)
- 14th July One Small Ranunculus to light at Red House, Goldcliff. Although the larvae have been found at several Newport sites, this is the first time an adult has been taken away from Roger James' old address at Summerhill Ave.

Also, a Crescent Striped at the same location, only the third county record of this characteristic salt-marsh species. The fourth county record then appeared on the 23rd July at Goldcliff Pill!

(Kevin Dupé)

20th July An Old Lady on the back door of Angiddy Cottage above Tintern. Very close to the date (23rd July) when one was found at the same house last year! (Bob Medland)

23rd July A Small Scallop caught at light at Red House, Goldcliff. The first county record since 1887. Work at the Newport Wetlands Reserve may have increased the supply of bedstraws, on which the larvae feed. (Kevin Dupé)

and about time too.....

31st July The sun finally reappeared for the last two days of the month. Suffering from too many indoor meetings and withdrawal symptoms from too few mothing or butterfly expeditions, Roger James and I spent five hours visiting three sites in the west (Wyllie), north (Clydach) and east (Angidy Valley) of the county. We were rewarded with 21 species of butterfly, surely a record this year, plus a few moths including Scallop Shell. The butterflies were Brimstone, Comma, Common Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Gatekeeper, Grayling, Green-veined White, Holly Blue, Large White, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Painted Lady, Peacock, Red Admiral, Ringlet, Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Copper, Small Heath, Small Skipper, Small Tortoiseshell and Speckled Wood. (Martin Anthony & Roger James)

Dates for your Diary 2007

Saturday 4th August Moth trapping, bats, owls and barbeque at Waunfawr Park (behind Crosskeys Campus, Coleg Gwent). For details contact Dave Beveridge, Urban Environment Awareness Coordinator, Caerphilly CBC Parks Services. Phone 01443 863121.

Saturday 11th August National Moth Night – MMBG meeting at Mescoed Mawr. See first article in this newsletter.

Saturday 20th October Butterfly Conservation (South Wales) Members' Day and AGM at Kenfig reserve centre.

MMBG – Contact Names and Addresses.

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