

Butterfly Conservation Wales
Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Cymru

Butterfly News

The Newsletter of the South Wales Branch
of Butterfly Conservation



Spring 2009

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Cover Image

Square-spotted Clay © Paul Waring

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Editorial by Andrea Rowe

Welcome to the Spring edition of Butterfly News which, as you will see, has had a Spring makeover, but as I hope you'll agree, is still packed full of interesting articles. I hope you approve of the makeover (it brings us into line with other Branch newsletters and will hopefully make the job of envelope stuffing a lot quicker!). If you do have any comments, please get in touch (contact details on back page).

No doubt you will also have noticed the name change of the Editor. Unfortunately, due to his recent ill health, Ron Elliott has decided to step down from his roles as Newsletter Editor and Webmaster for the Branch. Dave Slade, Branch Chairman, says "Ron has done a sterling job for us over the past five years and Andrea has a tough act to follow. On behalf of the Branch, I would like to thank Ron for all of his hard work over the years and wish him a speedy recovery." I am sure all the Branch members who have had the pleasure of meeting Ron and sharing his enthusiasm and expertise, will wholeheartedly agree with Dave.

As I sit here at the computer, it looks as if Spring has finally sprung. I was out in the garden earlier and whilst enjoying the warmth of the sunshine, saw a Brimstone zip past me - so here's hoping for plenty of good weather this year to enable us all to get out and about and see plenty of butterflies and moths!

I hope in future issues to be able to include lots more news and articles from Branch members, whether it be projects you are involved with, sites you have visited or simply news about species you have encountered. Please email your article to me and I will endeavour to include it in our next issue.

Welcome to New Branch Members

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

A very warm welcome to: Miss L J Davies, Cwmrhydyceirw, Swansea; Mr J Carter, Carno; Mrs C E Evans, St. Mellons; Miss V S A Walsh, Blackpill; Mr RP and Mrs V C Linsey, Swansea; Mrs E M Marke, Godrergraig; Mr P J Baker, Pontprennau; Ms L S Perrott, Penclawdd; Lt Col PM and Mrs P Wardle, Penderyn; Mr W G G Phillips, Treboeth; Mr E Sheldon, Llandygydd; Mr J Curtis, Dinas Powys; Ms J M Ross, Ebbw Vale; Mr G L W Stait, Pembroke; Ms S Lewis, Rhayader; Mr G A Payne, Llanelli; Mrs A G Westermann, Llanfarian; Mr D J King, Cardiff; Mr C W Whitaker, Crewe; Miss A Hobbs & Mr D Rees, Nantgaredig; Ms G Driver, Broxbourne.

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS) gets go-ahead

After two years of pilot testing, a new method of monitoring butterflies in widespread habitats, such as farmland and upland moorland, is to be rolled out nationwide this year.

In the recent past, butterfly monitoring in the UK has tended to focus on nature reserves and butterfly-rich places. This has led to a lack of monitoring in vast areas of the wider countryside, including farmland, plantation woodland, uplands and urban green spaces.

The UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, run by Butterfly Conservation (BC) and the Centre for Hydrology and Ecology, has developed the new WCBS method to gauge the changing abundance of widespread species in the general countryside. This will bring additional benefits such as the ability to assess the effects of changing land use, such as farming stewardship schemes, and issues associated with climate change on the species. Monitoring butterflies in the wider countryside will provide a clearer picture of the status of UK species in conjunction with existing butterfly monitoring.

This year the WCBS team have set a target to survey over 1000 squares and, in this first roll-out year, hope to achieve good coverage. The target will be achieved with the help of British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) recorders surveying their Breeding Bird Survey squares in the Summer for butterflies and also through a suite of new randomly selected 1km survey squares for each BC branch.

The table to the right summarises the 1km squares identified for survey in the South Wales Branch area. As you will see these are spread fairly evenly through the Vice-County areas.

The WCBS method involves making two core visits per year to the 1km square between May and August to count butterflies seen along two 1km survey lines running roughly north-south or east-west through the square. So once the square is set up it shouldn't take too much time to do the actual survey.

If you would like more information on the survey, please visit www.ukbms.org/wcbs.htm. If you can spare some time this Summer, please have a look at the squares that need surveying and if there is one you can help out with, please contact Dr Katie Cruickshanks, the Wider Countryside Co-ordinator on 01929 406036 or email survey@butterfly-conservation.org.

The following squares have been randomly generated for the South Wales area:

1KM SQ	Location	Vice County
SN6342	Rhosgoch, NW of Pumsaint	Carmarthenshire
SN0502	Carew Cheriton, E of Lamphey	Pembrokeshire
SN9331	Maesllwydiart Uchaf, Pentre'r-felin, Sennybridge	Breconshire
SN6672	Crosswood/Trawsgoed, N of Lledrod	Cardiganshire
SN9163	Coed Aberelan, W of Elan Village	Radnorshire
SM9634	Esgyrn, SSE of Fishguard	Pembrokeshire
ST0897	Penbwlcha, W of Treharris	Glamorgan
ST1583	Briwnant, NE of Tongwynlais	Glamorgan
SO3611	Field Farm, Coed Morgan, SE of Abergavenny	Monmouthshire
<i>SS8185</i>	<i>Margam Country Park, SE of Port Talbot *</i>	<i>Glamorgan</i>
<i>SN5462</i>	<i>Ysgubor-fach, SE of Pontsaeson, Cross Inn *</i>	<i>Cardiganshire</i>
SN5755	Ty'n-yr-helyg, NE of Rhiwonnen (NW of Llangybi)	Cardiganshire
SO0969	Croftperthi, N of Llanddewi Ystradenni	Radnorshire
SS9190	Pant Blaenhirwr, SE of Pontycymer	Glamorgan
SM9737	Carn Fran, NE of Lower Town/Cwm (E of Fishguard)	Pembrokeshire
SN8871	Esgair Rhiwlan, NW Craig Goch Reservoir, W of Rhayader	Radnorshire
SO1219	E of Tor y Foel Mountain, W of Llangynidr (in BBNP)	Breconshire
SM8713	Broadway, E of Broadhaven	Pembrokeshire
SN6974	Gilwern, NE of Llanafan	Cardiganshire
ST4088	Wilcrick, NW of Magor	Monmouthshire

* Squares in italics have already been assigned to recorders.

Has your MP signed the Early Day Motion (EDM)?

Members of Parliament (MP) have recently registered their deep concern at the decline in butterfly numbers and congratulated volunteers who participate in the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. Bob Russell, MP and long-time BC member, has tabled the EDM, which also calls on the Government to promote cross-departmental policies to assist in safeguarding Britain's butterflies. To see the full text of the EDM and to find out if your local MP has signed the EDM, please visit

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=37000&SESSION=899>

If your MP hasn't signed yet, please consider contacting them and asking them too.

Note: The Editor has been made aware that Madeleine Moon, MP for Bridgend, is a Parliamentary Private Secretary and is therefore ineligible to sign EDMs.

The Square-spotted Clay – is it really rare in Wales?

The Square-spotted Clay is a rare species that occurs chiefly in eastern England. There are only a few records from Wales. It is an obscurely marked moth, especially when worn, that can easily be confused with commoner relatives. Now, having come across the species in three widely separated localities in Breconshire over the past three years, I wonder whether it really is as rare in Wales as we think.

However it is difficult to give advice on where to search for it. The books say that the larva feed on Common Nettle, Oxlip and Dog's Mercury (and possibly other foodplants) and the moth is recorded in a wide variety of habitats.

So, despite this frustration, if you come across a moth that seems not purple enough for a Purple Clay, too dark for a Double Square-spot and with broader wings than most Triple-spotted Clays, just check that it isn't the Square-spotted Clay. It might be commoner than we think!

Norman Lowe

Brecknock County Moth
Recorder



*Right and Front Cover:
Square-spotted Clay
© Paul Waring*

Play and Learn

Are you one of our younger members or a teacher? Do you have children or grandchildren? Well if your answer is yes, then the BC 'Learn' webpages may be right up your street. They are packed full of fantastic, fun resources all about the wonderful world of butterflies and moths, with information on their biology and life cycles, how they fit into the web of life and how we can help to conserve them for future generations. There are teachers' resources, activity sheets, posters, competitions and lots of online games, quizzes and puzzles to explore. Visit www.butterfly-conservation.org/text/8/learn.html to see for yourself.

Moths Count Update

Over the past year, the Moths Count project has made significant progress in raising awareness about moths and in developing the National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS). During 2008, we ran seven moth training events and six public moth events in Wales.

Mapping Moths

The NMRS database grew substantially during 2008 as a result of County Moth Recorders submitting their local datasets. It now contains 4 million moth records from 56 vice-counties across the UK. More than half of the Welsh vice-county datasets have been received to-date totalling in excess of half a million records! This progress has enabled the production of the first provisional distribution maps! The shaded areas on the map below (Figure 1) show the vice-county datasets in the NMRS database to-date and our great thanks are due to all the County Moth Recorders and individual moth-ers involved. The remaining datasets are awaited once County Moth Recorders have completed input, verification and formatting of their records.

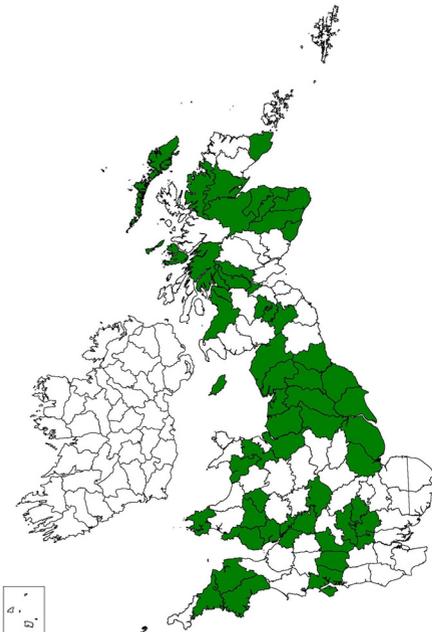


Figure 1: Vice-county datasets incorporated into the NMRS database by December 2008.

Due to the widely recorded nature of the Large Yellow Underwing we can gain an insight from its distribution in the NMRS database into moth recording coverage in general. The absence of this moth from a 10km square may

indicate low levels of recording. It is clear from the provisional map for this species (Figure 2), that moth recording is active throughout the Welsh vice-counties for which we have data.

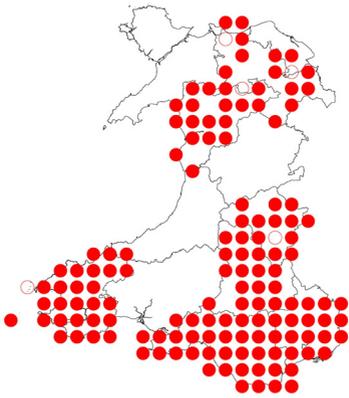


Figure 2: NMRS distribution map of the Large Yellow Underwing at 10km square resolution, showing a high level of recording coverage for the seven Welsh vice-county datasets in the database to-date.
Pre-1995 ○ Post-1995 ●

Data collected from the Rothamsted light-trap network over the period 1968-2002 recorded a 97% decrease in the population levels of the V-moth. This population decline is mirrored by a distribution decline that is already evident on the provisional NMRS map for Wales (Figure 3).

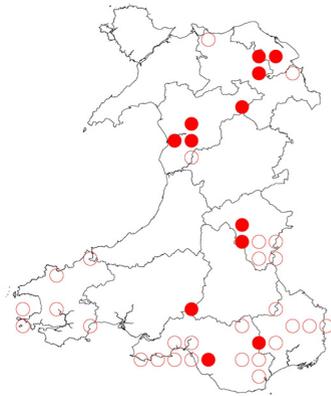


Figure 3: NMRS distribution map of the V-moth at 10km square resolution, showing a marked decline in distribution.
Pre-1995 ○ Post-1995 ●

Historical Moth Records

Two major national datasets of moth records have been made available to County Moth Recorders and eventually to the NMRS. An estimated 10 million moth records from the Rothamsted light-trap network are currently being disseminated to County Moth Recorders. To date, a third of these records have been forwarded to County Recorders for validation and incorporation into their local datasets. We are very grateful to Rothamsted Research and

Ian Woiwod in particular for this contribution to the NMRS.

Additionally, over 600,000 moth records from the previous Lepidoptera Recording Scheme, which ran from the late 1960's to the early 1980's have been computerised by the Biological Record Centre (BRC). All of the information from the original recording cards sent in to the scheme has been electronically captured. The dataset contains records for 863 macro-moth species with a remarkable 84% coverage of Britain, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands at the 10km square level. Approximately 139,000 of the records in BRC dataset are from Wales and the recording coverage of Wales is estimated to be a staggering 92.5%.

These historical datasets will provide a baseline for the NMRS to enable accurate assessment of species distribution change. They will also highlight "white-holes" to encourage targeted recording of under-recorded areas. We shall be receiving the BRC dataset within the next few months and will be repatriating the records to County Moth Recorders. For this fantastic achievement and valuable contribution towards county datasets and the NMRS the Moths Count team would like to pass on huge thanks to Dr. Mark Hill and his team at the BRC.

Other developments

Provisional online distribution maps for nearly all species of macro-moths will be available on the Moths Count website www.mothscount.org in the coming months. These maps will provide the first update for decades for many species, and the first accessible maps ever for the Geometridae. The provisional distribution maps will be regularly updated and will provide useful information and feedback to moth recorders about species' range changes. Additionally, moth recorders will be able to view their moth records in wider context.

Whether you're recording moths regularly or just becoming interested, there are lots of ways to get involved in Moths Count and the National Moth Recording Scheme in 2009. Happy mothing! For more information see **www.mothscount.org** or contact Sarah-ann Mold on 01929 406009 or nmrs@butterfly-conservation.org to be kept informed of all Moths Count and NMRS progress, or to sign up to the Moths Count mailing list.

Moths Count is a partnership of many organisations, individuals and businesses, led by Butterfly Conservation. The principal funder is the Heritage Lottery Fund, but many other organisations and individuals have contributed to the project's resources including, in Wales, the Countryside Council for Wales, Snowdonia National Park Authority, Welsh Language Board, Butterfly Conservation's Branches and local moth groups. Butterfly Conservation is very grateful for this generous support.

Updating the 'Biodiversity of Wales' Identification Pack

In 2005 the National Museum Wales (NMW) produced a set of identification sheets for CRoW Act Section 74 species (S74). This, combined with a series of identification workshops, provided a resource enabling practitioners to identify species of conservation concern. In 2007 the Section 42 list of the NERC Act updated and expanded the S74 list, taking the total number of species from 175 to 541.

The NMW, with the Wales Biodiversity Partnership, plan to update the identification sheets to reflect the new list and make these available on the NMW web site as they are completed. As before, training will also be provided to complement the production of the identification sheets. Due to the volume of work that would be required to complete identification sheets for the entire list, it has been suggested that the project prioritises those species and taxonomic groups where identification assistance is currently lacking and expertise sparse.

Your assistance is required to prioritise those species, or groups of species, that need identification sheets and also to help establish the best approach for delivering the training. If you are interested in putting your opinions forward but have not yet been consulted, please contact Laura Palmer, Ecologist at Cardiff County Council who is co-ordinating the consultation on 029 2087 3268 or lpalmer@cardiff.gov.uk.

The Great North-South Divide?

As you know, Wales has two Butterfly Conservation (BC) branches: South Wales and North Wales. When members join BC, they are assigned to their local branch by the Membership department in the Headquarters office. Straightforward? If you live in Swansea or Llandudno it is, but there are a few areas right in the centre of Wales, where it isn't so clear-cut.

If you do live in the heart of Wales then it is important that you know that you can choose which branch or branches you belong to. It may be because you find it easier to get to events and field meetings in a particular area or that you have a greater affinity to the area. Whatever the reason you can either choose to belong to the South Wales branch, the North Wales branch OR you can choose to belong to both (although this would incur an additional membership fee of £6.00 per annum payable to BC). If you do want to make any changes to your membership please contact Hannah Cooper at Head Office on the following email address: hcooper@butterfly-conservation.org.

Exciting but Drab by Martin Anthony

On 21st May I was fortunate to accompany Oliver Howells (Ministry of Defence, MoD) to the MoD Training Area at Caerwent in SE Monmouthshire. The 1800 acres, which make up the training area lie primarily on an outcrop of Carboniferous limestone, with approximately 1000 acres of grassland including five meadows designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and significant areas of (mostly secondary) woodland.

Since I was last there in 2004, use of the area for military training has increased tenfold, making access for conservation purposes much more difficult. On this occasion about 25% of the base was out of bounds but we still recorded 16 Grizzled Skipper and 8 Dingy Skipper spread, in small numbers, at locations throughout much of the base.

The highlight of the visit came when I netted a small moth flying along a hedgerow, which was readily identified as Drab Looper (*Minoa murinata*). This was a surprise since the larvae feed on wood spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), preferring the flowers and floral leaves, and neither Oliver nor myself had seen wood spurge within the base. A search ensued and eventually the foodplant was found on the verges of a lane alongside the boundary fence. Four further Drab Looper individuals were also seen. Drab Looper is a UK BAP Priority species with two main centres of occurrence in Britain: central southern England and the borders of England, and south Wales. It is currently known from four other sites in eastern Monmouthshire, but this discovery probably represents the most westerly colony in UK.



Drab Looper on Wood spurge

State of Britain's Larger Moths

This publication is now free of charge and available from Head Office. If you would like a copy please contact Lynne Stuckey on lstuckey@butterfly-conservation.org or 01929 400209.

WALES ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION FORUM (WEIF)

by Adam Rowe, South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre.

In March 2008 a new forum was established to discuss the big issue of environmental (and particularly biodiversity) information management in Wales. The event, which was instigated by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), aimed to gather together all parties with an interest in environmental data in Wales. Those present included representatives of WAG, Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales, Environment Agency Wales, the four Welsh Local Records Centres, Local Authorities, NGOs, recorders, academia and environmental consultancies.

The Forum agenda was set by the participants. A round table 'issue identification' session was followed by informal workshop sessions on subjects such as: data flow and exchange between recorders, national schemes and LRCs; encouraging future experts; and sharing data collected by consultants.

Following the Forum, a Wales Environmental Information Steering Group (WEISG) was established to develop ideas and to tackle issues raised at the Forum. WEISG identified its vision: ***“Sharing Welsh environmental information for the benefit of the environment and people of Wales, the UK and beyond”***, as well as highlighting six main themes coming out of discussions at WEIF: Resources; Data Flow; Data Quality; Skills and Training; Technology; and Governance.

Working groups, building on and adapting existing groups where appropriate, will look at each of these themes with the help of lead partners. Data Flow was highlighted as a priority and formed the theme of the second meeting of WEIF in March 2009. This meeting identified a number of key actions to be taken forward by WEISG and the Data Flow working group. For more information on WEIF or WEISG please contact Adam Rowe on 029 2064 1110 or adam.rowe@sewbrec.org.uk.

Are you a Welsh speaker?

If so, and if you can spare some time, you may be able to offer some valuable assistance to the South Wales Branch. The Committee would like our Branch newsletter to be available in both English and Welsh, so if you are a fluent Welsh speaker and would be interested in helping the Branch translate some articles from the comfort of your own home and can spare a few hours, we would be extremely grateful if you could get in touch with Andrea Rowe.

New Blood Needed for South Wales Branch Committee

We currently have vacancies for local Branch Committee members. But what does getting involved mean? The Committee meets around four times a year; in addition we attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Members' Day. Meetings are held in the evening and we try and keep them as short as possible! The Committee manages the budget for the Branch, makes decisions on site management and where to focus our energies, as well as organising the AGM/ Members' Day.

So what type of person are we looking for? Anyone who is a member of BC; whether you are interested in moths, butterflies or both, have been a member for years or have just joined, are an experienced Lepidopterist or just starting out, and wherever you live! We want the Committee to reflect your views, so please consider giving up a small amount of your time and get involved. If you are interested or want more information, please contact any of the Committee members (details on back page).

Local Records Centres (LRCs) Updates

West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC) News

by Colin Russell, WWBIC Manager

Our growing database at the time of writing (Dec 2008) stands at over 420,000 records and our Species Data Officer, Kate Jones, has been helped in this by office volunteer and county lepidopterist, Ron Elliott. Thanks to all who have passed on their records to us. The mobilisation of CCW records continues. New work at the centre includes a connectivity and habitat analysis around settlement areas in Carmarthenshire for the Local Authority.

After three years establishing and managing the centre, Rob Davies left to spend time on his other interests; everyone at WWBIC was sorry to lose him. He continues to work with us on project and IT support. The new Manager, Colin Russell, has a degree in zoology and many years experience managing small businesses, charities and working with the voluntary sector. Our Data Mobilisation Assistant, Laura Burnett, left in August and was replaced by Madeline Tasker. Madeline has a degree in Environmental Science and experience with commercial plant breeding companies here and abroad.

Last summer WWBIC held two recorder days: at Furzy Mount Farm near Puncteston, Haverfordwest and at Craig y Dyfor Farm near Whitland. Both days suffered to some extent from poor weather, but despite this we

managed to record a wide variety of species including new Lepidoptera tetrad records at Furzy Mount. This year we plan to hold more recorder days, so please check our website www.wwbic.org.uk for details. Now WWBIC is back at full strength, we are looking forward to a busy and productive year in 2009.

South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) Update

by Adam Rowe, SEWBReC Manager

The Winter period 2008/09 has been a busy period at SEWBReC, being the peak period for data input. Our team of seven paid staff, plus volunteers, have been working hard at computerising paper-based records received from CCW and local bird groups, amongst others, resulting in a data holdings total of over 1,150,000 records. We have also continued to service the biodiversity data needs of our wide range of users. Our other main Winter tasks have been the production of the first combined Glamorgan-Gwent Recorders' Newsletter (see www.sewbrec.org.uk) and organisation of annual Recorders' Forum meetings for Glamorgan and Gwent. Both events were well attended and included presentations centring on the theme of brownfield biodiversity.

This Summer SEWBReC will run two Biodiversity Blitz recording days in both Glamorgan and Gwent, as well as a range of other training events. Please see our events calendar on our website for details of these and other events.

SEWBReC has also recently been involved in a number of Wales and UK-wide initiatives. During February a seminar was held with members of the Institute of Ecologists and Environmental Managers to discuss ways of getting more data from consultants' reports into LRCs and the National Biodiversity Network. SEWBReC, along with the three other Welsh LRCs, has also been involved in work arising from the first Wales Environmental Information Forum (see page 12). Finally, SEWBReC aims to steer the future development of the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (www.alerc.org.uk) – a new national voice for LRCs.

Biodiversity Information Service for Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park

by Janet Imlach, BIS Manager

BIS is, as always, exceptionally busy. We are entering the VC43 (Radnorshire) Lepidoptera data for 2008 and have just received VC47 (Montgomeryshire) butterfly records. We have exchanged all BIS moth data for VC47 so that VC recorder Peter Williamson can complete his collation of county records. We then hope to have a Data Exchange Agreement and BIS will hold these county records. We also have good relationships with VC43 and VC42 (Breconshire) moth recorders and receive regular annual updates.

EVENTS

April

04 National Butterfly Recorders meeting for recorders and transect walkers, Birmingham & Midland Institute. Contact Ian Middlebrook on 01929 406032 for more details.

May

30 Training Event: Moth Recorders' Workshop, Boncath Village Hall, Pembrokeshire. Led by Norman Lowe (see page 16 for contact details).

June

06 Moth trapping, Newport Wetlands RSPB, Newport. For details and booking Tel: 01633 636363.

06-14 Wales Biodiversity Week, see www.biodiversitywales.co.uk for details of events.

10 Butterfly ID course, Neath Port Talbot (NPT) led by Richard Smith. Aimed at keen beginners with the hope those attending will be prepared to carry out some monitoring of local sites. Priority will be given to those people living in or close to NPT. Booking essential via Chaela Carell c.carrell@neath-porttalbot.gov.uk.

Mid June onwards
20-28 Look for white letter hairstreaks around canopy of elms - see www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/w-album/index.php for more information
National Garden Moths Count week, see www.mothcount.brc.ac.uk/default.aspx for details of how to get involved.

June-July Look out for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries - more information will be available nearer the time on www.butterfly-conservation.org/downloads/50/bc_wales.html

July

04 WTSWW West Glamorgan Group Outdoor Event: Silky Wave Moth Survey at Overton Mere. Led by Russel Hobson, Butterfly Conservation. Parking fee applies. Open to both members and non-members; donations welcome. You must book a place. Contact Jo Mullett, 01792 635784 or 07967 127364

04 Training Event: Introduction to Moths & Moth Recording. Parc Cwm Darren, Bargoed, Caerphilly. Led by Norman Lowe (see page 16).

25-02 Aug National Save Our Butterflies Week

September

18-19 National Moth Night, see www.nationalmothnight.info for details

October

24 South Wales Branch AGM and Members Day, Kenfig NNR Visitor Centre.

November

21 41st National BC AGM, Winchester University, hosted by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Branch.

County Butterfly and Moth Recorders and Branch Committee

Breconshire VC42

Moths

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Cardiganshire VC46

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Carmarthenshire VC44

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01267 202210

Glamorgan VC41

East Glamorgan Moths

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Glamorgan VC41

Butterflies & West

Glamorgan Moths

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moonmoths@sky.com
01792 539447

Monmouthshire VC35

Butterflies & Macro-moths

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01633 612272

Micro-moths

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7QR
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Pembrokeshire VC45

Moths & Butterflies

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01646 672508 (h)
07974948048 (m)

Radnorshire VC43

Moths

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Butterflies

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Branch Committee Members

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