



## AUTUMN 2006

### NEWSLETTER OF NORTH WALES BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Events and Activities organised by the North Wales Branch of Butterfly Conservation are regularly updated on the branch website [www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](http://www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

### FORTHCOMING BRANCH ACTIVITIES on pages 2 & 3

**Sales for Branch funds:** some Christmas cards of Eyrarth Rocks Reserve in the snow are still available at £3.75 per pack of 5, and copies of 'A Country Diary for North Wales' by Jan Miller at special members' price of £6.95 (incl. p+p); contact Jan (details on back page) for these; and see other publications and butterfly and moth plants for sale on the Branch website:  
[www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](http://www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

**Records: please send your records to your local county recorder (see back page for details)**

Newsletter by email: this newsletter can be sent to you electronically and in colour. To request this, and also advance notice of extra events and courses that appear throughout the year, please contact [info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

***Butterfly Conservation Wales***

***Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Cymru***

***10 Calvert Terrace, Swansea, SA1 5AR***

***Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats***

**Achub glöynnod a gwytnod gwyllt a'u cynefinoedd** Registered Charity No.254937

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### Editors note:

The North Wales Environmental Information Service (**Cofnod**) held the first official North Wales Recorder's Forum in March 2006. Membership is open to anyone who is active in biological recordings. However, Cofnod encourages recorders to pass their records directly to the appropriate County Recorder, as this makes verification of the data easier. Details of the County Recorders for different species are on the website [www.cofnod.org.uk](http://www.cofnod.org.uk)

## BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION NORTH WALES BRANCH (BCNW) PROGRAMME OF EVENTS Winter 2006/7

**Pensychnant Conservation Centre, Conwy, 7.30pm on 24<sup>th</sup> November**  
a talk, "The More Unusual Welsh Lepidoptera" by Ilija Vukomanovic.

**BC Volunteers' Seminar at Gregynog, Newtown, on February 3-4<sup>th</sup>**

### **Recording the Moths and Butterflies of Wales** Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2007 Gregynog Conference Centre, Newtown Programme

#### Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February

12:00 Arrive and Register

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Welcome/Introduction and Domestic Arrangements – Russel Hobson

UK Butterfly and Moth Projects

14:15 'UK National Moth Recording Scheme' – Richard Fox

14:50 Soap Box – Volunteer on Moth recording

15:00 'UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme' – Dr Tom Brereton

15:25 Soap Box – Volunteer doing a Transect

15:35 Tea/Coffee

15:50 Workshops

- UK BMS – How to get involved and issues in Wales – Led by Tom Brereton

- UK National Moth Recording Scheme – Led by Richard Fox and Russel Hobson

16:50 Reporting back from the workshops

17:20 'Open Mic'. Opportunity for anyone to raise issues or thoughts

18:30 Dinner. Opportunity for informal discussions in the bar

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February

09:00 Progress with the National Action Plan for Wales – Russel Hobson

09:30 'Butterflies and Moths of Harlech' – Helen Bantock

10:00 Soap Box – Short piece about a species project

10:10 'High Brown Fritillary, Alun Valley' – Richard Smith and John Sherwood

10:30 Update on the Mynydd Mawr Marsh Fritillary Project – Deborah Sazer

10:50 Reserves Update – Jan Miller and Russel Hobson

11:10 Tea/Coffee

11: 25 Workshops (4 from following)

- Future priority for Species Conservation Projects – Russel Hobson
- Photography for Identification – Mike Clarke/David Mitchel/Ilija Vukonamic (tbc)
- Habitat Management (Grasslands and/or Brownfields) – Deborah Sazer/John Davis/Jenny Joy (tbc)
- Butterfly Gardening – Jan Miller (tbc)
- Leaf Miners – Norman Lowe (tbc)
- Other suggestions welcome (please contact us by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006)

12:20 Reporting back from the workshops

12:35 Discussion

12:55 Closing remarks

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Depart

**Please contact** [jburroughs.bcw@btconnect.com](mailto:jburroughs.bcw@btconnect.com) by November 30<sup>th</sup> if you wish to attend.

**An illustrated lecture 'Gardening for Butterflies' by Jan Miller, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2007**, Ellesmere Gardening Club, 7.30pm. at Ellesmere Town Hall, Wrexham.

Visitors welcome, sales of books and plants for branch funds.

**Volunteer work parties at Eyarth Rocks after Christmas-** contact Rob Whitehead; [Records@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:Records@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

**Moth Groups** will continue to meet at Pensychnant on the first Monday of each month, and at Treborth on the third Monday of each month

**Starting in February, until July '07, Pensychnant** will be running a series of ten workshops aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of moth recording in North Wales. These will include macromoths, micros, laboratory and dissection techniques, databases, moth trapping, recording weekend and forays. Details and dates still to be finalised. (They will be posted on the branch web site). It has been suggested that the Branch establishes a specialist micro-moth group, in line with some other branches; there will be some micro-lepidoptera workshops within Pensychnant's programme.

Clearwing moths (Family: Sesiidae) have a justifiable reputation for being amongst the most elusive macro-moths in the UK fauna. Unless special methods are employed (see below) there is a limited chance of encountering one and, in fact, one could easily live a lifetime without ever seeing a clearwing or, at least, recognising one for what it is. There are a number of reasons for this: the moths are day flying and are not attracted to light and therefore do not turn up in moth traps; they tend not to sit conspicuously on flowers; their flight is quiet and unobtrusive and even if a clear view is obtained they can easily be mistaken for a wasp of some sort. Indeed many species are named after the non-lepidopteran insects which they are thought to mimic; for example *Synanthedon scoliaeformis* (the **Welsh Clearwing**) is named after the (non-British) genus *Scolia*, which are large wasps found in Europe (*scoliaeformis* translates as 'resembling a scolia'). A further difficulty arises from the fact that clearwing larvae feed internally in their host plants so that there is little external evidence to betray their presence. Even so, this meagre evidence has traditionally provided the best means of searching for these moths.

Given the problems involved in finding these moths it is not, perhaps, surprising that there are few records for any species and that we do not even know how many species might occur in North-west Wales.

We do know that the Welsh Clearwing occurs, at low density, over much of southern Merioneth and adjacent parts of Montgomeryshire. The **Thrift Clearwing** occurs on rocky coasts around Anglesey and the Lleyn but has not been found recently in Merionethshire despite targeted searches. Almost certainly, the commonest clearwing is the **Lunar Hornet Moth** which appears never to have been recorded as an adult (other than by breeding) but is deduced to be common based on the ubiquity of the larval workings in sallows.

Fortunately there is a new 'hi-tech' method of attracting the adult moths based on the pheromones released by the female moths to attract males. Synthetic versions of these chemicals are now readily available from biological suppliers and cover all the British clearwings except the Lunar Hornet. Interestingly, the chemical analyses were not conducted out of academic curiosity but because clearwing moths are agricultural pests in some parts of the world; presumably the idea was to use the pheromones to attract and then kill the moths.

These lures have only been available for a few seasons but already one species has been found which was previously quite unsuspected in North Wales. This is the **Red-tipped Clearwing** (*Synanthedon formicaeformis*) which is associated with willow carr. On the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2006 four of these small moths came to the appropriate lure (known as 'for') in an area of coastal willow just north of Barmouth. A week later, another four were attracted to the lure at Arthog Bog and, later in the month, Helen Bantock was also successful further up the coast at Mochras. Another specimen was obtained (details not known at the time of writing) during a 2006 coastal invertebrate survey by the National Museums Liverpool.

Interestingly, no Red-tipped Clearwings were found when the lure was tried at inland sites though whether this can be put down to bad luck is open to question. However, it seems clear that the Red-tipped Clearwing is a reasonably common moth in appropriate habitat along the coast of Merioneth although it should be added that the habitat itself is not very extensive and tends to be under-valued where it does occur. It also seems reasonable to predict that the moth will be found in Caernarvonshire and Anglesey and probably elsewhere in Wales. Finally, one can ask which other species occur here but have yet to be discovered? The answer, of course, is that we don't know! The **Orange-tailed Clearwing** (host plant: Wayfaring Tree) seems unlikely but none of the other species are impossible though some would certainly be more surprising than others. I would urge everyone interested to purchase a pheromone kit and give it a go next year. Do not make any assumptions and try not to get discouraged if nothing happens. There is an element of luck involved. The weather has to be perfect and even if the lure is ideally situated there does actually have to be an adult male moth sitting somewhere within the molecular plume. In a way, this is a bit like fishing - there may be lots of times when nothing happens but when it does the excitement is intense!



Red-tipped Clearwing, 2006. Janet Graham

**Bracken management and fritillary butterflies in North Wales. Dave Thorpe.**  
Vice County Butterfly Recorder (Caernarfonshire and Anglesey).

Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is native to the UK but also widely distributed across the world from temperate zones to the tropics. In much of its range it is thought to have increased its abundance. It can cause a problem both in terms of loss of grazing land and displacement of important habitats. There are concerns with links to human and animal disease. For this reason farmers in North Wales use a range of methods to attempt bracken control. Bracken can be weakened by repeated rolling, tramping using cattle, cutting or bruising. Herbicides can also be used to kill the plant and roots (using glyphosate) or check bracken growth (using asulam). Bracken can harbour a range of native species and be a valued part of the landscape. It often acts as a canopy on old woodland sites supporting an understorey of bluebells and wood anemones (ancient woodland indicators). Dog violets are also harboured by bracken (as demonstrated at Eyarth rocks). Consequently, bracken sites can be valuable for fritillary butterflies. In Caernarfonshire, **Small Pearl-bordered fritillaries** use bracken-dominated “dry” sites in several locations (such as Moel y Ci and Llanbedrog Headland). Bracken removal at such sites would be likely to lead to local extinction of this species. Wet sites (where SPBF larvae feed on marsh violet) seem to be much more common despite the frequency of bracken in the landscape. Small Pearl-bordered fritillaries also use sand dune sites at Morfa Dinlle and on Anglesey, often having a second brood in such dry, warm sites.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Llanbedrog Head

**Dark Green Fritillaries** are found using bracken-infested sites, both in the lowlands and uplands in North Wales (although tracing such a strong-flying species to a patch of violets is a challenge).



Pearl Bordered Fritillary at Eyarth Rocks.

The larvae of **Pearl Bordered Fritillaries** certainly feed on violets in bracken litter – but none have been recorded in Caernarfonshire for many years. The Environment Agency and National Parks are statutory consultees for aerial spraying of herbicides. As such, aerial spraying of asulam (funded for the most part by Tir Gofal) is screened for impact on water supply and conservation. Known fritillary butterfly sites (and sites supporting native ancient woodland or violet-rich understorey) are screened-out where possible. However fritillary butterflies are under-recorded and a site visit is required to audit sites for flora. Sadly not all aerial spraying companies consult prior to application. One company made the mistake of spraying my neighbour's land when I happened to be home in August 2004. The Health and Safety Executive prosecute such activity – in this case prosecution cost the company more than £10,000.

Objection to aerial spraying is not sufficient to protect a site that has botanical value for butterflies. This summer, despite objection, Tir Gofal paid for bracken eradication by backpack. The site concerned had bluebells, wood anemone, dog violets, mosaic woodland and heath. I query why a whole farm conservation scheme funds such “conservation” activity in the Welsh uplands. Bracken can be a problem, it can displace heath and species-rich grassland but can also simply indicate old woodland sites and support important flora and fauna that would otherwise be lost to grazing or desiccation. There is no shortage of sites where bracken is displacing ecologically valuable habitats. Proper screening to protect sites where bracken protects biodiversity is badly needed before conservation funding is allocated. **More recording of fritillaries in the uplands will also help protect sites. Any records are very welcome.**

We carry out a butterfly transect for Butterfly Conservation, at Nant-y-Coed near Llanfairfechan. The site is a woodland Local Nature Reserve owned and managed by Conwy County Borough Council. To perform the transect, we walk (once a week) a standard route up through the wood and note all the butterflies we see close to the path. Of course, it has to be warm enough for butterflies to be flying (minimum 13 degrees) and at least quite sunny! Quite often we start a transect, only to abandon it when cloud obscures the sun. Very frustrating!

We have been doing this since 2002, and at the time of writing, we are almost at the end of the 2006 season. The commonest species is the **Green-veined White**, one of the smaller 'cabbage' whites (although the food plant is actually garlic mustard). It flutters along the path edge in the woodland, seeking out whatever nectar sources are available. There have also been large numbers of **Speckled Woods**, but few **Orange-tips** this year. We have recorded nine individuals of the **Wall Brown** in 2006, a lovely butterfly which is still quite common in western Britain but scarce further east. We also regularly see three more browns, the **Meadow Brown** (normally the commonest species from early July), the **Gatekeeper** and the **Ringlet**. These fly mainly over the two meadows which form part of the reserve.

By contrast, a number of the showy species seen in gardens (often on buddleias) don't feature greatly in our tally; thus we get few **Red Admirals**, **Painted Ladies** or **Commas**. We do, however, record (from late July) an elusive species scarcely seen in gardens: the **Purple Hairstreak**. This small butterfly appears silvery in flight; seen from above (if you can!) the males have a purple gloss on the wings. They are quite common in oakwoods, only one generation flying from mid-July to late August. Normally we use binoculars to see these flying over the canopy of the sessile oaks; in a good aphid year, they also come lower down to feed on honeydew (from aphids) on ash trees, and occasionally can be seen on bramble. Our normal tally by the end of September is 17 species, however this year it is 19. There were some surprising absences; we never seemed to see any **Small Whites**, although we could miss the odd one among the **Green-veined Whites**. We expected to find some **Small Heaths** (another brown) on open ground going up to the mountain wall. Both these species have appeared for the first time this year.

Our counts are emailed to Butterfly Conservation at the end of the season, and are combined with similar counts in other areas to provide a picture of how our butterflies are faring. Further details on [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org). If you would like to help contact the County Recorder Andrew Graham through the North Wales website [www.butterfly-conservation/northwales.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation/northwales.org). There are lots of ways you can help butterflies; performing a weekly walk and count is probably best left to those of us lucky enough to be retired! It has certainly helped to improve our butterfly identification skills.

I'm a moth recorder from the West Midlands; I've been recording for a number of years and now look to venture out into new areas of the UK to sample the often very different moth species found. With the varied habitats Wales has to offer - from moorland to ancient oak woodland - and living just 60 minutes down the motorway, it has always been an obvious place to travel. However, this year I was attracted to one area of Wales in particular; the superb habitats around Maentwrog and Harlech. My first trapping holiday was in Coed Felinrhyd, Maentwrog for the week commencing the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. We stayed in a farmhouse high up into the ancient semi-natural/replanted woodland. 61 macro species were recorded during the week including: **Puss Moth** *Cerura vinula*, **Barred Umber** *Plagodis pulveraria*, **Great Prominent** *Peridea anceps*, **Lunar Thorn** *Selenia lunularia*, **Oak Hook-tip** *Watsonalla binaria*, **Scalloped Hook-tip** *Falcaria lacertinaria*, **Oak Nycteoline** *Nycteola revayana* and many **Square Spot** *Paradarisa consonaria*. Day-searches in more open habitat produced great numbers of **Common Heath** *Ematurga atomaria* a few **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma* and one **Speckled Yellow** *Pseudopanthera macularia*. Many larvae were found: mainly **Heath Rustic** *Xestia agathina* and **Oak Eggar** *Lasiocampa quercus*.

My second trip to the area was on the 22nd of July when I stayed at a B&B in Maentwrog for two nights before moving to Plas Tan-y-bwlch for the remainder of the week. On the first night staying in the B&B a small moth flew through the open window and circled the bedside lamp, it was a fairly worn individual and at first glance appeared to be a 'micro'. With closer inspection it had a similar appearance to **Pinion-streaked Snout** *Schrankia costaestrigalis*, after looking at the relevant page in 'Waring and Townsend' my best guess was **Marsh Oblique-barred** *Hypenodes humidalis*. I checked the window for any more and indeed there was another sitting on the outside of the glass. The two moths were later confirmed as Marsh Oblique-barred by David Brown over a pint in the Plas bar. On the 24th we moved to Plas Tan-y-bwlch where I ran 2/3 traps each night until the 28th (many thanks to the very helpful Plas staff for allowing me to do this). Traps were placed in the woodland to the west of Plas amongst mainly Beech and Oak. 121 macro species were recorded, 20 of which I had never seen before. Highlights included: **Bordered Beauty** *Epione repandaria*, **Four-spotted Footman** *Lithosia quadra*, **Beautiful Carpet** *Mesoleuca albicillata*, **Double Lobed** *Apamea ophiogramma*, **Crescent** *Celaena leucostigma*, **Welsh Wave** *Venusia cambrica*, **Clouded Magpie** *Abraxas sylvata*, **Beautiful Snout** *Hypena crassalis*, **Barred Hook-tip** *Watsonalla cultraria*, **Satin Lutestring** *Tetheella fluctuosa* and **Barred Chestnut** *Diarsia dahlii*. On the 26th Helen Bantock kindly let me run one of my traps from her house in the incredible setting of Harlech sand dunes where I caught 41 macro species including: **Archer's Dart** *Agrotis vestigialis*, **Shore Wainscot** *Mythimna litoralis*, **Sharp-angled Carpet** *Euphyia unangulata*, **Northern Footman** *Eilema complana f. sericea* and a **Small Mottled Willow** *Spodoptera exigua*. I was sorry to leave at the end of the week so when Helen generously offered accommodation at Traethdy on the dunes I knew it

wouldn't be long before I returned.

I did indeed return to the dunes on the 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> of August running three traps for the two nights. The weather wasn't ideal on either night but more so the first with strong winds and driving rain. However the winds were from the south so brought with them the chance of migrants. Very few moths were caught on the first night with only the very common species present in small numbers. The second night was an improvement with the migrants I had hoped for turning up including Small Mottled Willow and most notably a very worn **Gem** *Orthonama obstipata* - another first for me despite trips to the Isles of Scilly with it as a target. Traethdy is becoming quite the Mecca for migrants! The most unusual resident species was a second generation **Clay Triple-lines** *Cyclophora linearia*. This beech feeder is becoming quite common back in the midlands as it extends its range north but I certainly didn't expect to see it on the dunes at Harlech!

I'm already planning further trips to the area for next year: the potential for moth recording is immense and to anyone who hasn't trapped in the Ancient oak wooded Ffestiniog Valley or the dunes of Harlech I can't recommend it enough. Full species lists or further information can be obtained by contacting me using the details below.

Darren Taylor, 4 Larkwood Drive, Penn, Wolverhampton, West Midlands, WV4 4UB.

dtgraphicdesign@yahoo.co.uk

## **Bullfighting's Safer !**

**Rob Whitehead**

Thanks to ridiculously cheap airfares I have made two short trips to Girona in Spain during 2006.

The first, in early June, produced sightings of a number of species new to me as well as some that can be seen in the UK. My exploration only went as far as two hills, either side of the river, only one kilometre or so from the city centre. **Lulworth Skippers** were everywhere, outnumbering the scores of **Iberian Marbled Whites**. Oddly, **Clouded Yellow** and **Painted Lady** were scarce (both having a good year in North Wales) as were **Provence Chalkhill Blue** and **Great Banded Grayling**. The prize sighting was of a **Two-tailed Pasha**, a species I have only seen a couple of times but never photographed before.

My second trip, at the beginning of August, produced a few new species with **Southern Gatekeepers** largely replacing the **Spanish Gatekeepers** that had been numerous in June. Another Two-tailed Pasha allowed me to photograph it but I was struck by the total lack of any grayling species. The next hillside looked promising with more rocky outcrops and less scrubby vegetation so I decided to have a look there on my second (and last) afternoon in Girona. The loose scree and steepness explained the lack of vegetation but there were few butterflies about and no graylings to be seen as I climbed higher. As the ground got steeper and slipper I thought I'd do the sensible thing and go back down.

Then came the slip. One foot in the air - grab a small tree - swing into it - whack ! and my kneecap moved halfway up my thigh. No pain, as long as my leg was kept straight , but how to get down ? The answer is very slowly and sitting down with one bad leg crossed over the good one. The first 10 metres took 20 minutes negotiating a fallen down drystone wall and the next 50m over scree with only dry grass clumps to hold onto was not much quicker. Less dangerous ground followed but you certainly realise how many prickly plants there are when you are pushing yourself along with your arms. Then the skies got darker and along came thunder, lightning and torrential rain. By now I was on a 'sheep track' that rapidly became a stream. It's not all bad - you can slide downhill quicker on stony mud ! Two hours later I was getting nearer to civilization and hoping to meet someone. People did walk there - their dogs had left evidence of that on the footpath. Broken glass also meant more detours from the middle of the path. During my many short rests I did notice other wildlife around me. There were some very attractive crickets and a lovely preying mantis but less welcome were the ants that seemed to be crossing my route every few metres. I finally got down to the road where, totally soaked and covered in cuts, scratches and insect bites, I was greeted with another downpour. The first hundred or so cars that passed understandably ignored the tramp frantically waving on the pavement. One eventually did stop and I was on my way to hospital. I can recommend the Spanish NHS - arriving at the hospital at 7pm I was seen within five minutes. After explaining I had to be at the airport at 9.30pm, I was X-rayed and examined and put in (an open) plaster without delay and made my flight with time to spare. Next week, in Wrexham Hospital, someone suggested taking up bullfighting or skydiving as a safer option for a hobby. But then - my first sighting for a week - a Small Tortoiseshell flew into the ward .....



Two-tailed Pasha - Rob's reward

I've recently been involved with recording butterflies on three 'brownfield' sites in North-east Wales. Rhydymwyn (WWII mustard gas works), Padeswood (cement quarry) and Wrexham (industrial estate) and have come to realise that this type of site has a great deal more potential for the conservation of rare species than most of our acres of monoculture rye-grass farmland, and even some of our national reserves. Yet brownfield sites are still regarded by local government and most people as waste land that needs developing.

At the same time I have been working on my ideas of making butterfly gardens out of rubble and limestone, and these have similar qualities to brownfield sites.

What are the essential characteristics of these habitats? The following has been compiled and condensed from a search of the subject on the internet and from various colleagues.

**What are Brownfields?** Any site that has been altered by man's activities can be described as 'brownfield'. This includes not only derelict areas in towns and cities but quarries, brick-pits, old railway lines and disused airfields. Brownfield habitats are typified by patches of bare ground and are 'nutrient poor'. As a result, sparse, low growing plants are able to establish themselves while plants needing more fertile soil, such as nettles and coarse grasses, are largely excluded. Many brownfield sites have been quarried or mined for centuries and are continually re-creating conditions suitable for many invertebrates. As farming methods have intensified, such sites have largely escaped improvement and remain as 'islands' in an agricultural prairie.

**Why are they important for invertebrates?** The short distances between warmer and colder areas and between ideal breeding sites and foraging sites are essential for many invertebrates as their 'cold-bloodedness' means that in our climate they have to constantly shift location in order to be warm enough to function. Many invertebrate species have a complex life cycle, with different specific requirements at different stages. In many cases invertebrates require two or more habitats or micro habitats to be coexisting in close proximity. The existence of these habitat mosaics is essential to the survival of many species.

Open bare areas are an important and often undervalued resource. Bare ground offers a number of benefits. In particular it warms up rapidly in sunshine, it is used by burrowing and ground nesting invertebrates and for egg-laying and it provides a clear visual field for predators.

Perhaps we should be looking at how these habitat features occur in the wider countryside and how they can be enhanced and made priorities in nature conservation management.

**Brownfields and Red Data Book Species** Brownfield sites contain as many Red Data and Nationally Scarce invertebrate species as ancient woodland (12-14% of the species). The best sites may contain up to half of an entire county's invertebrate fauna which will not occur elsewhere in the county. Such areas are being lost due to government subsidies which encourage development on brownfield land.

**The Government has placed great emphasis on the need to reuse land rather than use previously undeveloped areas.**

This means that all Brownfield sites are at risk of being re-developed. Buglife says 40 per cent of brownfield sites, particularly those in London, are incredibly important for UK biodiversity; they often support nationally important populations of rare and scarce invertebrates, plus other wildlife such as birds, reptiles, plants and lichens.



Thanks to work by Buglife, Canvey Wick, an important brownfield site for the **Brown-banded carder bee**, was protected by English Nature in Spring 2005, it is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest

### **Can Green Roofs Save Urban Wildlife?**

Buglife says "We are not saying brownfield sites should not be developed, but they need to be assessed and measures put in place to protect their hidden treasures." They also suggest that buildings use "green roofs" – or "brown living roofs" - layers of sediment to encourage ruderal plants that support insects. A variety of different nutrient poor materials are used ( which are best taken from the vicinity of the building-crushed brick is often used) and by recording all the species of flowers, birds and insects that make their home there, it is possible to

see which are most effective in attracting the greatest variety. In addition to replacing brownfield sites that are lost to development, they could also provide important new habitat where there is none at present and act as wildlife corridors linking existing habitats.

## **Vision for the future of Brownfields**

One of the main problems is that brownfield sites are often the most visually unattractive places, with piles of bulldozed rubble that attract fly-tipping and general litter. Yet they are more floristically diverse than wild-flower meadows and are home to a wide variety of uncommon species that need an early successional state, bare ground and warmth.

Old mineral workings are also havens for a wide diversity of invertebrates. Some are allocated 'conservation after-use'. It may be then that the trouble starts. The scruffy legacy of the extraction industry is often not appreciated for its value to biodiversity. Trees are planted, soil imported, conservation seed mixes spread and small shallow puddles bulldozed into a big lake for ducks to sit on. The habitat of the scarce invertebrates, as well as ruderal plants and xerophytic lichens, usually doesn't get much of a look-in. I have observed this happening at the Castle Cement quarry site at Padeswood.

Alternatively the 'do nothing' approach could conserve many scarce invertebrates and other organisms, provide robust urban wildspace where local kids can ride their bikes and at the same time save the industries a lot of money.

Is talk of 'mitigation' merely paying lip service to nature conservation? Is it designed to keep a few eco-nuts quiet, or is there some hope for brownfield nature parks in the future?

**We hope to take a members' field trip to the Wrexham industrial site to see the Grizzled Skipper next May – keep an eye out for the events list in the Spring newsletter.**

**Buglife -The Invertebrate Conservation Trust. [www.Buglife.org.uk](http://www.Buglife.org.uk)**

## **A Visit to Surrey**

**Brian and Sue Roberts**

We decided to visit the local Butterfly Conservation Reserve at Oaken Wood and also Bookham Common during a long weekend in Cobham (30th June to 4th July). The temperature hovered in the top 20's and early 30's and, to quote Rob Whitehead, "The Tropic of Surrey" was a very apt description because the ground in places was severely cracked to a depth of about 12" with the cracks several inches wide. I found this site by reading the Surrey B.C. Newsletter at the recent members' day.

So on a boiling Sunday morning we set off with the temperature on the car thermometer showing 27 degrees C at 9.10am- a mere 81F.

The reserve lies south of the village of Dunsfold (where the Top Gear Airfield is located) but the entrance is not easy to find .If you hear dogs barking you are not far away as there are kennels just across the road from the entrance.

The parking was quite tight with only enough room for two cars and there was one already there when we arrived, but it was all worth while because in the field as we entered the reserve there were lots of **Marbled Whites**, **Small** and **Large Skippers** and countless **Meadow Browns** and **Gatekeepers**.

As we progressed into the reserve we started to see good numbers of **Silver-Washed Fritillaries** and about 15 **White Admirals** (that is probably an undercount of this species). **Ringlet** had emerged and looked really pristine.

By about 11.30 am we were getting very hot and sought the refuge of the car as by this time the temperature was 32 degrees. We made our way to the next site, Bookham Common, and whilst parking we heard a man outside the next car giving directions to the `Purple Emperor Tree` I asked him for the same directions and he duly obliged, adding that they were flying today. We made our way to the area of the common he had mentioned but could not quite locate the precise spot and then, as we were looking perplexed, a very kind gentleman gave us the information we needed: we were in fact only about 50 yards away but needed to go up a subsidiary path. Within a minute we saw two people looking high up at an Oak Tree and after about a minute we saw our first **Purple Emperor** of the day followed shortly by three flying at the top of the tree. The BBC had apparently been there the day before filming but had only seen one briefly. Also, there were **Purple Hairstreaks** (more of that later).After watching the Emperors flying at the top and too and fro from tree to tree we decided to start the walk back, seeing more Silver Washed Fritillaries and White Admirals (although not as numerous as in Oaken Wood). Then I saw it- a small butterfly perched on a nettle by the side of a minute pool by the path.As we approached, we found to our amazement that it was a Purple Hairstreak, but unfortunately it did not stay long enough for me to photograph- possibly a chance in a lifetime missed, one of the hardest butterflies to photograph and I had missed it. The extremely dry weather must have contributed to it coming down to the ground.

As we walked back we saw more Purple Hairstreaks in the Oak Trees but still reflected on what might have been.

Altogether, however, it was a wonderful day and thanks go to the kind people who directed us to the spot.It really was a Purple patch day.

For those of you who are interested ,the OS grid reference for Oaken Wood is SU993339. It is off the minor road from Dunsfold to Plaistow on the right hand side just north of some kennels.

The approximate OS reference for Bookham Common is TQ122566.To reach the reserve take Bookham Road south from the village of Downside and shortly after going over the M 25 you come to a car-park with a sign-board of the area. Leaving the car-park with the sign-board on your left take the path towards Hill

Farm keeping to the left .You will very shortly see a path going off on the right with a little wooden arch over it - take this path which gently rises to the left and then you will see a very substantial dead tree on your left and to its immediate right two oak trees-these are the Purple Emperor Trees. We were told that the Emperors start to fly from about noon and having arrived at the site at about 12.30 we certainly agree with that.

The visits to these reserves are well worth while at the appropriate times.



Purple Hairstreak by Alan Barnes (courtesy of Butterfly Conservation website)

### **Butterflies in North-east Wales (VCs 50&51) 2006**

**Rob Whitehead**

Vice County Butterfly Recorder for Denbighshire & Flintshire

As usual this report is based on records received by mid-September. I hope many of you will be sending in records causing me to 'correct' my current assessment. Of the 1200 records received about 40% are from Holywell and Graigfechan.

First sighting of the year was of a **Red Admiral** in Colwyn Bay (SKT) on 11 February; a successful hibernator, perhaps. Immigrants boosted the population with records of a dozen or more being seen on various days in July and August.

A **Brimstone** appeared in Graigfechan (RW) on 31 March and there were summer sightings from the east and south but none (so far) from the north. One was seen near Bontuchel where I have not seen buckthorn and at the same location the first **Comma** was seen on 1 April. On the 10th **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Peacock** appeared at Greenfield Valley (BSR) with **Speckled Wood** and **Small White** recorded on the 23rd (BSR). **Orange Tips** were at Sontley (JLR) and Graigfechan on the 28th, a good two or three weeks later than usual. Later generations of all these (except Orange Tip) produced good numbers in the

extended periods of good weather in the summer. Small Whites were especially numerous.

Eleven more species appeared during May. On the 3rd **Holly Blue** was seen in Greenfield Valley (BSR) and **Green Hairstreak** and **Grizzled Skipper** were at Loggerheads (DCH) with **Large White** at Rhyl (TL) and **Green-veined White** sighted in the following two days. Dingy Skipper appeared at Greenfield Valley (BSR) on the 10th. A visit to Eyarth Rocks on the 11th saw an early **Wall Brown** as well as the first of the **Pearl Bordered Fritillaries** and three days later a **Painted Lady** was seen on the Reserve. **Small Copper** was recorded at Cyffylliog on the 28th and **Small Heath** were out at Eyarth Rocks on the last day of the month.

Surely someone saw a **Common Blue** before the 1st June (at Graigfechan) or a **Large Skipper** before the 13th (at Eyarth Rocks)! There were already worn specimens of **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** at Bryn Alyn SSSI on the 10th and **Dark Green Fritillaries** flying at Moelfre Isaf on the 17th were on the early side. **Meadow Brown** at Bontuchel on the 16th; **Ringlet** at Cyffylliog on 23rd; and **Brown Argus** near Llandegla Forest on the 29th were other additions in June. The Brown Argus in this area is single-brooded (univoltine) but had probably been out for more than two weeks. In the northwest, where it is bivoltine, it should have appeared in May.

On the 1st July there were dozens of **Large Heath** flying at Fenns Moss and on the 2nd seven **White-letter Hairstreaks** were seen near Llangollen (BF). Ten of the latter species were seen together on Wrexham Industrial Estate (MT) and four on Eyarth Rocks later in the month, indicating a good season. **Small Skipper** was first reported from World's End (JLR) on the 5th; **Gatekeeper** on the 8th at Greenfield Valley (BSR); **Grayling** on the 11th at Bagillt, Point Of Ayr and Gronant (DCH); and **Purple Hairstreak** on the 18th at Bryn Euryn.

The only one of the thirty-three species regularly recorded that has not been reported is the **Silver-studded Blue** but records of that species will be among those recorded on the Mynydd Marian transect.

However, the count does go up to thirty-three courtesy of the **Clouded Yellow**. The first report was from Rhyl (IG) on 5th July with others seen at the end of that month and through August and September including - Foel Fenlli (RJ); Rossett (MB); Llanbedr (PT); Llangollen (JLR); Greenfield Valley (BSR); Mynydd Marian (BG); Eyarth Rocks (REJ); Ruthin (CS) and I even had two visits to my garden in Graigfechan (RW). Are there any more records out there? Is this year better even than 1992 or 2000?

I suppose the Clouded Yellow has to be the 'butterfly of the year' although many species were in unusually good numbers and recorded from 'new' sites. The extended periods of good weather this summer may have had two noticeable effects. One is that there has been more movement from the emergence site and the other is that there were emergences over a shorter period adding to the impression of high numbers. I have heard comments on both these points from more than one observer. My own experience has been of more visits than usual to my garden by species like Common Blue and Wall Brown (often females) and of seeing Dark Green Fritillaries, for example, at sites where they have not been

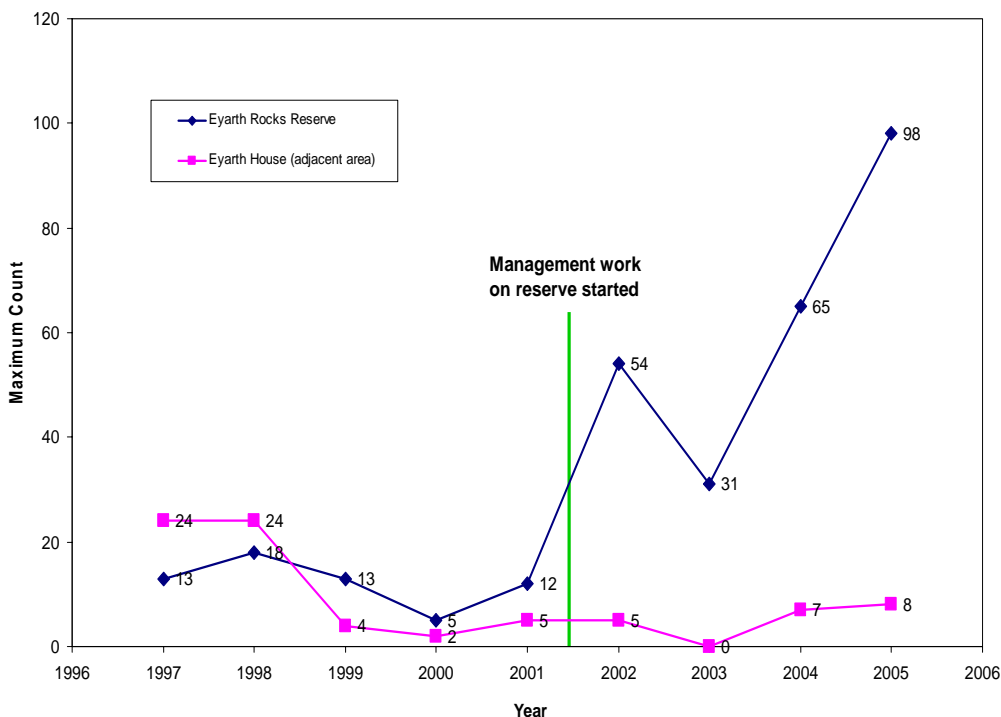
seen before. I also agreed with one recorder that Gatekeepers seemed to have a shorter flight period than usual - then I saw one on 15th September !

The only butterfly that appears to have had a much poorer season than usual is the Green-veined White. Perhaps it prefers our traditional damp and gloomy summers.

**Thanks to recorders:** Mike Byrne (MB); Bryan Formstone (BF); Becky Groves (BG); Ian Gorton (IG); David Hinde (DCH); Rhun Jones (RJ); Richard Jones (REJ); Tony Lewis (TL); Brian & Sue Roberts (BSR); John Lawton Roberts (JLR); Clem Shaw, N Ireland (CS); Mark Taylor (MT); Paul Triggs (PT); Dr S K Thomas (SKT) and J B Flint, Phillip Howson, Betty Lee and John Smith.

**Editor: the graph below shows the result of all the hardwork put in by Rob and many volunteers at Eyarth Rocks.**

**Maximum Counts of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at Eyarth Rocks North Wales**



**Editor: many thanks to all contributors-please keep writing! Items for next spring will be needed by the end of February 2007.**  
**Helen Bantock**

## How one woman's gift will make a world of difference.

When Pamela Lewis was alive, she visited Butterfly Conservation's reserve at Prestbury Hill in Gloucestershire. She was inspired by that wonderful place and its profusion of butterflies. When Pamela died she remembered Butterfly Conservation in her Will with a generous gift. In 2005 we used Pamela's legacy to create a new nature reserve at Alners Gorse so that we could conserve one of the most important areas in Dorset for the Marsh Fritillary (and countless other rare butterflies and moths). We shall be using this new reserve to show other landowners from this beautiful part of Dorset, and further afield, how to create and maintain the habitat that the Marsh Fritillary needs for it to thrive.

In time, Pamela's influence on the conservation of the Marsh Fritillary could be enormous. We welcome legacy gifts of any size and every legacy we receive is put to work to make a lasting difference. This could be through our educational work with young people, or in the development of a landscape conservation project in an important butterfly area, or by paying for the ongoing management of our nature reserves.

Leaving a legacy to Butterfly Conservation will not cost you anything in your lifetime and could reduce the amount of inheritance tax your family may have to pay on the value of your estate, as all legacy gifts to charity are free of tax. Best of all, though, you will be making a lasting contribution to the conservation of Britain's butterflies and moths.

Butterfly Conservation relies heavily on the support of its members and friends, so please will you consider making a gift to the Society in your Will?

To talk informally, and in confidence, about helping Butterfly Conservation with a gift in your Will, please telephone me on 01403 256175, or write to me at our Lulworth offices.

David Bridges (Head of Fundraising)

✂ -----

**Please return this slip (or a photocopy) to David Bridges at Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Dorset BH20 5QP.**

- I have already remembered Butterfly Conservation with a legacy in my Will.
- I am considering remembering Butterfly Conservation with a legacy in my Will.
- Please send me a free copy of Butterfly Conservation's legacy leaflet.
- Please telephone. I would like an opportunity to discuss how I can help Butterfly Conservation through my Will.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_ (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone no. \_\_\_\_\_

This information will be held in absolute confidence. The information you provide is not binding in anyway, but it does give us a valuable indication of your future intentions and will help us plan our future work

# County Butterfly and Moth Recorders

If you would like to send records by e-mail please use the addresses shown below or [info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk) Butterfly recording forms can also be printed off from the website [www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](http://www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk) or can be sent to you by post from any of the recorders.

## Moth Recorders

Anglesey - Vice County(VC)52  
John Harold  
Hen Ardd, Carreg y Garth  
Rhiwlas, Bangor  
Gwynedd  
LL57 4HD  
[jhmoths@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jhmoths@yahoo.co.uk)

Caernarfonshire - VC49  
Julian Thompson,  
Pensychnant Conservation  
Centre, Sychnant Pass, Conwy  
LL32 8BJ (01492) 592595  
e-mail: Secretary  
[@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

Denbighshire - VC50  
Bryan Formstone  
15 Beech Avenue  
Gresford  
Wrexham LL12 8EL  
tel: (01978) 855174

Flintshire - VC51  
David Bennett  
Arosfa, Rhes y Cae,  
Flintshire CH8 8JG  
tel: 01352 780787

Merionethshire - VC48  
Andrew Graham  
Trawscoed  
Llanuwchllyn, Bala  
Gwynedd LL23 7TD  
tel: (01678) 540370  
e-mail: Transects  
[@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

Montgomeryshire - VC47  
Peter Williams  
"Pandy", Commins Coch  
Machynlleth  
Powys SY20 BLG  
tel: (01650) 511583

## Butterfly Recorders

Anglesey -Vice County(VC)52  
David Thorpe  
3 Brynteg, Clwt y Bont  
Gwynedd LL55 3DT  
tel: 01286 871982 e-mail:  
[david.thorpe@environment-agency.wales.gov.uk](mailto:david.thorpe@environment-agency.wales.gov.uk)

Caernarfonshire - VC49  
David Thorpe  
3 Brynteg, Clwt y Bont  
Gwynedd LL55 3DT  
tel: 01286 871982 e-mail:  
[david.thorpe@environment-agency.wales.gov.uk](mailto:david.thorpe@environment-agency.wales.gov.uk)

Denbighshire - VC50  
Rob Whitehead  
Haulfryn, Graigfechan  
Ruthin, Denbighshire LL15 2HA  
tel: (01824) 704507  
e-mail: Records  
[@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

Flintshire - VC51  
Rob Whitehead  
Haulfryn, Graigfechan  
Ruthin, Denbighshire LL15 2HA  
tel: (01824) 704507

Merionethshire - VC48  
Andrew Graham  
Trawscoed  
Llanuwchllyn, Bala  
Gwynedd LL23 7TD  
tel: (01678) 540370  
e-mail: Transects  
[@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

Montgomeryshire - VC47  
Tamasine Stretton  
c/o Montgomery Wildlife Trust  
20 Severn Street  
Welshpool  
Powys SY21 9AS  
tel: (01938) 555654

## Committee Contacts

**Chairman**, Ilija Vukomanovic  
[chair@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:chair@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

**Secretary**, Julian Thompson  
See left or e-mail: Secretary  
[@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

**Treasurer**, Bob Lee,  
15 Newton Drive, Buckley,  
Flintshire CH7 3EB. tel: 01244  
550993 e-mail: Treasurer  
[@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

**Conservation Officer**, Mike  
Hammett and David Thorpe;  
e-mail: conservation  
[@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

**Education, website,  
publicity**, Jan Miller, Saith  
Ffynnon Farm, Whitford,  
Holywell CH8 9EQ, Flintshire.  
tel: 01352 711198 e-mail:  
[info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

**Newsletter Editor** -  
Dr. Helen Bantock,  
101 Crouch Hill, London  
N8 9RD. tel: 07854 119618  
e-mail: newsletter  
[@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk](mailto:@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk)

**Butterfly Conservation Wales**,  
10 Calvert Terrace,  
Swansea SA1 5AR  
Tel: 0870 7706153  
[info.bcw@btconnect.com](mailto:info.bcw@btconnect.com)

**Butterfly Conservation (HQ)**  
Manor Yard, East Lulworth  
Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP.  
[info@butterflyconservation.org](mailto:info@butterflyconservation.org)  
tel: 0870 7744309  
fax: 0870 7706150  
Registered in England No.  
2206468  
Registered Charity No. 254937