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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

Butterfly Conservation Wales
Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Cymru
10 Calvert Terrace, Swansea, SA1 5AR
Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats
Achub glöynnod a gwytynod gwyllt a'u cynefinoedd **Registered Charity No.254937**

Editor: Helen Bantock

New UK BAP species Jan Miller

Perhaps the most significant recent event for butterflies and other taxa, was the long-awaited publication of the new UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) review of priority species and habitats, which can be read on the UK BAP website www.ukbap.org.uk .

Preparation of the new list has taken several years, following extensive consultation with experts, and the final list has significant implications for the conservation of butterflies, as well as other wildlife. The key change is that the number of butterflies listed as UK BAP priorities has increased from 11 (one of which was already extinct) to 24 extant species, over 40% of the current resident butterfly fauna. The additions include scarce species such as Wood White and Duke of Burgundy, but also rapidly declining (if still widespread) butterflies such as Dingy Skipper , Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Grayling, all of which we have in North Wales. (see full discussion in British Wildlife vol 18, 7, August 2007)

European Interests Group

http://www.bc-eig.org.uk/The European Interests Group of Butterfly Conservation aims to promote the enjoyment, conservation and study of butterflies, moths and their habitats in Europe. The website and newsletters include news about trips to see rare butterflies in many parts of the continent, reports from other members and countries etc. Membership is open to members of Butterfly Conservation by payment of £10 extra per year; this can be arranged as part of your Direct Debit membership subscription, please let Head Office staff know if you would like to be included in this growing group. Other individuals and organisations are also encouraged to contact EIG so that together we can build a network for sharing data, experiences and practical help.EIG wants to promote recording schemes throughout Europe and hopes to be able to provide a comprehensive list of such schemes here. Again, please email info@bc-eig.org.uk if you know of, or run, such a scheme.The EIG is run entirely on the internet to save volunteers' time and costs. So you need to have an e-mail address to be a member.

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

Some notes on the habitat and larval foodplants of Ashworth's Rustic *Xestia ashworthii* Andrew Graham

Ashworth's Rustic is a common moth in the hills of North West Wales but is curiously absent from the remainder of Britain. The moth was included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan on the basis of its restricted range and the paucity of records.

Recent records extend from the Ynys Hir in Cardiganshire and the southern end of Lake Vyrnwy in Montgomeryshire, through Merionethshire (numerous sites) to the north coast of Caernarvonshire. There is no doubt that this is a common species in rocky upland habitats and it has even been described as being one of the dominant species of such places. (Young, M.R., 1974, *Some of the Lepidoptera of the moorlands near Llyn Cwmynach, Merioneth*. Ent. Rec. J. Var. 86).

North West Wales remains poorly monitored and there are still many ten kilometre grid squares from which the Ashworth's Rustic has never been recorded, even though it is highly likely to be present. Visiting lepidopterists naturally wish to optimise their chance of seeing the moth and therefore prefer to try a known site.

This has led to a profusion of records from Pen Sychnant, near Conwy, which is now by far the best-known site. Elsewhere, the few resident moth enthusiasts tend to be familiar with the moth and seldom make the effort of trapping in some remote spot in the hills purely for the sake of another dot on the map. Fortunately,there is an alternative method of mapping the range of this moth, which is to search for larvae in spring. On a suitably sunny day in April the larvae can be found basking prominently, even in temperatures only a few degrees above freezing. They are distinctive enough to be instantly recognisable.

Habitat

For a long time successive authors have employed the phrase 'slate and limestone hills' to describe the habitat of this moth. However, I would like to suggest that the underlying geology is unlikely to be an important consideration and, in fact, these two particular rock types represent, at best, only a small proportion of the known range. A glance at a geological map shows that the geology of North Wales is extremely complex with a bewildering array of different rocks represented. Various intrusive and extrusive igneous rocks are common, as are sedimentary rocks such as mudstones, siltstones and sandstones. The moth is found in regions where all these rock types are exposed and is in no way restricted to the relatively small outcrops of metamorphosed mudstone ('slate') or

to the Carboniferous limestone which skirts the area to the north and east. For this reason, I would suggest that any reference to 'slate and limestone' should be avoided in future as being thoroughly misleading.

Having studied much of the literature on this subject, it seems to me that the idea of an association with limestone is especially dubious. It is entirely plausible that the moth may be found in limestone localities although it has to be said that there are very few such records – in contrast to the numerous records from non-limestone districts. In fact, the only recent record from a limestone district that I am aware of is from a quarry in Anglesey (Adrian Fowles pers. comm.).

Many of the old sites from the Llangollen area, including the site of the original discovery in 1853 (Bryn Hyfryd - Joseph Ashworth's house in Llangollen) are actually on acidic rocks. Even those old records where the site name is given as 'Eglwyseg' (the spectacular limestone cliffs north of Llangollen) have an attached grid reference which places the precise locality a short way to the west, on acidic rocks. Quite possibly these grid references are inaccurate and the moths really were taken on the Carboniferous limestone. Alternatively, we now know that the moth is likely to be found on the acidic rocks of the Llangollen area and thus it is a possibility that the original records were not strays from the limestone, as assumed at the time.

Whether or not any of the early records really do refer to moths that were caught on limestone, the idea quickly took hold that this is a limestone species and there are numerous references to limestone in the literature. For example, Vol. III of The Lepidoptera of the British Isles (Charles G. Barrett, 1896) states that the moth "sits in the daytime on limestone rocks". Indeed some of these comments seem quite bizarre in the extent to which they remain faithful to the notion. For example, R. Tait in 1923 writes about the common occurrence of the moth on the rocks at Penmaemawr and 'almost to Snowdon'. He writes: "From this limestone strip the insect rarely seems to stray" although he does then go on to mention a few other (acidic) sites. One suspects that he assumed (incorrectly) that the rocks he was describing were limestone simply because of the presence of the moth.

This attachment to an accepted idea is reminiscent of the determination early lepidopterists had for the notion that White Beak-sedge is the foodplant for the Large Heath butterfly. When they couldn't find any of the plant they assumed that they must have missed it. The lesson to be learned is, of course, that one should believe the evidence of one's own eyes rather than rely on an accepted viewpoint.

One further reason for doubting an association with limestone is the absence of any records from the Great Orme. This well-known and well-studied limestone headland is close to the thriving populations of Ashworth's Rustic on the acidic rocks of northern Caernarvonshire and it might be expected that the moth would be found there if there is any truth at all in the concept of an association with limestone. Perhaps it does but there appear to be no records.

One characteristic of all the sites I have seen is the presence of bare rock. The moth is grey coloured and is stated to rest by day on bare rock, where it is almost

perfectly camouflaged. In contrast, the moth would be conspicuous resting on vegetation and for this reason alone it seems reasonable to assume that the species is adapted to live in rocky places. Incidentally, it seems to me that the colour of the moth matches the acidic rocks of North Wales very well but is, perhaps, a less good match for the Carboniferous limestone.

Larval foodplants

Given the belief that the Ashworth's Rustic is associated with limestone, it isn't surprising that the foodplants listed in the literature include several which typify such habitats. **Common Rock-rose** often heads the list, closely followed by **Wild Thyme**, and also including **Salad Burnet** and **Lady's Bedstraw**. We now realise that these species cannot be important as larval foodplants because they don't grow at the sites where the moth is known to occur. (Wild Thyme is a partial exception as it is often found on only slightly basic rocks such as dolerite and does sometimes grow in Ashworth's Rustic sites. However, whether the plant is used isn't known - it has been refused by all the larvae I have reared).

Other plants listed in the literature include the following.

Foxglove	Unlikely to occur in Ashworth's Rustic habitat unless there has been a fire or other disturbance. Refused by my captive larvae.
Hieracium murorum	A strangely specific suggestion.
Salix repens	Very unlikely to occur in typical Ashworth's Rustic habitat. Other Salix spp are reputed to be acceptable to the larvae in captivity. However, none of mine would eat willow.
Golden-rod	This plant does occur, sparsely, in Ashworth's Rustic habitat but I do not know whether it is used.
Sheep's Sorrel	Abundant in Ashworth's Rustic habitat but refused by my larvae.
Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*)	Commonly found alongside the larvae. None of my larvae would touch it.
Harebell	Sometimes occurs with the larvae. Not tried.
Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*)	This plant is characteristic of Ashworth's Rustic habitat and definitely is eaten by the larvae.
Heath Bedstraw	Almost always to be found near the larvae. One larva I raised would eat nothing until offered Heath Bedstraw which it immediately started consuming with amazing enthusiasm. It then fed solely on this plant until pupation.
Bilberry	Bilberry is very common in Ashworth's Rustic habitat but is not given as a foodplant in the literature. However, a larva was observed feeding on Bilberry in spring 2007 (Trawscoed). A similar observation was made in 2000 on Cadair Idris. (John Bratton, pers. comm.)

Conclusions

There are many things that we do not know about the Ashworth's Rustic but here are two things that are definite.

1. It is a common moth in rocky, acidic sites in NW Wales.

2. The larvae do eat Heather, Bilberry and Heath Bedstraw.

It seems probable that the larvae are best described as polyphagous and there may well be existing evidence for the use of other plants. I would be very grateful for any comments or observations on this subject.

Locations,locations,locations –mothy tales John Hicks

One would have thought that trapping away from home was a pretty straightforward event. What could be simpler, drive to the location,(after obtaining the landowners permission) set up the equipment and wait for the moths to arrive. However, sometimes things do not quite follow the set plan.

Helen Bantock & I decided to try some oak woodlands close to Harlech. Our Heath traps were set up at dusk,one in the woods and one in an adjacent "empty field". Returning in the morning, the woodland trap was quite disappointing so we moved on to the "empty field" trap only to see that the trap and battery had been knocked over and the culprits,3 large black bulls, were grazing a few yards away.We managed to retrieve the undamaged equipment with knocking knees on my part.

A few weeks later, after good numbers of Reed Veneer (Chilo phragmitella) were discovered by the Mawddach estuary on national moth night, Helen and I decided to try reed beds further north.We chose an area of reeds lining both banks of a large stream, some distance from the sea. The van was parked on a piece of hard ground just off the road and the generator set up by the side. A bridge spans the stream so we ran a cable to the M/v sheet trap set up on said bridge and settled back to wait for darkness . Moths soon started to arrive in good numbers but after a few hours of trapping, the light suddenly went out. Torches were hurriedly switched on to reveal the van and generator standing in several inches of water. Never has trapping equipment been dismantled so quickly.We had unknowingly chosen a night of one of the largest spring tides and failed to realise that the stream was affected this far back.Still,all in a nights trapping, moth trappers need to be made of stern stuff! Suprisingly, the equipment was undamaged.

Another requirement in trapping away from home is to be not easily frightened as night time can bring unusual visitors (apart from the obligatory dog walkers, it's amazing the times people choose to walk their pets).

A few years ago, I had set up the sheet with m/v lamp on the Morfa Dyffryn sand dunes, a NNR where I have permission to trap.It was a rather cool and clear night so not ideal for moths and I passed time by admiring the lights on the mountain farms.A flashing light came into sight,clearly a helicopter. It passed me diagonally about half a mile away and then changed course and came directly towards me and hovered overhead, by this time I had realised it was a police helicopter.It stayed overhead for probably only a few seconds but it felt like ages and I was frantically trying to think of an explanation for my nocturnal light show.Happily they seemed to work out what was going on and headed off towards the Lleyn peninsula.

Visitors of a non-human sort occasionally appear at another site that I trap, a mixed woodland estate standing in a cwm.The M/v trap was set up on one of the forest tracks one night in June.Moths began to arrive straight away and as I moved back to the van for more pots, a wraith like creature flew past within a few feet of my head, making a return pass within a few moments.It was far too large for a bat and was in fact a nightjar. These are regular visitors at this site and even though I know they are there, they always succeed in giving me a fright when first putting in an appearance, good to see them around though and apparently thriving at this site at least.

I will end on a most enjoyable trapping night but also one of the most exhausting. I was asked to arrange a session for a local children's wildlife group.The meeting place was a local garden and the sheet would be set up for the first hour or so and a trap left on overnight and checked the following morning.A dozen or so children in the 7-11 age group turned up and after the 'don't look at the light etc' talk was given we waited for the moths. They were rather slow in arriving but the kids had purloined my 2 nets and were having a whale of a time chasing imaginary moths, each other, and squabbling over who's go it was or who had it longer than who.At 11 pm they were returned to their parents by the organiser with promises of"see you tomorrow".The next morning all returned at the appointed time to see the catch.I was trying for an orderly record of the caught specimens, with a description etc. of each one ,but the plan soon fell by the wayside thanks to my enthusiastic,hands-on helpers.I have never seen so many hands in one trap and so many egg boxes moving in so many directions at once! Moths were flying in all directions and some micros were lost but 45 species were counted.

The main thing however was that the children enjoyed it immensely and were keen to do it again. I returned home for a lie down in a darkened room and to recover ready for the next trapping adventure,
There's never a dull moment for moth trappers!!

Butterflying on the margins Brian and Sue Roberts

Sue and I decided on a return visit to the Newbury area for a few days in June to look for birds and butterflies.The week we chose was the week of the floods around the country, and the Newbury area had had its fair share of rain.
The first full day in Newbury we decided to go to one of our favourite butterfly sites-Martin Down in Hampshire-it very rarely fails to produce good species but it was not a butterfly but a bird that was the first special species of the trip when we saw a Montagu's Harrier near Alton.
As we were approaching Salisbury the rain clouds gathered and we stopped at the Wilton house Garden Centre for coffee in the hope that the clouds would clear-they didn't and as we got close to the site it started to rain.By the time we got there the rain had stopped but the ground was quite wet due to the recent rains in the area.

As it had stopped we started to walk southwards on the reserve and as we approached the area where we usually see lots of Blues all we saw were the odd **Small Heath.** We spent some time looking around and then in the grass I spotted a perched **Adonis Blue** with wings open-what a sight and such a surprise in such conditions; it got better because a few moments later two **Small Blues** were seen and, as we walked back to the car-park, Tree Pipit and Cuckoo. It then started to rain again so we spent a few minutes in the car-the rain stopped so we crossed the road from the car-park and proceeded over the now very slippery limestone to the northerly area of Martin Down where we hoped we would see some more species.It was just starting to drizzle with rain when we saw not one but two **White Admirals** and our first **Meadow Browns** of the year.
So despite far from ideal weather 5 species were seen.

The next day was spent shopping, due to the continuing really bad weather, but then on our last full day in the area the forecast was not too bad for where we were heading, firstly to the Butterfly Conservation Reserve of Oaken Wood, where again in far from ideal conditions (the odd shower of rain etc), we saw about **10 Marbled Whites** and best of all a **Silver-Washed Fritillary.** We could not believe our luck, and just to mention that the most numerous butterfly we saw was **White Admiral :**they were everywhere, well over 20 were seen.It is such a good site for this species and on one occasion we saw 3 flying around together and they seemed to be disputing territory.

Our final visit of the trip was to Bookham Common, the object of the trip was to see if the Purple Emperor was out.When we arrived the sky was quite dark and there was the odd spot of rain, so after some time looking in the relevant tree with no luck and also trying to locate the Nightingale that was singing close by, we decided to walk along the path to the other end of the common through the woods and again, despite the conditions, **White Admirals** were flying, and then two **Dark-Green Fritillaries** were seen. If you ask me does lightning strike twice in

the same place and in the same spot I would certainly agree because last year at the same site (in very different weather - very hot) we saw a Purple Hairstreak on the path and as I didn't have my camera with me I missed photographing this difficult species. This year, when walking near the same place, Sue spotted a small butterfly nectaring on a bush, it was again a **Purple Hairstreak**-I couldn't believe it. And again due to the conditions, my camera was in the car! Also near this bush were two **White Admirals**, the two **Dark Green Fritillaries**, a **Red Admiral** and **Meadow Browns** all in very heavy dark cloud conditions with again the odd spot of rain and in the case of the Purple Hairstreak breaking a lot of conventions of its normal behaviour. Sue thought that just before she spotted it she had seen a White Admiral go up the Oak tree immediately above the bush and that she thought she saw a small butterfly come out of the oak tree, possibly the hairstreak.

And so at the end of the short break we had seen some good species in weather conditions which were far from ideal. It had taught us a valuable lesson that, even in difficult conditions, species may still be seen. And I shall never again go to that spot in Bookham Common without my camera!!!

Cerrig y Gwaennyydd, Habitat Restoration **Dave Thorpe**

The Environment Agency is working with CCW to restore 37 hectares of grazing marsh close to Harlech. The site supports a marsh fritillary butterfly population and currently has 20 hectares of *Succisa pratensis*-rich pasture (the habitat of this internationally- protected butterfly species). A total of 5 km of fencing is being erected by the EA to allow grazing management to favour marsh fritillary. 1.5 km of native broadleaved hedging is being planted to act as a shelter to hopefully benefit marsh frit adults.

The Agency's Operations Delivery team is restoring areas of wetland damaged by previous ditch- management activity. CCW have entered a management agreement with the landowner – for managed grazing by Welsh black cattle. We hope to revert improved land to species rich pasture by deep ploughing and seeding or plug planting in subsequent years. We are grateful to Butterfly Conservation for advice and monitoring work and to CCW for assisting with the project.

Funding for this project was provided by John Mosedale from Flood Risk Management. We hope to find similar wetland restoration projects at the Eifionydd Fens sites or on Anglesey in future years.

Butterflies in Harlech 2007 Helen Bantock

There is no doubt that 2007 will go down as a poor year for lepidoptera in the UK. It seemed strange in the brilliantly sunny and hot April weather to be in the slacks with only Peacock butterflies and later in the year I missed the Clouded Yellows, which so often grace the autumn scene, although there were a few Painted Ladies on the Sea Rocket in September.

Nevertheless, the early warm weather led to **Dingy Skippers** emerging in Harlech forest by the beginning of May and numbers held up compared with previous years.

In 2004, Butterfly Conservation and Forestry Commission Wales published a joint survey of lepidoptera within the forest, which included management plans (Priority Butterfly and Moth Survey of Forestry Commission Wales Forest Holdings 2001-2004.Butterfly Conservation Report number SO5-27).As this is the only remaining site for Dingy Skipper in VC48, there were high hopes that the area would be improved. Unfortunately, none of the management plans were actioned until this year, owing to changes in FC personel. The recommendations of the report included no more than 25% cutting of verges each year and emphasised the importance of removing all the birch scrub from what used to be very favourable habitat in a large glade.However, it was not possible to tackle the birches in the spring because of flooding and as the verges were very overgrown, they were all

cut back.
In fact, although the area along a track at the edge of the forest is looking good with tall Bird's foot trefoil and bare sandy areas, no butterflies were seen to use it: the largest number, as in the three previous years, being in a sandy strip in front of the forest. This area is in fact owned by FCW but is grazed by both cattle and rabbits. There is a substantial amount of tall Bird's foot Trefoil there and shelter is also provided by some dead, felled sallows.
Future management will control the scub at the edge of a concrete path, where Dingy Skippers were seen this year, with further widening of the tracks through the forest. There is a difficulty in managing for grassland species within a woodland setting, but the present FC manager is very keen to do all he can.Unfortunately, it is not possible to restore some of the area to heathland, which would be the ideal management.

An early sighting of three **Marsh Fritillaries** at Cerrig y gwaenydd (see article p 9) on 20.05.07 led me to hope for a good season there, as the web count in the autumn of 2006 was encouraging with 16 multiple webs in one field. However, there was no big peak as happened in the two previous years, possibly because the weather deteriorated and it was cold and wet in the last week of May.The situation was also poor at Harlech NNR, where an electric fence was erected in March of this year in an attempt to encourage vegetation regrowth on part of the dune slacks where Marsh Fritillaries were abundant in 2004 and previous years.The damage to the vegetation was due to mowing of the rushes (destroying 50% of webs) in the autumn of 2004 and overgrazing of the entire NNR.

I visited a well defined population at Tir Stent, near Dolgellau and found good numbers of Marsh Fritillaries flying there on the 21.05.07.However, on 13.09.07 I went to look for webs at Tir Stent and could only find six, in contrast to 2006, when there were about 40.The autumn situation at Cerrig y gwaenydd was also very disappointing . I only found two very small webs in the best field and none during vegetation surveys of two other fields which were in good condition.Since Ty Canol,the linking site between Lower Harlech and the NNR, was lost in 2006, it seems there is little hope of re-colonisation, if the Cerrig y gwaenydd site fails next year.
The Marsh Fritillary has always been prone to extinctions and recolonisations and before the advent of intensive farming practices, there were suitable linking areas of habitat (as the butterfly is not usually very mobile) with adequate Devil's bit Scabious and tussocky sward so that new colonies were easily formed should populations become extinct due to parasitism or other factors.

In view of the national launch of the **White letter Hairstreak** project this year, which will run until 2009 (http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/w-album/index.html) I looked for elms in two monads. One was in SH62 and the

other in SH61.The Harlech area was not one of the randomly chosen ones, but I searched my local area extensively, as I have seen many Wych Elm loving moths, such as Blomer's Rivulet and Clouded Magpie, and feel that if they can hang on then so might the White letter Hairstreak (WLH).
The search was easiest in the early spring because the pink blossom is very eye catching, though some young growth doesn't flower. Later in the year, the light green fruits are also very conspicuous.I found many trees growing along the upper road about a mile outside and to the north of Harlech.However, they were difficult to survey for clashing male activity during the flight season because of their position and because of the poor weather at this time.
It was also difficult to know when the flight season might start. Here I was helped by Brian Roberts, who was able to let me know when WLH were flying further north. The Harlech elms are surrounded by Ash and Sycamore, both of which could be used by the butterflies for feeding, reducing the need for ground level nectar sources. No eggs were seen, but only a few branches were able to be inspected.

I did have more luck at Barmouth.The random monad is just outside the town on the Mawddach estuary road by a lay by.In spite of several searches, no WLH activity was seen there.However, there are some elms in the 10km square along the road at the entry to Barmouth on the north side.On the 16.07.07, sporadic sun appeared around 9.30am.Having looked at the estuary elms first, I arrived back in Barmouth just on 11 am, and the sun was intermittent, but quite strong. In 20 minutes, I had four or five sightings of dark butterflies at the top of a big lime which overlooks the elms .There is another lime behind it and a sycamore and ash but no oak nearby. The butterflies had the typical hairstreak fidgety flight, but I saw no spiralling. I watched one disappear into the leaves of a branch below the crown of the tree and re-emerge briefly, but then it all went quiet and nothing more happened in the next 45 minutes. I had previously seen a dark butterfly at the top of the trees there on the 7.07.07.

In view of the fact that Brian reported definite WLH in his valley on 18.07.07 and possible activity two days before this, I suspect that the dark butterflies I saw were WLH.I plan to monitor this site next year, as well as continuing to look at other areas in SH61 and 62. I shall use a telescope, as the trees are so tall. The flight behaviour, though I didn't see the spiralling of clashing males, was in all other ways like the WLHs I have seen in London.

I havent space to catalogue all the other butterflies seen or to do other than mention that a new BC transect has been started this year in Harlech with Kate Williamson being the lead.One of my happiest memories of late summer is of watching a **Grayling** egg-laying in the slacks on the 13.08.07.

Moths Count training workshops 2007 John Harold

As part of the launch of Moths Count, 2 introductory workshops took place in northwest Wales this year. The aim of these was to bring moths, moth recording, and moth conservation, to people with little previous exposure to the subject. A key objective was to bring in people who are likely to get involved with moth recording and contribute moth records to their local County Recorders and thence to the national recording scheme.

One event was at Breakwater Country Park, on the coast at Holyhead on Anglesey. In this Vice-county recording has been at a very low level for many years, in terms of number of active recorders. The other event was at Moelyci Environmental Centre near Bangor in Gwynedd. In this Vice-county (Caernarfonshire) there are more recorders, but they are restricted to a fairly small geographical area and there is great potential for more active recorders.

Moelyci Environmental Centre, Tregarth near Bangor Gwynedd. 26th May 2007.
22 people attended the event at Moelyci, whilst at Breakwater CP 16 people attended all day, plus a further ~20 who came into the visitor centre and joined in for a while.

The events were publicised through a variety of channels;-

- BC national publicity
- Email from Wales office to local recorders
- NW BC branch website
- Pensychnant and Moelyci events lists and website
- Anglesey AONB annual brochure, and poster in Breakwater visitor centre
- Small pieces in Daily Mail and Bangor Chronicle
- Word of mouth

Most interest was generated by the local publicity – national publicity only produced a few bookings. Both venues worked well, and were friendly, flexible and generally enjoyable and interesting places to spend a day.

The timing of the events was good – with plenty of attractive moths around, including several hawk-moths and the very popular Buff-tip, which always generates a lot of interest. The downside was that the daytime weather was not really good enough to do any fieldwork.

The choice of a daytime session as opposed to night-time moth-trapping had

some advantages in that a much wider range of information was presented, giving a broad introduction to moths, their ecology, recording, conservation etc, which

would be difficult to do at night.

One observation of relevance for future Moths Count events is the question of language of delivery. Wildlife events in N Wales are often perceived as an 'English' activity, but not in this case. The majority of the attendees at the Moelyci event were Welsh-speaking. I would suggest that if future events are planned, there should be at least one which is first language Welsh, and is advertised as such. This would help to further the profile of moths, Moths Count, and BC in the indigenous population.

Feedback was very positive, both on the feedback forms and by email afterwards. Here's an example from someone who has been on the edge of getting into moths for quite a while. He's now hooked!

"John
Just to say thanks for the event yesterday which I thought was fantastic! Wonderful to see so many spp, really interesting background stuff - fun, informative, and a privilege to see so many amazing beasties!
Plan was to bring the kids for an hour or two until they got bored, but at lunchtime they didn't want to leave!
And you have certainly inspired me to get an actinic (and a net!), and send those records in...."

Pitching the level of delivery is bound to be tricky, as often the audience will include total beginners, near beginners, and people with a little more prior experience of moths. Perhaps more important is the difference between 2 classes of beginners – there are those who are already actively involved in another branch of natural history (commonly birds, but not always), and those who are not. This is a very big difference! The feedback forms suggest that the pitch was appropriate overall.

Already this year the level of recording seems to be on the increase, and there is improved communication between recorders and County Recorders. In part this is a continuation of an existing trend; the number of moth species being recorded has increased steadily over the last 6 years, as has the number of recorders who are submitting records. However it seems to me that new moth-ers have benefited from the timely arrival of the national Moths Count project, the excellent local moth recording project run by Pensychnant Conservation Centre this year, and the regular meetings at Treborth Botanic Gardens and Pensychnant.

Looking to a positive future for Grizzled and Dingy Skippers RusselHobson

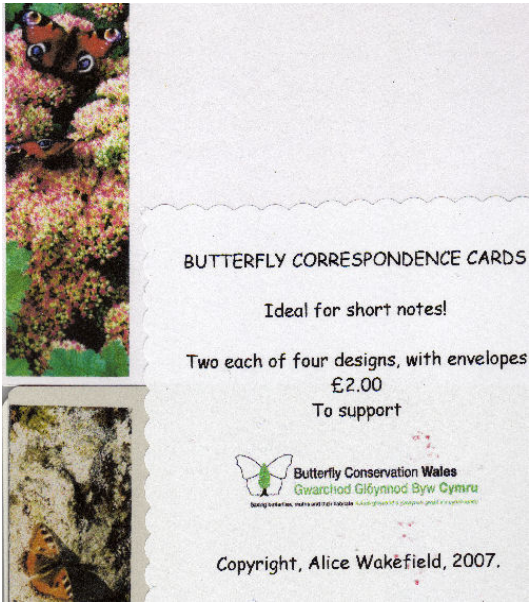
A disappointing recent planning decision will lead to the loss of three hectares of Grizzled Skipper habitat on the Wrexham Industrial Estate. In mid September Wrexham Council agreed to the building of a major new recycling plant on a brownfield site on the Industrial Estate. During the environmental assessment a colony of over 20 Grizzled Skipper (considered a large population on brownfield land) was discovered. The site is north of the known colonies visited during the Branch AGM in May.
Butterfly Conservation was consulted late in the process regarding a mitigation package for the Grizzled and Dingy Skipper. After seeing the quality of the land during a site visit an objection to the plan was submitted. Butterfly Conservation was not opposed to the recycling plant, just that sufficient consideration had not been given to alternative sites or the wider landscape needs of these butterflies.

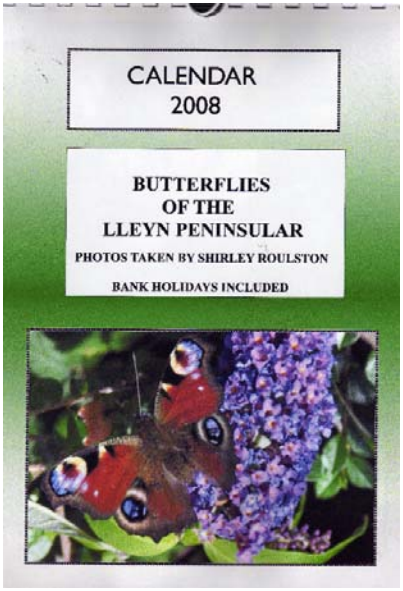
There are records of Grizzled and Dingy Skipper from across the Industrial Estate and much of the grassland and scrub on the site is far richer than the surrounding improved farmland. These Skippers occupy early successional stage habitats. Work by Butterfly Conservation in the West Midlands, as discussed by Jane Ellis at the Branch AGM, shows that it is possible to develop land yet retain and create breeding habitat. The second key consideration is how butterflies persist at a landscape scale. These Skippers do not travel far from their breeding habitat so newly created habitat needs to be as close to existing colonies as possible. Loss of even small patches could make the remaining colonies increasingly isolated from one another.

Both these skippers are now UKBAP species; the Grizzled Skipper's range has declined by 62% and the Dingy Skipper by 49% in the last 25 years in Wales. As high priority species for us, Butterfly Conservation is working at two levels to improve the situation for them at Wrexham. At the recycling plant we are working with the developers and others to ensure the best possible mitigation package is implemented and the work is adequately monitored to inform future development.

Secondly Local Authorities now have a duty to have regard to biodiversity as part of the new Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 – called the 'NERC Act' for short. Butterfly Conservation is discussing with Wrexham Council, CCW and other wildlife groups developing an ecological plan for the Industrial Estate that will help protect the best areas but, crucially for development areas, what mitigation measures will be needed to ensure the long-term survival of the most important species like the Grizzled and Dingy Skipper.
I**f anyone wants more information about the Grizzled or Dingy Skipper the Wales Office has a huge supply of species factsheets. For more information about conservation on Wrexham Industrial Estate contact Russel Hobson, Senior Conservation Officer, on 01792 642972.**

Christmas Merchandise for sale Alice Wakefield's notecards; £2 for pack of 5 plus £1 p+p (all proceeds donated to Branch funds), Shirley Roulston's Calendar £6 including p+p; (£1 from each sale Shirley is donating to Branch funds), Eyarth Rocks Christmas Cards £3.00 for pack of 5 inclding P+p, proceeds donated to Branch funds, 'A Country Diary for North Wales' special members price- £6.50 including p+p.£1 donated to Branch funds for each book sold. This book also describes and promotes some of the work of Butterfly Conservation in North Wales.





Please contact Jan Miller if you wish to buy any of the above at Saith Ffynnon Farm,Whitford, Holywell CH8 9EQ,Flintshire. Tel: 01352711198

Iolo event at Conwy (see website for photo)
Iolo Williams was at Conwy Butterfly Jungle on Saturday 28th July as part of Save Our Butterflies week, to open the new garden for wild butterflies outside the tropical house.
Butterfly Conservation staff and volunteers were there to explain the problem with endangered wild butterflies and how the charity is working to save them.
Iolo said "when I was a boy there were butterflies everywhere and now we see very few. I urge everyone to join Butterfly Conservation, as I have, and help to save these beautiful creatures" then he released some wild Peacock butterflies which had just emerged from their pupae, onto the garden flowers. Conwy

Butterfly Jungle is helping to support us by allowing any Butterfly Conservation

member 50% off the cost of entry to the large glass house which is bursting with tropical plants and glorious butterflies flying free inside the warmth of the 'jungle'. You can find out more at www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk and http://www.conwy-butterfly.co.uk/

Eyarth Rocks Reserve update, Autumn 2007 Jan Miller

The year started out in very high spirits with the warm March and hot April – Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were reported on the wing in mid and South Wales by 12th April
and were out a little later further north at Eyarth Rocks, near Ruthin, but still appeared to peak around the first week in May rather than the last as has been usual in recent years. This may actually have been to their advantage as they probably had their summer's work of mating and egg-laying all done before the cool rainy period. However, we won't know until next year how it affected the overwintering of the larvae in the leaf litter. Tom Knight achieved a timed count of 54 adult Pearl-bordered Fritillaries on 28th April, but this doesn't equate with previous recording methods where several volunteers traversed the whole reserve, so presumably if we had managed to do that this year before the rains we would have got closer to the 100 maximum count of last year.

There was a visit by BC Midlands Conservation officer, Jenny Joy, to assess potential of reserve, as part of the ongoing Reserve Committee's activities. We came out with high praise for our efforts so far, but a proviso that more volunteers are needed to carry on the great work of Rob Whitehead and David Hinde. A memorial bench for Rob is planned, paid for out of donations at his funeral and from his relatives. Two Interpretation panels and better signage on footpath are also planned.

Sara Hughes, a local mature student completed a Masters plant habitat study comparing Eyarth Rocks with Eryrys (near Llanarmon yn Ial)– she sent us a copy of her report, which is available to borrow; ask Jan.

CCW carried out a habitat survey; they selected five patches of pbf habitat and within each one did a zig-zag walk and at five pace intervals looked for presence of violets, nectar plants, bramble and bracken within a 0.5m radius circle. A copy of the report can be obtained from them at a later date.

CCW also consulted us on one visit for advice that could be given to one of the adjacent landowners (Nant Hall estate) to help the spread of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, and with a CCW grant this management is now beginning.

Special volunteer work party on March 7th to tie in with national BC 40th Anniversary celebrations! The work will involve some gentle cutting of tree seedlings growing up through the limestone pavement, a bonfire to sit round (bring packed lunch and gardening gloves) and a conducted tour of the reserve with search for evidence of feeding larvae. Children welcome if accompanied by an adult, but no dogs please.

NNWT have sought permission to plant a rare limestone plant – Limestone Woundwort (*Stachys alpina)* on the limestone pavement areas of the reserve.

NWWT have been continuing work to safeguard Limestone Woundwort *(Stachys alpina)*, which grows at only three sites in the UK, two of which are in North East Wales. Limestone Woundwort is a softly hairy perennial 40-80 cm tall belonging to the Labiate family and it grows on calcareous soils usually within woodland glades, and flowers from June to August with pinky-red flowers that have a distinctive yellow 'eye'.See NWWT website;
http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/northwales/CurrentProjects.html

This is going through the CCW channels at present and will probably happen next spring.

Anyone who would like to be involved in any of these projects (we also would love someone with a bit of time to spend, to type into a computer file the handwritten plant list from the 1970s!) please contact Jan Miller info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk or 01352 711198

Further Work Planned

This includes extra fencing, the bench for Rob and any corrective work required following the dangerous tree survey.Bracken cutting (possibly funded 50% by CCW) and further walling are needed as well.

Thanks to those who helped me in the fundraising; Helen Clarke and Louise Jones for growing plants to sell, Jill Tattershall who helped me with planting 5 school gardens this year (monies paid for this from Anglesey County Council), Jane Kelsall and Deborah Griffiths for running a stand at Machynlleth seed fair in the spring, Alice Wakefield for making notelets to sell, and for those who gave donations. Please see page 16 in this newsletter, or our Branch website (www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk) for further ways to buy Christmas cards, calendars, books and plants to help us in the important task of saving the Pearl-bordered Fritillary in North Wales.

BCNW Events 2008

A full events list for 2008 will appear in the spring Branch newsletter), and you can always find up to date evnts on the website. You can also send in your e-mail address to
info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk to be included on the occasional circular e-mail newsletter telling you of extra events coming up.

Advance notice of a date for your diary:

11th March 7pm. 'Gardening for Butterflies' talk by Jan Miller at Caeathro Gardening Club, Caeathro Canolfan centre, (on Caernarfon to Bedgellert road.) plant and book sales.

Visitors welcome.

Mobile phones help conservebutterflies...and moths

In the UK, the average consumer replaces his/her mobile phone every 18 months. It is estimated that 15 million mobile phones are replaced each year in the UK, so there is huge potential for charities to raise valuable income from schemes that encourage the recycling of mobile phones!

Platinum, gold, silver and copper are all found in mobile phones. These precious metals, as well as various plastics, can all be recycled, reducing landfill and helping to prevent environmental damage.
We have teamed up with the recycling company, **Greener Solutions** so that Butterfly Conservation will receive £2.50 for every old mobile phone that our members and supporters recycle – irrespective of the age or condition of the phone.

Greener Solutions have printed a supply of reply envelopes for us (at no cost to Butterfly Conservation). An envelope is enclosed with this newsletter. If you have an old mobile phone you no longer want, please use this envelope to recycle it, or pass the envelope onto a friend or relative. The income we generate from this scheme will help to fund our conservation work throughout the UK.

This scheme gives us an enormous opportunity to raise extra income (and to do more to encourage recycling). I would particularly like to hear from you if you think you could persuade any local companies or other public outlets – large or small - to support our scheme among their staff or customers. I can provide any quantity of reply envelopes on request!
If you think you can help me to extend this scheme, would like more reply envelopes or have any questions, please call me on 01929 406018 (direct line) or email me at pmackie@butterfly-conservation.org

Please support this worthwhile scheme if you can. Many thanks.
Poppy Mackie
Development Officer (Supporter Fundraising)
Butterfly Conservation Head Office