

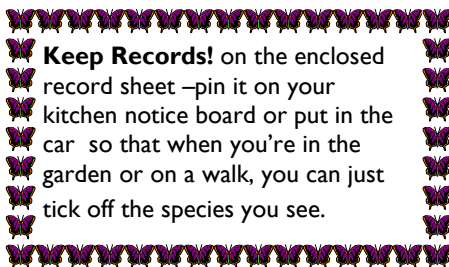
Butterfly Conservation Newsletter

North Wales Branch

Spring 2005

Welcome to the New Butterfly Season!

The first butterflies are out and it is vital to our work that we get as many records as possible.



Keep Records! on the enclosed record sheet—pin it on your kitchen notice board or put in the car so that when you're in the garden or on a walk, you can just tick off the species you see.

If you are already keeping records on the **garden recording form** sent out with the national magazine, please copy them to this recording sheet as well, because they go to different centres.

e-mail reminders can be sent to you a week before each event, as well as advance notice of extra events and courses that appear throughout the year, request this is an e-mail to info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

               **Identification courses** are run to  help you recognise butterflies or  moths so that you can keep re-  cords—find these **on the events**  **list**, (updated on centre pages and  on website) or have a go at the  **online ID workshop on the**  **Branch website;**  www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk                                                         

Your local County Recorder can help identify a strange species, you can telephone them, (details on the back of this newsletter) and also send them your records in November.

Recording and transect forms can be printed off from the Branch website, where you will also find details of all the Recorders and how to send in records by e-mail



Butterfly Conservation Wales
Gwarchod Glöynnod Byw Cymru

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats. Achiub glöynnod a gwryfnod gwylt a'u cynffnoadaid

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We have had a very sad time on the committee these last few months with the loss of our stalwart volunteer Alan Wagstaff from cancer at the heartbreaking early age of 34. Not only have we lost a good friend and enthusiast for all our efforts, we have also lost our Newsletter editor. I have taken this on temporarily, but would like to hand this job over to another volunteer in time for the next issue. Please consider helping us—nominations for this and other jobs for the branch are requested on page 8, where you can also find details of our forthcoming Members' Day, that promises to be a very interesting occasion. The events list in the middle may look the same as last time, but it has been updated with several extras—you can always find the most up to date list on our Branch website;

www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

And we can send you e-mail updates if you let us have your e-mail address—see page 7.

We have articles on a variety of topics to do with butterflies as well as moths and many thanks are due to our authors. If you would like to contribute to the next newsletter please e-mail or post it to me for the time being. (Contact details on the back). Alan always tried to have a mixture of articles for beginner and the more experienced, and I would like to continue this tradition, so don't be afraid to send in any descriptions or observations—as long as it is relevant to butterflies or moths, our readers will be interested!

Happy recording this summer!

Jan Miller

MOTHERS' UNION AT PEN-SYCHNANT

The earliest known surviving moth record for the vice county of Carnarvonshire is the Weaver's Wave, discovered on the Sychnant Pass by T.Hague on 31st July 1856.

Weaver's Wave was a good find. It had been discovered, new to Britain, in "North Wales" only the previous year, and named after its discoverer (the exact location is unknown but it may have been near Barmouth?). Hague recorded another from "Penmaenmawr" in 1860, and Capper recorded another there in 1874. The hills above Penmaenmawr (probably meaning Sychnant Pass) became the most frequented locality for this rarity and the source of most of the early pinned specimens. Soon other good moths were found at Sychnant, with a Triple-spotted Clay in 1861 and Marbled Coronet before 1873; both local species.

Ashworth's Rustic was discovered at Sychnant in July 1881 by George Porritt, a well known Yorkshire collector. Ashworth's Rustic had been discovered, new

to science, near Llangollen, in 1853, but after Porritt's discovery Sychnant became the best known site. Indeed many collectors took their holidays in Penmaenmawr with the aim of getting as many specimens as possible. An astounding 102 *ashworthii* caterpillars were collected by the Manchester Entomological Society in April 1907; R.Tait claims that he "nearly brought his collecting days to an untimely end when he fell in the excitement of the chase."

The lure of Sychnant has not diminished with time. Ashworth's Rustic and Weaver's Wave are still known only from the mountains of North Wales, and attract mothers from all over Britain. At recent moth trapping sessions for these two Notable A species, in July 2003 and 2004, mothers came, just for the night, from as far as Somerset, Hampshire, Gloucestershire, and Kent!

By now 385 moth species have been recorded at Sychnant, including 19 nationally 'Notable' species and 61 of 'Local' status. Butterfly Conservation has identified Sychnant Pass as one of the six key upland sites for Lepidoptera in Wales; it is included in the

national Invertebrate Site Register; and moths are cited as one of the main reasons for its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

With probably the best recorded history of moths in North Wales, Sychnant is an appropriate meeting place for the Moth Group of the North Wales Branch of Butterfly Conservation. The group meets at Pensychnant Conservation Centre on the first Monday of every month, at 8pm. We are rarely so intrepid as the Victorian moth collectors: Probably it is the lure of a comfy chair by the fire which attracts us. It is an informal group, just chatting about moths and other aspects of natural history. Sam Thomas & John Harold may bring some microlepidopteran marvels and I will put the Robinson Trap out to catch a seasonal selection. So, there is something to appeal to enthusiasts of all abilities. All welcome. Oh! And its moth-ers not mothers.

Mothers welcome too.



The Pensychnant Estate forms the top of the Sychnant Pass. Its 150 acres includes some of the best of the heathland habitat where the Ashworth's Rustic and other upland moths occur.

Although the original house at Pensychnant (the lower, right-hand end) was built about 1690, the main house, and really the whole character of the estate dates from the Victorian era. Built between 1877 and 1882, Pensychnant was the country-home of Abraham Henthorn Stott, architect of the Lancashire cotton mills. Stott & Sons was one of the most eminent Victorian firms, building about a fifth of the mills in Oldham at a time when Oldham did one eighth of the spinning in the world.

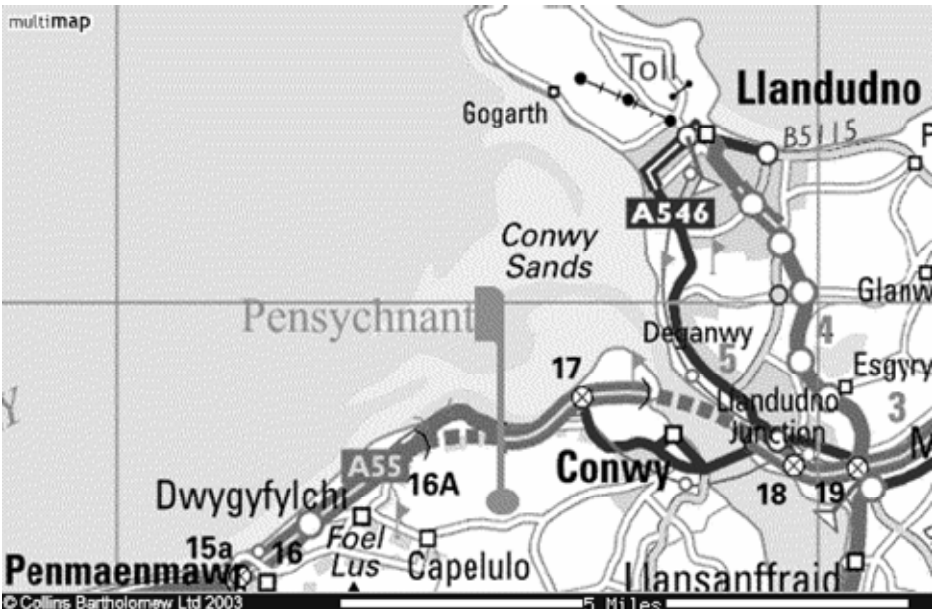
By 1937, the cotton industry had collapsed and Pensychnant was sold, but in 1967 Brian Henthorn Stott, great grandson of the architect, bought it back again. Brian Stott loved Pensychnant; its vital

wildlife; its outstanding natural beauty; its tranquillity. In 1989 he set up the Pencychnant Foundation (registered charity) to protect the history and natural history of Sychnant, for peaceful enjoyment, for posterity. Now, the Pencychnant Foundation continues in his memory.

Pencychnant is managed as a nature conservation centre and nature reserve. The Pencychnant Foundation works with local naturalists in support of other local and national wildlife organisations to record and safeguard the wildlife and natural beauty of Wales. The house hosts various wildlife art exhibitions through the Summer and many wildlife events and

lectures throughout the year. For a programme of events 'phone (01492) 592595

To get to Pencychnant from Conwy, turn left off the oneway circuit by Heddlu/ Police. From Penmaenmawr, turn up by the 'Mountain View' pub. Pencychnant is 2½ miles from Conwy and Pen., in the woods at the top of the Sychnant Pass. Pencychnant's drive is just above the Sychnant Pass Hotel.



A WEEK IN WESSEX

We all know that the butterflies in North Wales are a delight, but the opportunity to visit another part of the UK was too good to miss, so on a changeable weather day in late May Sue and I set out to spend a week in Wiltshire. Due to very helpful information from Richard Southwell of the West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation, we visited the Monkwood B.C. Reserve Nr Worcester. We reasonably quickly found a glade where there were 9 Wood White Butterflies flying around and perching together with Brimstones, Peacocks Small Whites and Speckled Woods. A wonderful start to the week and our first ever view of Wood White.

The following day we joined the Dorset B.C. Group visit to Cerne Giant Hill in a walk (more a climb) up Giant Hill in search of Marsh Fritillary, The walk is steep in places but after about 20 minutes we were watching the first of about 60 specimens of Marsh 'Frits' seen during the walk, also observed were Brown Argus, Adonis Blue, Small Heath, Common Blue and Dingy and Grizzled Skippers.

Next day was Bentley Wood day-a magic reserve which later in the year hosts Purple Emperor and White Admiral. However our search today was Pearl Bordered Fritillary and Duke of Burgundy.

Whilst we were walking around we

found Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, however no Duke of Burgundy was found despite the valiant efforts of a local contact.

We then travelled a short distance to Dean Hill which is another possible site for Duke of Burgundy; we saw Green Hairstreak Dingy and Grizzled Skippers but alas once more not 'Duke's'.

Our next site to be visited was Martin Down and as this can take a day to cover we started early in the morning under a blazing hot sun. The first highlight was however a bird and that was a Montagu's Harrier followed later in the day by a Nightingale. The great thing of the day was however the discovery of 2 Small Blues - what a wonderfully small, delicate butterfly it is. We also saw here the inevitable Brimstones, Small Heath, Grizzled Skipper, Orange Tip and Speckled Wood.

The next day provided us with yet another wonderful site in the form of over 30 Adonis Blues at Ulwell Meadow (by Ballard Down), about the same number of Common Blues, Small Heath, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers. A visit earlier in the day to Roborough Heath gave us a glimpse of Dartford Warbler and then on to Durlleston Country Park where we saw more Adonis Blues and again Grizzled and Dingy Skippers.

A return to Martin Down gave us a single Holly Blue, more Adonis Blues and incredibly nearly 30 Small Blues in

two colonies. Two of these butterflies gave me the experience of the trip when they landed on my shoe! Butterflying doesn't get much better than this; however I forgot to mention that when we went with the Dorset Group to Cerne Giant Hill the leader got one of the Marsh Fritillaries to crawl on to his hand.

Whilst we were at Martin Down a person came up to us and said he had just seen a Duke of Burgundy this was picked up by two other people and we went to try and find it-despite four of us trying to find it for more than an hour no sign except we saw one or two Grizzled Skippers! Brimstones are abundant at this site and we counted nearly 40 during our visit.

Our final attempt to see the 'Duke' took us to Noar Hill Nr Selborne which is another site for them. We heard from a local that he had just seen a Duke at the far end of the reserve and again 4 people joined in the search for it to no avail, but we did find one or two Small Blues and another Green Hairstreak.

So ended a wonderful week with 21 species seen and the Duke of Burgundy will have to wait for another year.

If anybody wishes to contact us for more details of the sites visited please email us as follows-

brian@ovenbird.fsnet.co.uk

Brian and Sue Roberts

e-mail updates

Do you have an e-mail address? Would like occasional updates on extra events or news from the Branch? Then please let us know at info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

Newsletter by e-mail

It costs the branch several hundred pounds to print and distribute the Branch Newsletters every year and some other branches now just make theirs available on their website and send e-mail notification of its publication to members. This not only saves money (and paper) that could be spent on conservation projects, it also saves volunteer time. So please let us know if you would like to get the newsletter this way in future (it's also in full colour on the website!) We promise not to release your e-mail address to anyone else.

Please state if you would like just e-mail events updates or the electronic newsletter as well. Previous Branch Newsletters from the last 3 years can be found on the website; www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

**North Wales Branch of Butterfly
Conservation AGM and
Members' Day 4th. June 2005**

**To be held at Brynteg Village Hall,
near Llangefni, Anglesey**

Programme;

10.30am. arrival and tea/coffee

11.00 am. to 11.30 brief AGM including election of officers.

11.30 to 12.30 Adrian Fowles, well known specialist on the ecology and conservation of the Marsh Fritillary from the Countryside Council for Wales will speak on 'Marsh Fritillaries in Wales'

12.30 to 2.00pm. Lunch at the California Inn across the road; hot meals or sandwiches to order, or members' own packed lunches can be eaten in the Village Hall where tea and coffee will be provided.

2.00pm. A guided walk to see Marsh Fritillaries and other species of butterflies, wild orchids, possibly Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoth and much more on the nearby National Nature Reserve Cors Eddreiniog, lead by local ranger, Les Colley.

In the event of bad weather, an illustrated talk will be given in the Village Hall as an alternative to the field trip.

This event is free to North Wales Branch members, who will get first places. Guests are welcome if space thereafter, at a charge of £5.00 each.

**Butterfly Conservation North
Wales Branch Annual General
Meeting 4th. June 2005**

As it is five years since the committee was established, we have to re-elect all the committee this year. All current committee members have agreed to stand for re-election. With the recent sad loss of Alan Wagstaff there are now even more vacancies for committee positions; please consider standing or supporting another member in volunteering to join the committee. We are a small, friendly group who only need to meet for committee meetings a couple of times a year, and we need your help!

Standing for re-election;

Chairman; Ilija Vukomanovic

Secretary; Julian Thompson

Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Branch organiser; Doug Murray

Volunteer co-ordinator, Publicity and Education Officer, Webmaster; Jan Miller

Conservation Officer; Mike Hammett

Committee member; Sam Thomas

Positions Vacant;

Newsletter Editor

Events Organiser

Fundraiser

Education co-ordinator

Please send bookings and nominations to the secretary by 30th. May.

Butterfly Conservation North Wales Branch (BCNW) Events, 2005

Update, Spring 2005

Moth ID workshop and trapping

Friday 29th April. 7.30pm.onwards

BCNW

Pensychnant Nature Conservation Centre, near Conwy. SH 752771

An evening of learning how to identify moths, aimed at beginners, but all levels welcome. Bring a torch. Booking advised. Contact Doug Murray or Julian Thompson.

Butterfly Identification Course, 5.30pm

Mynydd Marian, near Colwyn Bay,

Thurs 5th May 2005. 5.30pm meet/arrival

5.45-6.45pm Walk transect route

6.45/7.00pm refreshments

7.00-9.00pm Training Session/talk

Contact Becky Groves;

becky.groves@conwy.gov.uk or

Ronnie.harvey@conwy.gov.uk or Jan Miller

Moth-trapping

Wednesday 11th May - 8.30 pm BCNW -

Nercwys Forest –

Ring for directions and grid ref and to check if still going ahead.

Bring stout footwear and a torch.

Contact David Bennett

Gardening for Butterflies, lecture by Jan Miller

Wednesday 4th. May. 7.30pm.

BCNW and Broughton and Bretton Gardening Club

Broughton and Bretton Community Centre, Brookes Ave., Broughton

Visitors invited. Booking advised. Sales of butterfly plants and books. Contact Jan Miller

Butterfly ID Evening

Monday 16th May 7.30pm

BCNW

Pensychnant Nature Conservation Centre, Near Conwy. SH 752771

An evening of learning about the British Butterflies - their identification, their life cycles, food plants, etc. Aimed at enthusiastic beginners, but all levels are welcome.

Contact Julian Thompson

Butterfly Identification Course

May 27th. 9.30 am to 4pm

Rhydymywn Conservation Centre, near Mold Organised by Deeside Urban Wildlife Group, CCW and BCNW

Only 20 places available, booking essential

Cost; £5.00 for members,

Including a PPP detailed comparative study of photos of all the North Wales species, then workshop to learn them yourself. In the pm. a field trip to look for live butterflies and learn how to record them by walking a transect.

Trainer; Jan Miller. Bring packed lunch.

Contact Jacinta Williams for details and booking.

Deeside Urban Wildlife Group

Phone / Fax 01244 541005

email: weo@duwg.org.uk

Walk -Pen y Gelli Local Nature Reserve,

near Holywell, Grid.Ref ; SJ.135761

Saturday 28th. May 11 am. BCNW.

A short walk to see some scarce butterflies and some dragonflies.

Meet at McDonalds at the Holywell/Caerwys exit from A55

Steep drops in this old quarry, children must be supervised by an adult.

Also brief hop over to nearby Race Course Mire SSSI.

Target Species – Dingy Skipper and Common Blue. Contact Jan Miller

Walk-Eyarth Rocks Reserve, near

Ruthin May 29th. 2pm. BCNW and Llanarmon yn Ial Conservation Society.

Butterfly Conservation North Wales Branch (BCNW) Events, 2005

Meet at Eyarth Bridge Grid ref. SJ 127553 between Llanfair DC and Pwll Glas
Short but steep, rough walking up to this limestone pavement SSSI, Butterfly Conservation's only reserve in North Wales. Stout footwear and tough trousers necessary.
Booking advised.
Target species; Pearl-bordered Fritillary.
Contact; Jan Miller

Gardening for Butterflies, lecture by Jan Miller

Wednesday 1st June 2..00pm.
BCNW and New Era Club,
Bethel Chapel, High St., Prestatyn.
Visitors invited. Booking advised. Sales of butterfly plants and books.
Contact Jan Miller

North Wales Branch Member's Day and AGM

Saturday 4th June. 10.30 to 4pm.
BCNW at the Brynteg Village Hall, Anglesey.
Guest Speakers including Marsh Fritillary specialists, pub-lunch at The California or picnic, then a Ranger-guided walk to see the rare Marsh Fritillary on Cors Erddreniog Reserve. Free to members of Butterfly Conservation. More details on page 7. Booking essential.
Target species; Marsh Fritillary, Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoth, native orchids,
Contact Doug Murray or Jan Miller

Moth-trapping

Wednesday 8th June - 8.30 pm BCNW
Coed y Felin SJ196678 park in car park above Mold/Denbigh road
ring for directions and grid ref and to check if still going ahead.
Bring stout footwear and a torch. Contact David Bennett

Gardening for Wildlife Day, Sunday

12th June, between 11.30 and 3.30. at Rhyd y Creuau field studies centre, Betws y Coed. Conwy County Council are running this as a Wales Biodiversity Week event There will be a series of workshops

(creating wildflower meadows, butterfly gardens, composting, creature homes etc). The event is free to members of the public. We will have a stand for Butterfly Conservation there, selling books and butterfly and moth plants - any volunteers to help man the stand for part of the time while Jan has to run two of the workshops would be gratefully welcomed! Contact Jan Miller

Walk -Butterflies of Newborough Forest and Dunes

Saturday 25th June. 11am.
BCNW

Meet at Llyn Rhos-ddu. SH426647.
A four to five mile walk, to look at the many butterflies of Newborough. Bring strong footwear, waterproofs and packed lunch. Tea and coffee provided.
Target species; Dark Green Fritillary, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Ringlet, etc.
Contact Doug Murray

Moth-trapping

Wednesday 6th July - meet 9.00 pm
BCNW

Rhes y Cae SJ 184710 park in layby near cattle grid
Ring for directions and grid ref and to check if still going ahead.
Bring stout footwear and a torch. Contact David Bennett-

NATIONAL MOTH DAY AND NIGHT 2005

Saturday 9 July

This annual event aims to get records from all over the country on the same day, even if you don't have the scarce target species. Recording forms can be downloaded from Atropos website, where more information can also be found. You can send in records from your own garden, and/or join one of the organized trappings below. Target species this year will be Clearwing, Northern Dart, Chalk Carpet and Double Line. We will have Clearwing pheromone lures at some of the following events.

Butterfly Conservation North Wales Branch (BCNW) Events, 2005

National Moth Night Trapping at Eyarth Rocks Reserve, near Ruthin.

Saturday July 9th. 8.00pm.BCNW

Meet at The White Horse Pub, Llanfair DC
Grid.ref. SJ 134555

Steep, rough walking; especial care must be taken in the dark not to fall off the cliff edge. Sorry, but no children under 14. Strong footwear and a torch required. Booking advised.Contact; Jan Miller, or David Hinde;

National Moth Night Trapping, Lixwm, near Holywell.

July 9th meet 9.00 pm BCNW

Y Parc Lixwm SJ 173710

Bring strong footwear and a torch.Contact David Bennett before to check if going ahead.

Woodland walk near Ruthin.

Sunday 10th. July; BCNW & NWWT

Meet at 2pm.in lay-by on B5372 (near Rugby Fields), Map Ref;- SJ 118578.

For;- White-letter Hairstreak, Brown Argus,and Dark Green Fritillary. Also many woodland flowers. Leader;- Rob. Whitehead

Moth-trapping for Ashworth's Rustic

Saturday July 16th. 9.30pm.

Pensychnant Nature Conservation Centre and BCNW

Pensychnant Conservation Centre, near Conwy SH 752771

Moth trapping to see this North Wales rarity and other upland moths.

Bring strong footwear and a torch.

Booking advised.

Target species;Ashworth's Rustic,Weaver's Wave

Contact Julian Thompson

{No moths or butterflies are intentionally harmed or killed at any of our events. We do not support collecting}

Did we find Ashworth's Rustic?

Sunday 17th July 11am.

Pensychnant Nature Conservation Centre and BCNW Pensychnant Conservation Centre, near Conwy SH 752771

The previous night's catch will be on display in the house at Pensychnant.

Contact Julian Thompson

A Butterfly Walk down the Greenfield Valley

Sunday 31st July at 2pm

BCNW and Flintshire Countryside Service

Meet at the Visitor Centre, Greenfield Valley, Holywell. Grid ref.; SJ 196774

Booking essential

Guided walk led by Brian and Sue Roberts

Target species; Purple Hairstreak

Contact Brian Roberts

Moth-trapping

Saturday August 13th - meet 9.30pm

BCNW Cors Prysau - SJ165725 (subject to permission) Ring for directions and to check if still going ahead. Bring stout footwear and a torch. Contact David Bennett

Moth-trapping

Wednesday 21st September - meet 9.00 pm -

BCNW Penycloddiau SJ 130664

Bring stout footwear and a torch.

Essential to ring first to check the event is still running;contact David Bennett

Walk -Butterflies of Mariandyrys Reserve, Anglesey.

Saturday 13th August. 2.00pm.

BCNW & NWWT

Meet at Reserve Entrance. SH604813.

Bring strong footwear and waterproofs.

Targets; Brown Argus, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (2nd generation), Grayling, etc.

Contact Doug Murray

Butterfly Conservation North Wales Branch (BCNW) Events, 2005

Moth-er's Union Meetings

First Monday in each month. 8.00pm

Pensychnant Nature Conservation Centre, near Conwy SH752771

Our monthly get-together to talk about moths, butterflies and other wildlife. All Welcome. Contact Julian Thompson

Treborth Monthly Moth Meetings

Third Monday of each month, 7.30 onwards.

Treborth Botanical Gardens, Bangor.

These informal meetings do not generally have a planned programme, but are arranged so that anyone can come along and meet others with similar interests, to get help in identifying your trapped moths, to put forward ideas for activities and to see moths of interest caught at Treborth the previous night. Contact Doug Murray

Moth-trapping at Eyarth Rocks Reserve,

the Wirral volunteers who've been clearing the scrub at Eyarth Rocks, and who did the moth-trapping there last year were so interested by the catch (see photos on Branch website) that they've decided to go up every month from March to July; dates (all Saturdays) suggested are; **April 16th, May 14th, June 18th and July 9th (National Moth Night)**

Of course, these are subject to the weather—phone David Hinde to check beforehand.

Leaf Miner Workshop and Moth-

trappings at Moel y Ci environment centre and other sites in NW Wales will be run by Sam Thomas and John Harold at dates to be arranged; Both beginners and experts welcome.

Contact John Harold (01248) 361126 for further details.

Contact Telephone numbers and e-mail addresses;

National Moth Night;

www.nationalmothnight.info

Butterfly Conservation Wales Office Tel: 0870 7706153 Fax: 0870 7706154

Email: info.bcw@btconnect.com

Brian Roberts 01352-714758 or email

brian@ovenbird.fsnet.co.uk

David Bennett 01352 780787 or

davetreebennett@aol.com

David Hinde 0151 648 3887 or

member@dhinde.freemove.co.uk

Doug Murray tel; 01248 750089 or e-mail;

Treasurer@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

Jan Miller; 01352 711198 or

info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

Jacinta Williams, Deeside Urban Wildlife Group, Phone / Fax 01244 541005

email: weo@duwg.org.uk

Julian Thompson (Pensychnant Conservation Centre) ; 01492 592595 or

secretary@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

Rob Whitehead 01824 704507 or

Records@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

See updates and additions to these events throughout the year on our Branch website;

www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

If you would like to receive e-mail updates please send a request to info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

We regret no dogs are allowed at any of these events, and all children must be accompanied by an adult.

bring sunglasses to shield eyes from bright lamp and a torch to moth-trapping nights, and stout footwear, thick trousers and waterproofs on all trips.

All these events are run entirely by

Volunteers to help save our native butterflies and moths . If you are not a member of Butterfly Conservation and have enjoyed our events, please join the society: you can do this on the website

www.butterfly-conservation.org or by telephone; 0870 7744309 Fax 0870

7706150 Butterfly Conservation is a national charity Registered in England No. 2206468 Registered Charity No. 254937

Fancy a Challenge?

Butterfly Conservation is in the second year of a CCW Species Challenge Fund project – “Threatened Lepidoptera surveys”. The project aims to identify new sites and also monitor existing sites for some of Wales’ rarest moths. The purpose of the project is to get an increased knowledge of their distribution so we will be in a better position to help conserve them.

There are four moths that we are asking volunteers to help with during 2005. The first is the **Waved Carpet**, a moth found in areas of woodland and scrub, often by water-courses, from June into August. The larvae feed on a variety of food-plants, including Alder, Birch and Willows. Currently, there are only a few records of the Waved Carpet in North Wales, but more are likely to be found with light-trapping in potentially suitable habitats.

But you don’t need specialist equipment to help with the project. The other three moths are all day-fliers so you can get out and enjoy those nice sunny days! The **Argent and Sable** is a moth that all those who go to woodland rides in search of butterflies should be aware of. It is a distinctive black and white moth which is active by day, especially in sunny or warm weather. The larvae feed on Downy Birch, Silver Birch and Bog Myrtle and so suitable habitat includes open and partially cleared or coppiced broad-leaved woodland, newly established

conifer plantations and bogs. There are very few recent records for this moth in Wales; last year it only recorded at the known site in Monmouthshire and at Fenn’s, Whixhall and Bettisfield Mosses on the Shropshire/Powys border. The lack of sightings is possibly due to under-recording, so hopefully if everyone keeps a look out for the moth more sightings will be made.

The **Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth** resembles a bumblebee. Detailed observations of this moth can prove difficult, but it can be seen nectaring on a variety of flowers, including Bugle, Bluebells and louseworts on a range of unimproved grassland habitats, with many sites also home to the Marsh Fritillary. The characteristic Hawk-moth larvae (i.e. they have a horn) can be found by searching leaves of Devil’s-bit Scabious on which it feeds. The pea green eggs can also be found laid singly on the underside of the Devil’s-bit Scabious leaves. There are only scattered records of this moth in North West Wales, including sites on Anglesey.

The **Welsh Clearwing** is a day-flying wasp-mimic, which was presumed lost from Wales by the end of the nineteenth century. However, in 1988 a chance observation near Dolgellau, Merionethshire, re-found the species in Wales and subsequent surveys have shown that it occurs in a wider area of the county, as well as parts of Montgomeryshire. The moth is one of the target species for National Moth Day

on Saturday 9th July and offers the ideal opportunity to get out and search mature Birch trees for evidence of its presence. For a leaflet full of information on how to survey and manage for the species please contact the Wales office (details below).

And not forgetting the butterflies...we are co-ordinating a Wales wide survey for the **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. We are also encouraging surveys for the **Large Heath**, and so are holding a Large Heath training day on Monday 27th June in Snowdonia National Park. For both butterflies we have produced a recording form with information of when and where to look. To get your free copy of the form, or for more information about the Large Heath training day, please contact the Wales Office (see below).

To help us get the most out of these projects it is important that we receive information of searches for any of these species, so please let us know if you are putting in the hard work even if you do not find the target of your searches. Information on survey work related to any of the species mentioned above can be sent to: Kelly Thomas, Butterfly Conservation, 10 Calvert Terrace, Swansea, SA1 6AR. We may be able to help provide travel expenses to survey sites, but these need to be agreed with us in advance. Recording forms and Fact-sheets are available by contacting the **Butterfly Conservation Wales Office**:

Telephone 0870 770 6153 or

Email wales@butterfly-conservation.org.

You can see beautiful colour photographs of some of these species, taken by Janet Graham, on our branch website, go to the 'Regional Species' pages at — www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

Also, you may see some of these species when we take guided walks or conduct moth-trapping nights this summer—(we will have Clearwing pheromone lures at some of these this year) - have a look at the events list in centre pages.



Argent and Sable (photo; D. Green)

The Wales office are running a number of training courses this year—mostly in South Wales, but one in Snowdonia for the Large Heath; find details of all these courses also on the branch website or by contacting Kelly on the above phone number.— Ed.

Here is a message for all local authorities in the U.K.;

Stop Urbanising our Rural Areas

There is a rising tide of concern amongst people concerned with wildlife conservation regarding the current regime employed by the Highways Departments of County Councils to maintain roadside verges and hedgerows. It is difficult to say whether highways managers or council officers have been brain washed into the idea that the countryside should be tidied up so that it is now becoming more like the urban areas of our larger cities. Which ever is the case, the current methods employed are extremely damaging to wildlife, very expensive to taxpayers and harmful to tourism. So where have they gone wrong and what is happening in our countryside?

Some years ago County Councils entered into consultation with environmental and conservation bodies in order to construct management plans that would cover the maintenance of our highways in an environmental and safe method for public use. Management plans now exist but the advice accepted by councils was badly flawed and must be revised if our countryside is to be managed in a way that is beneficial to our wildlife and the people that live there.

There is little doubt that highway safety is very important but at present the method used is a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Roadside verges within villages do not need to be cut or strimmed on a monthly basis and a one-metre cut is sufficient for most areas of our major roads. The cutting of roadside verges outside towns and villages is only necessary in a limited number of single track roads where tall plants can cause an obstruction to road users. There are areas at road junctions where good visibility for road users demands more extensive verge cutting but this is only a fraction of the work currently undertaken. There is also a problem with bad timing of the cutting procedures. At present the first cut is made just before Easter. This has caused the destruction of all bar one of our spring flowers so that the snowdrops, violets, primroses, wild strawberries, garlic mustard and bluebells have all disappeared. There are many others that have also disappeared or are now very rare and we are left with the Lesser Celandine and Dandelions together with grasses, docks and nettles.

On a more general note, councils are very keen to encourage tourism into the countryside and this begins during the Easter break. I wonder if anybody in these councils has ever considered why people visit the countryside at Easter. It's much too cold to sit on the beaches, if you have them, so

the correct answer is to walk along the lanes, see the wild spring flowers and enjoy the fresh air. How therefore can councils expect people to visit and enjoy the countryside when their council workers and contractors have removed any signs of wild flowers from the roadside verges. Because there are no flowering plants, there are no visible insects and so the bees and butterflies can no longer be enjoyed.

The destruction of roadside verges continues throughout the spring and summer months so that only invasive plants can survive the onslaught. The damage is compounded by the fact that the cut material is left lying on top of the verges thus smothering the plants that, without daylight, begin to die off. The loss of our summer flowering plant species from roadside verges is now entering the hundreds and all of these are the foodplants for insects.

It should now be apparent that there has been a break in the food chain along our roadside verges. In addition these verges are the link between areas where plants and all higher creatures still survive. The result is that the link is now broken so that plants and the insects that feed on them cannot move safely from one area to another. Vast numbers of micro insects live and feed in healthy roadside verges and hedgerows. These include leaf-mining flies and moths that cannot survive the cutting blade. Populations of summer immigrant birds and our bats have crashed because of the severe reduction of insect life. We are also losing some of our favourite butterfly species.

This is not entirely due to the cutting of roadside verges as the blame must be shared with current intensive farming practices.

The time has come when some action must be taken to restore the balance between nature and man in order to preserve our sanity and leave somewhere where our children and their children can relax and enjoy the beauty around them.

I would be happy to discuss the amendment of existing management plans in order to improve the future of our countryside.

Michael J Hammett

Conservation Officer, Butterfly Conservation, North Wales Branch

Conservation@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk

[If the mowing schedules could just be moved to the end of June many butterfly and moth larvae would also have the chance to pupate and fly before there is a visibility problem from verge vegetation.

We hope to run a campaign, together with other wildlife organisations, to highlight this issue – Ed.]

A Recent History of the Butterflies of Eyarth Rocks SSSI

I came to live in the Ruthin area in April 1986, only a mile or two from Eyarth Rocks.

During the summer of that year I visited the SSSI a few times recording 22 species of butterfly. This would be a good annual total for the whole of Wirral, where I previously lived.

Over the next few years species were added to the list on Eyarth Rocks, reaching 32 with the arrival of Ringlets in 1998.

However, this hid the fact that species were declining and disappearing from the site during the 1990s, reflected by the fact that only 23 species have been recorded on the BC Reserve since its purchase in 2001.

A review of each species' fortunes on the SSSI over the last twenty years follows.

The **Small Skipper** was enjoying an expansion of range in the mid-1980s and first appeared in 1988. It could be seen all over the site in reasonable numbers for a few years before dwindling away and being last recorded in 1999. The **Large Skipper** has been present throughout the period but is never seen in any numbers. The **Dingy Skipper** was more numerous in most years despite its larval food plant, bird's-foot trefoil, having a patchy distribution. A steady decline in the 1990s saw it being last recorded in 1998. The last record of **Grizzled Skipper** was in 2000. This species was seen all over the site in the late 1980s but became restricted to one small area ten years later. It may still survive on the western, wooded slopes; an area rarely visited since the purchase of the BC Reserve. There is certainly no shortage of the larval food plants, barren strawberry and tormentil.

The **Clouded Yellow** has been recorded between 1992 and 2000 but it is only a casual visitor and probably has never bred on the site. Similarly, the **Brimstone** has appeared between 1998 and 2004 but there are none of its larval food plants present. **Large, Small and Green-veined Whites** are all regularly recorded as is the **Orange Tip**.

I didn't see my first **Green Hairstreak** until 1987 and they are seen in ones or twos most years. It is uncertain whether they use gorse or common rockrose for breeding. Both **Purple** and **White-letter Hairstreaks** have been present throughout the period but are not often encountered by the casual observer. Rarest of this group is the 'common and widespread' **Small Copper**. I have only recorded it in 1989 and 1990!

The **Brown Argus** appears every year and maybe only arrived in the mid-1980s. It was certainly more numerous around 1990 and is only seen in very small numbers now. The **Common Blue** has not been seen since 1998 but was rarely seen on the BC Reserve area where most recording occurs now. The **Holly Blue** varies in numbers from year to year as it does on most sites. There is some concern for this species as a number of holly trees succumb each year to a disease now present.

Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma are all regularly recorded on the site. In August, patches of devil's-bit scabious are often covered in these butterflies and other species. Of the three **Fritillaries** recorded, the **Small Pearl-bordered** has fared the worst. It was never as numerous as its closest relative and has not been seen at all since 1998. It would have been expected to tolerate changes to the site more readily than the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. The latter is the flagship species

for the site and was the main reason for the establishment of the BC Reserve. Although the primary aim of the management work carried out has been specifically to increase the suitable habitat for this species, it is still gratifying to note that it is the one species that has significantly increased in numbers since 2000. However, its decline over the rest of the site continues. Maximum daily counts may have exceeded 100 individuals over the whole site in the late 1980s but typical counts ten years later were of around 40 butterflies, equally distributed over the BC Reserve land and the rest of the site. The lowest recent count was of only 6 adults in 2000. Since then the population has increased with a maximum count of 72 adults in 2004, with 65 of these on the BC Reserve. Only 7 were seen on the rest of the SSSI on the same day. Population variations of the **Dark Green Fritillary** have followed a similar pattern but they are always present in fewer numbers.

Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Gate-keeper, Meadow Brown and Small Heath are regularly recorded in varying numbers. The **Ringlet** appeared in 1998 but does not appear to have established itself on the site. The **Grayling** was one of the first species to disappear from the site in the period under review. It is difficult to say when this occurred as, although the last record is from 1992, the site has received most of its visits in May and June before the start of the flight period.

The decline (and possible local extinction) of at least one-third of the species recorded on the site is disappointing. However, if their demise is more related to the continuous encroachment of scrub and bracken and the lack of grazing rather than to climate change and other occurrences beyond our control we can be optimistic about recovery and re-establishment of some species, now that active management of the Reserve is taking place and that a grazing regime is to be reintroduced.

Rob Whitehead
Volunteer Reserve Manager for BC . Eyarth
Rocks Reserve .

[BC Wales Office have now secured Objective One funding for the fencing, wall repairs and interpretation panels for the reserve. This could not have been achieved without matched-funding from the many volunteer hours that many people have given to scrub clearance at Eyarth Rocks, and also from our fund raising. A very big thankyou to all our volunteers!

You can find out more about the Reserve on our Branch website at www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk and also from our free guide leaflet (designed and illustrated by Alan Wagstaff) available from Rob or Jan (tel. 01352 711198—Ed]



Pearl-bordered Fritillary photo R. Whitehead

Copy date for next newsletter; 20th. September 2005
Please, if possible, e-mail any contributions as an attached Word document to
northwalesbutterflies.org.uk
or send by post to Jan Miller at address on back cover

Obituary -

Alan Christopher Wagstaff

1970 to 2005



Alan Wagstaff tragically lost his battle with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma on 27th. February this year. He was just 34. Alan was a founding member of the renaissance of Butterfly Conservation in North Wales in the mid 90's. Initially a marine biology graduate from Bangor University, he became one of the premier wildlife artists in the region and produced most of the guide leaflets for the local Wildlife Trust as well as interpretation panels for local reserves like the Great Orme. If you see "NaturalDTP" in small letters at the bottom of any wildlife literature it means it was entirely Alan's work. He was also adept at the computer skills needed for layout and design, which he in turn applied to our Branch newsletter and promotional materials, making them at once attractive and professional. He joined a small moth group that met regularly at Pencychnant Conservation Centre near Conwy; they later formed most of the original committee of the new North Wales Branch, Alan becoming Newsletter editor, events organiser and publicity officer. He was also Butterfly Recorder for Caernarvonshire. He bought a portable actinic Heath Trap which he put out every night in his small garden. Sitting upon the opened trap and a copy of Skinner

each morning for some hours, he taught himself to identify the majority of Macro-moths, so much so that he was successful in attaining the post of B.C. Moth Officer for Wales in 2001. Alan instigated a series of moth-trapping events across the whole of North Wales, largely on North Wales Wildlife Trust Reserves, in 2000, the year I became involved with the Branch. Many new records for this under-recorded area were thus collected. Anyone who went on some of those summer night trappings will remember the way he was so enthusiastic and not the least bit patronising to those of us who were completely in the dark, in more ways than one. We'd hold up a tubed specimen and say 'what's this' and you would hear Alan's sudden inrush of breath as he went 'ooh!' and reached for it. Even if it was something very common, he made you feel that you'd got something special. And maybe that is the key to why he was such a good friend to so many people. I was completely new to the whole concept of Butterfly Conservation when I joined the committee, and it was Alan who, (via e-mail, for we lived at opposite ends of the region) encouraged me. We bounced ideas off each other for increasing membership, for public events and publicity and generally buoyed each other up when frustration set in. I e-mailed him at length once with complaints about what some people had said or done, and he e-mailed back sympathetically, but at the bottom he just put "I found 4 moths in the trap this morning" It was March, the start of the season, and it made me laugh and brought me back to why we were doing all this volunteer work in the first place. That's what I will always remember about him.

He leaves a wife and a three year old son, as well as a brother, sister and parents, and many bereft friends, to whom the North Wales Branch send our most heartfelt condolences.

You can see some of Alan's work on our Branch website .
Jan Miller

County Butterfly and Moth Recorders

If you would like to send records by e-mail please use the recorders' e-mail if shown, or; info@northwalesbutterflies.org.uk Butterfly recording forms can also be printed off from the website www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk or can be sent to you by post from any of the Recorders

Moth Recorders

Anglesey - Vice County(VC)52
POSITION VACANT –
If you would like to consider taking on this job, please enquire of Doug Murray
Ty Moireach, Lon Tudur,
Llangefni, Anglesey LL77 7HP
tel; (01248) 750089

Caernarfonshire - VC49
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Butterfly Recorders

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Conservation Officer—Mike Hammett; e-mail; conservation

Volunteer co-ordinator , Education, website, publicity—Jan Miller, Saith Ffynnon Farm, Whitford, Holywell CH8 9EQ, Flintshire.

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