



MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No 138 Feb 2018.

A monthly newsletter covering

Gwent and Monmouthshire Vice County 35

Editor: Martin Anthoney

To Recorders in The Abergavenny Area – Skirrid Fawr Help Needed

National Trust Ranger Kate Jones set up a new weekly butterfly transect on the Skirrid Fawr near Abergavenny in 2017 to monitor the effects of coppicing in the woodland. The Pant Skirrid woods were purchased from the Forestry Commission in 1986; after gradually reducing the conifer coverage by 25% by 2001, the woods were left for the next 15 years. A healthy seed bank meant there was an explosion of growth which saw light levels drop and bramble take over the understorey. The woodland team have now started a five year work programme of thinning the woodland and opening up the rides; we hope to see an increase in the abundance of butterflies and hopefully an increase in species diversity.

The transect was started midway through the summer of 2017, so it's first full year will be 2018. Kate is looking for volunteers with good butterfly identification skills to help with the weekly monitoring, forming part of a rota system so that the weekly schedule can be met throughout the summer from March to October. If you are interested please contact Kate on kate.jones@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Monmouthshire Moth & Butterfly Group Annual General Meeting

You are cordially invited to our AGM, details below:

AGM

Thursday 8th March 2018

Royal British Legion Club,

Old Market Street, Usk, NP15 1AL

7.30pm - 9.30pm

Sam Bosanquet will give an illustrated talk on “*Mining and beating - micromoths by day*”.

An agenda for the meeting can be found at the end of this newsletter.

Review of the Year 2017

Looking at the overall meteorological statistics would suggest 2017 weather was fairly average in Gwent. The following table shows a comparison of 2017 with the long-term (30 year) average values for each season in south-east Wales:

2017 Weather compared to the long-term (30 year) average values				
Season	Minimum Temperature (degrees above average)	Mean Temperature (degrees above average)	Hours of Sunshine (as a percentage of the average)	Rainfall (as a percentage of the average)
Winter	+1.4°C	+1.5 °C	103%	66%
Spring	+1.4 °C	+1.3 °C	105%	87%
Summer	+0.6 °C	+0.4 °C	96%	120%
Autumn	+0.5 °C	+0.4 °C	95%	86%

Temperatures were slightly above average, particularly in the first half of the year. Apart from a wet spell in June/ July, 2017 was a relatively dry year, though Summer and Autumn were frequently cloudy. This may have accounted for a lack of butterfly species, with 34 species the lowest total for five years. In contrast, a good number of warm, cloudy but dry nights produced a record total of 467 macro moth species, surpassing by 15 the previous record in 2014.

Year	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Butterfly species	34	35	36	36	35	34	36	36
Macro moth species	467	444	451	452	433	403	437	426

Butterflies

A slow start to the year, with hardly any records until the end of March. Meadow Brown (4474 individuals recorded) was well ahead of other species in abundance during 2017, with Ringlet second (1848). These high numbers were largely due to a few prolific sites. Third in the list was Red Admiral (1534 individuals), which had one of its best-ever years and three times the numbers of the other common *Vanessids* (Comma 535, Peacock 484, Small Tortoiseshell 390). It is disappointing that the Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell have still not recovered from their dramatic decline in 2015.

Of the other migrants, 141 Painted Lady individuals was a reasonable total for Gwent, but a mere six Clouded Yellow individuals was disappointing. Eleven White Admiral records in the Wye Valley was an improvement after several very poor years, and Silver-washed Fritillary continues its spread north and westwards. On the negative side, it is disappointing that for the first time in ten years no Brown Argus records have been received. Marbled White had a good year (1469 individuals), remarkably outstripping Large White (1265). To be fair, this was entirely due to counts of a thousand individuals flying over one large site at Devauden. The sight of the sky filled with Marbled Whites drifting gently about will remain as my butterfly memory of 2017.

Macromoths

The year began well with two reports of Small Brindled Beauty and five of Dotted Chestnut. On 9th March two Barred Tooth-striped came to Nick Felstead's light at the site where he discovered the species in 2016, a third was caught on 30th March and five larvae found in May (George Tordoff), so it is reassuring to confirm a colony is definitely established there.



Barred Tooth-striped (Trichopteryx polycommata)
(Nick Felstead)



Kent Black Arches (Meganola albula)
(Hazel Mitchell)

Five new species of macro moth were added to the county list in 2017, bringing the total on the list to 580 species:-

On 18th May an "Ash Pug" form of *Eupithecia innotata* came to Mel Oxford's light at St Brides; usually recorded these days under Angle-barred Pug, this is the first VC35 record with photographic confirmation.

On the night of 19th June Hazel Mitchell had a small grey and white moth attracted to her light trap at Tintern, subsequently confirmed as Kent Black Arches (*Meganola albula*). A second came to the same site on 19th July and a third to St Brides on 14th July (Mel Oxford).

On the night of 21st June, a specimen of Blair's Mocha (*Cyclophora puppillaria*) came to Kevin Dupé's light trap near the coast at Red Barn Centre, Newport Wetlands.

On the night of 12th July a Star-wort moth (*Cucullia asteris*) came to light in Kevin Hewitt's garden at Blackwood on the western side of the county

Finally, Kevin Hewitt had a specimen of Juniper Carpet (*Thera juniperata ssp juniperata*) to his garden on 13th October.

Other macro moth records of note included:-

White-line Snout to light at Llantarnam Abbey Woodland on 21st June. A new site for this UK Priority Species (Bob Roome).

The second and third county records of Brussels Lace to light at Goldcliff on 25th June and 11th Oct (Lance Hutchings).

The fourth county record of Barred Carpet at Tintern on 27th June (Hazel Mitchell).

Toadflax Brocade at Undy on 6th July and 24th Sept (Keith Jones) and Newport on 5th August (Roger James), the first occurrence east of Newport in the two years it has been a resident species.

Three Great Oak Beauty at a new site in Penallt (20th June to 8th July) (Ian Rabjohns)

Following earlier records in 1991 and 2014, the third and fourth county records of Least Carpet at Llandogo (25th July, Linda Pullin) and Wonastow (25th Aug, Heather Colls) strongly suggest it is now resident in the east of the county.

Migrant highlight of the year was the spectacular Crimson Speckled (*Utetheisa pulchella*) near Chepstow on 23rd October (Nick Felstead), the first county record since 1871. In general, migrant numbers were low. Seventeen Humming-bird Hawk records was slightly up on the fourteen of 2016, but well below the peak numbers such as ninety-two in 2011. Thirty-two Vestal was probably the best of the rest, which included Bordered Straw (3), Dark Sword-grass (53), Gem (3), Pearly Underwing (3), Scarce Bordered Straw (4), Small Mottled Willow (12) and one White-point. It is difficult to know whether a yearly high of nine Four-spotted Footman represented migrants or a newly established resident.



Crimson Speckled (Utetheisa pulchella)
(Nick Felstead)



Small Mottled Willow (Spodoptera exigua)
(Lance Hutchings)

Martin Anthoney

Microlepidoptera

Eighteen species of micro moth were new for VC35 (Monmouthshire) in 2017:-

- 4.039** 73 *Stigmella trimaculella* (Haworth, 1828) — Llandeenny ST405865;
mines on *Populus* hybrid 25 ix 2017 — Nick Felstead *per* Sam Bosanquet.
- 4.040** 74 *Stigmella assimilella* (Zeller, 1848) — Wonastow Road Ind. Est. SO498121;
mines on *Populus alba* 3 x 2017 — Sam Bosanquet.
- 4.053** 78 *Stigmella incognitella* (Herrich-Schäffer, 1855) — Chepstow ST537942;
mines on *Malus* 20 x 2017 — N. Felstead *per* Sam Bosanquet.
- 15.003** 281 *Caloptilia populetorum* (Zeller, 1839) — Slade Wood ST450893;
19 ix 2017 — N. Felstead *per* Sam Bosanquet.
- 15.087** 365 *Phyllonorycter comparella* (Duponchel, [1843]) — Wonastow Road Ind. Est. SO498121;
mines on *Populus alba* 3 x 2017 — Sam Bosanquet.
- 34.002** 900 *Pancalia schwartzella* (Fabricius, 1798) — The Tumble SO256115;
28 v 2017 — Sam Bosanquet.
- 34.009** 896b *Cosmopterix pulcherimella* (Chambers, 1875) — Chepstow ST535941;
mines on *Parietaria* 12 viii 2017 — N. Felstead *per* Sam Bosanquet.
- 35.133** 832 *Caryocolum blandella* (Douglas, 1852) — Llanthony SO276292;
27 vii 2017 — Sam Bosanquet.
- 38.015** 620 *Elachista gangabella* (Zeller, 1850) — Slade Wood ST4589;
31 v 2017 — Sam Bosanquet.
- 48.003** 387 *Prochoreutis sehestediana* (Fabricius, [1777]) — Bloreng SO261122;
25 vii 2017 — Sam Bosanquet.
- 49.002** 1014 *Isotrias rectifasciana* (Haworth, 1811) — Caerwent Quarry ST472896;
31 v 2017 — Sam Bosanquet.
- 49.075** 1052 *Acleris umbrana* (Hübner, [1799]) — Imperial Park ST281841;
3 ii 2017 — Sam Bosanquet.
- 49.190** 1101 *Endothenia ustulana* (Haworth, 1811) — Caerwent Quarry ST472896;
31 v 2017 — Sam Bosanquet.
- 49.296** 1179 *Notocelia incarnatana* (Hübner, [1800]) — Oakfield Road, Cwmbran ST297942;
6 viii 2017 — R. Roome *per* Sam Bosanquet.
- 49.372** 1232 *Pammene populana* (Fabricius, 1787) — Blackwood ST171966;
13 viii 2017 — K. Hewitt *per* Sam Bosanquet.
- 49.374** 1235 *Pammene trauniana* ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775) — Dewstow ST465883;
18 v 2017 — N. Felstead *per* Sam Bosanquet.
- 62.023** 1442 *Pempelia palumbella* ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775) — Blackwood ST171966;
24 vi 2017 — K. Hewitt *per* Sam Bosanquet.
- 63.054** 1409a *Cydalima perspectalis* (Walker, 1859) — Caerleon ST326908;
7 x 2017 — D. Brooks *per* Sam Bosanquet.

Sam D S Bosanquet

Recent Highlights

After a period of snow on 10th/11th, the remainder of December alternated stormy, mild weather with colder, frosty spells. After a stormy start, January was a predominantly changeable month with fronts crossing the country at regular intervals, but it was colder and more settled between the 6th and 12th and in the third week. February started showery but often feeling cold due to wind chill, with frequent frosts. The south of the county avoided any further snow, but hills in the north were less lucky.

A few hardy moths braved the cold nights, but to date (14th Feb) no reports of butterflies flying have yet been received for Gwent in 2018.

2017

- 12th Dec Brick to light at Newport Imperial Park (Mel Oxford)
- 20th Dec Satellite, Mottled Umber, Winter Moth and 15 December Moths to light at Penallt (Ian Rabjohns)
- 21st Dec A run of cloudy, mild nights from 21st- 23rd Dec enticed several people to put light traps out:
1 Chestnut, 3 December Moth, Mottled Umber, Red-green Carpet and 2 Winter Moth at Dingestow. (Sam Bosanquet)
Satellite, Scarce Umber, Spruce Carpet and 11 December Moth at Risca (Martin Anthoney)
1 December Moth, 2 Mottled Umber, Spruce Carpet, Winter Moth and Yellow-line Quaker at Tintern. (Hazel Mitchell)
17 December Moths at Newport Wetlands (Kevin Dupé)
- 22nd Dec Chestnut, 5 December Moth, Mottled Umber and Scarce Umber at Risca. (Martin Anthoney)
4 December Moth and 8 Winter Moth at Mounon (Nick Felstead)
Buttoned Snout found hibernating indoors at Dingestow. (Sam Bosanquet)
- 23rd Dec December Moth, Mottled Umber, Spruce Carpet and 5 Winter Moth at Buckle Wood. (Nick Felstead)
- 30th Dec Dark Chestnut, 2 Mottled Umber, Red-green Carpet and 13 Winter Moth at Coed-y-Ffermau, Gaer Fawr. (Nick Felstead)



Agonopterix yeatiana (Kevin Dupé)



Agonopterix heracliiana (Kevin Dupé)

2018

- 9th Jan Five specimens of the micro *Agonopterix yeatiana* disturbed when dismantling old reed-screens at Uskmouth. (Kevin Dupé)
- 22nd Jan A specimen of the micro *Agonopterix heracliiana* disturbed at at Redhouse Barns, Newport Wetlands. (Kevin Dupé)

Running a trap for 31 nights in my garden at Risca between 1st Jan and 13th Feb produced 24 blank nights and the following moths:

- 13th Jan 1 Mottled Umber
- 16th Jan 1 Winter Moth
- 23rd Jan 1 Chestnut, 1 Dark Chestnut
- 31st Jan 1 Early Moth
- 3rd Feb 1 Pale Brindled Beauty, 1 Early Moth
- 5th Feb 1 Early Moth
- 11th Feb 1 Oak Beauty

Martin Anthoney

Books to Borrow

Kevin Dupé has bought two moth ID books for MMBG as per the AGM decision in March (yes, a little late!). He bought Waring 3rd edition (£24.95) and a copy of Sean Clancy (a bargain at £20!). Anyone wishing to borrow the books should contact Kevin (details at the end of this newsletter).

Dates for your Diary 2018

Sunday 25th Feb Habitat management at Blackrock Quarry, Clydach. 10am – 1pm.
Meet at the lay-by adjacent to the old lime kilns (SO215125).
[Head east along the A465 Heads of the Valleys road from the Brynmawr roundabout. After 1½ miles take the left turn for Clydach Village. Continue along Main Road through Clydach village and the lay-by is then on your right. Allow time to negotiate the massive roadworks taking place in the area]
Contact Martin Anthoney [details below]

Thurs 8th March MMBG AGM at British Legion, Usk 7.30pm. Sam Bosanquet will talk on
“Mining and beating - micromoths by day”

Sunday 18th March Habitat management at Hendre Wood. Meet at Old Lodge entrance at Hendre Woods (S0 462146), on the B4233 Rockfield Road from Monmouth, at 11:00 - 15:00. Contact **George Tordoff 07794521017**

Saturday 24th March Butterfly Conservation annual meeting for butterfly recorders at Birmingham and Midland Institute, central Birmingham. 10am – 4pm £10

Saturday 9th June *Go Wild* Show at Parc Bryn Bach, Tredegar

Thursday 14th June to Saturday 16th June National Moth Night. The theme will be *Pyralids*. For more information, see <http://www.mothnight.info/>.

20th July to 12th August Big Butterfly Count. Details at www.bigbutterflycount.org

Saturday 20th Oct Butterfly Conservation (South Wales Branch) Members Day and AGM at Kenfig.

MMBG – Contact Names and Addresses.

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Monmouthshire Moth & Butterfly Group Annual General Meeting

You are cordially invited to our AGM, details below:

AGM
Thursday 8th March 2018
Royal British Legion Club,
Old Market Street, Usk, NP15 1AL
7.30pm - 9.30pm

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of last AGM (22nd March 2017) and matters arising
3. Presentation of Accounts - Sheila Dupe, Treasurer
- approval of accounts.
4. Election of Officers – Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer.
5. Main speaker – Sam Bosanquet, VC35 Recorder for micromoths, will talk on
“Mining and beating - micromoths by day”
6. AOB including updates and plans for coming season.



Yours Sincerely,

Kevin Dupé, Secretary