



# MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No 160 March 2020.

*A monthly newsletter covering*

*Gwent and Monmouthshire Vice County 35*

*Editor: Martin Anthoney*

## Coronavirus

*Butterfly Conservation* have asked that the following be circulated to butterfly and moth recorders:

*The UK Government delivered a very strong and clear message on 23rd March 2020 with their updated guidance:*

- ***The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.***

*Bearing this in mind, Butterfly Conservation strongly advises that you adhere to the message from the government, and therefore **only record butterflies and moths in your gardens.** Please do not make any journeys away from your home in order to undertake recording activities, these would be considered as non-essential at the present time.*

*We will continue to monitor this situation closely and will produce revised guidance when the time is right. Please check for any updates at [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org).*

The Coronavirus restrictions also led to the postponement, at short notice, of Monmouthshire Moth and Butterfly Group AGM on 18<sup>th</sup> March. Apologies for this – we will arrange an alternative date after restrictions have been lifted, whenever that may be.

## Updated 2019 Numbers

	Butterflies	Macromoths	Micromoths
Number 2019 Records	7,087	19,745	4,961
Number 2019 Species	37	472	479
Species on VC35 list	50	586	843

## A Review of VC35 (Monmouthshire) Microlepidoptera Recorded in 2019

Sam Bosanquet

The number of Micro records produced in Monmouthshire in 2019 fell a bit since the bumper years of 2017 and 2018, from more than 5000 records to 4961. Most of last year's top 10 recorders submitted similar tallies, and the drop in numbers is almost entirely the result of one of those top 10 – Mel Oxford – switching passions from mothing to metal detecting. He contributed more than 2300 records of 172 species between 2014 and 2018, so he certainly played his part in documenting our Microlepidoptera. Luckily Lee Gregory has stormed into the top 10 recorders to replace Mel, and as he is based in the under-recorded north-west of VC35 he seems set to make some notable finds. The top recorders submitted more than 95% of the year's records: Sam Bosanquet (1356), Kevin Hewitt (855), Hazel Mitchell (752), Nick Felstead (656), Bob Roome (454), Simon Phipps (225), Lee Gregory (139), Ian Rabjohns (102), Kevin Dupé (95), George Tordoff (87) and Keith Jones (78). Species diversity was slightly down on the previous year, but was still high: 479 species of Micro recorded in 2019 compares favourably with 497 in 2018, 343 in 2017 and 458 in 2016. Again, Nick Felstead boosted the species diversity significantly with his diurnal searching and leaf mine recording, and Lee Gregory also made many diurnal records.



The county Micro total now stands at 843 species, following 7 additions in 2019. The additions were: **11.002** *Narycia duplicella* – Dingestow Court, netted in flight at 5pm on warm sunny day 21 vi 2019 – Sam Bosanquet; **35.064** *Argolamprotes micella* – Tintern, to MV 10.vii.2019 – Hazel Mitchell; **49.02** *Argyrotaenia ljugiana* (photo above) – Keepers Pond, disturbed from heathland on sunny afternoon 19.v.2019 – SB; **49.086** *Acleris logiana* (photo above) – Tintern, to MV 25.i.2019 – HM; **49.173** *Phiaris micana* – Tintern, to MV 29.vi.2019 – HM; **49.181** *Lobesia occidentalis* – Highmeadow Woods, flying around small plant of *Euphorbia amygdaloides* in open setting, 3pm 1.vi.2019 – George Tordoff; **49.253** *Epinotia fraternana* – Llandogo, to MV 29.vi.2019 – Simon Phipps. The rarest addition was George's *Lobesia occidentalis* (photo below), which is probably an overlooked longterm resident of the county on the same Wood Spurge colonies that support Drab Looper, whereas Hazel's *Argolamprotes micella* (photo below) and *Acleris logiana* are spreading in England and are assumed to be new arrivals here. *Epinotia fraternana* may be resident among conifer plantations in the Wye Valley, and both this species and *Phiaris micana* are easily overlooked as commoner Tortricids. *Narycia duplicella* is obscure looking and diurnal, so doubly easy to miss, whilst *Argyrotaenia ljugiana* is a diurnal upland species, found far from Gwent's resident Microlepidopterists (except for newly arrived Lee).



Other outstanding records made during the year included (in taxonomic order):

- Mines of *Stigmella aceris* on Field Maple at Lady Park Wood (Nick Felstead) and Lamby Way (Sam Bosanquet), the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> county records with the latter being the first from west of the Wye.
- Mines of *Stigmella regiella* on Hawthorn at Penhow Woods (NF), the 5<sup>th</sup> record.
- Mines of *Stigmella sorbi* on Rowan on Mynydd Machen (SB), the 4<sup>th</sup> record.
- Mines of *Stigmella suberivora* recorded from 20 sites across Gwent by Nick Felstead during targeted recording of Holm Oak mines (photo below, NF); there were just 5 previous VC35 records.



- Mines of *Bohemannia pulverosella* on Apple leaves at Abergavenny (NF) and Uskmouth (Lee Gregory), 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> records.
- Mines of *Ectoedemia heringella* on Holm Oak at 23 sites across Gwent (photo above, NF); there was just a single previous VC35 record, from St Woolos Cemetery.
- Mines of *Ectoedemia sericopeza* on Norway Maple samara at Dingestow (SB), the 5<sup>th</sup> record.
- Mines of *Ectoedemia heringi* on Oak at Chepstow Park Wood and Wentwood (NF), 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> records.
- Single *Diplodoma laichartingella* at Dingestow on two days in late June (photo below, SB), 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> records.
- *Bucculatrix nigricomella* by day at Penallt (Ian Rabjohns), 5<sup>th</sup> record.
- *Bucculatrix albedinella* by day in polytunnel at Dingestow (SB), 4<sup>th</sup> record.
- *Bucculatrix demaryella* to MV at Slade Wood (George Tordoff), 5<sup>th</sup> record.



- Mines of *Caloptilia cuculipennella* at Skenfrith (Andy & Melissa Banthorpe), 3<sup>rd</sup> record.
- Mines of *Acrocercops brongniardella* on Oak at Pen-y-pound (SB), 4<sup>th</sup> record and the first since 2002.
- Mines of *Phyllonorycter comparella* on Grey Poplar at Llandeenny (NF, photo above), 2<sup>nd</sup> record.
- Single *Paraswammerdamia albicapitella* at Dingestow (SB) and Penallt (IR), 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> records.
- *Ypsolopha alpella* to light at Blackwood (Kevin Hewitt), 5<sup>th</sup> record.
- *Argyresthia pygmaeella* to light at Blackwood (KH), 5<sup>th</sup> record and the first since 2007.
- *Argyresthia semifusca* to light at Blackwood (KH), 5<sup>th</sup> record.
- *Luquetia lobella* to MV at Dingestow (SB photo above), 2<sup>nd</sup> record.
- *Agonopterix scopariella* to light at Bica Common & Wentwood (NF) and twice at Tintern (Hazel Mitchell photo below), the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> records.



- *Agonopterix assimilella* at Penallt (IR), 4<sup>th</sup> record.
- *Anacamptis blattariella* to MV at Slade Wood (NF), 4<sup>th</sup> record.
- *Bryotropha senectella* eight times at Oakfield, Cwmbran (Bob Roome), 2<sup>nd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> records.
- *Prolita sexpunctella* by day at Keepers Pond (SB photo above), 2<sup>nd</sup> record last seen in 1928.
- *Carpatolechchia decorella* to light on two nights at Tintern (HM), 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> records and the first since 1981.
- *Stenolechia gemmella* twice to light at Blackwood (KH), 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> records.
- *Batrachedra pinicolella* twice at Dingestow (SB), 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> records.

- Cases of *Coleophora albitarsella* at Dingestow (SB) and Rogiet Poorland (Lee Gregory), 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> records.

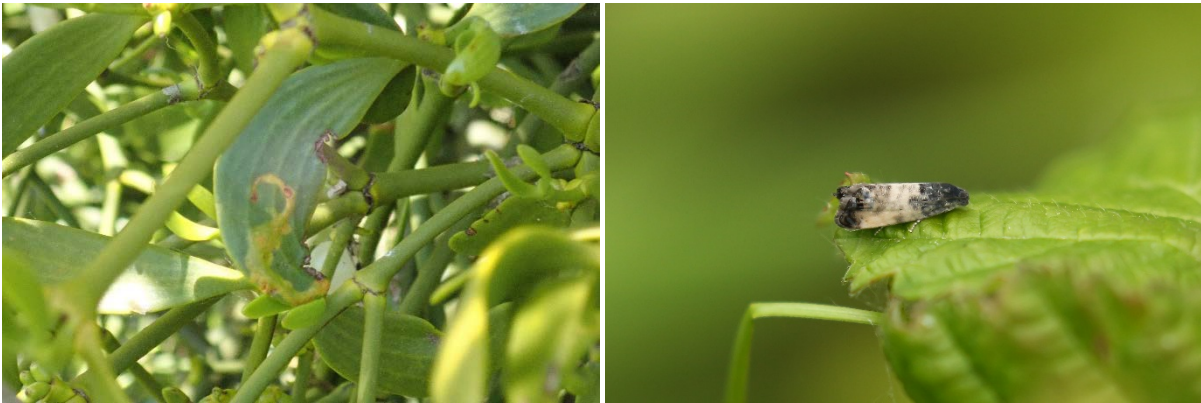


- *Coleophora striatipennella* by day at Dingestow (SB), 4<sup>th</sup> record.
- *Coleophora argentula* to actinic trap at Dingestow (SB), 5<sup>th</sup> record.
- Cases of *Coleophora follicularis* on Hemp Agrimony at Uskmouth (SB & LG), 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> records.
- A wandering *Elachista albidella* (gen det) to MV at Dingestow (SB), 2<sup>nd</sup> record and the first since 1999.
- *Spuleria flavicaput* by day at Magor Pill (LG), 5<sup>th</sup> record.
- The migrant plume *Oxyptilus laetus* to MV at Dingestow (SB photo above), 2<sup>nd</sup> record and the first since 2000.
- *Epermenia falciformis* to light at Tintern (HM photo below), 5<sup>th</sup> record.



- *Spatalistis bifasciana* by day at Oakfield, Cwmbran (Bob Roome), 5<sup>th</sup> record.
- *Acleris hyemana* by day at Keepers Pond in February and May (SB), 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> records and the first since 2000.
- *Phalonidia gilvicomana* swept from Wall Lettuce at Cleddon Shoots (SB photo above), 2<sup>nd</sup> record and the first since 1985.
- A *Celypha woodiana* mine on Mistletoe at Magor Marsh (GT photo below), the 2<sup>nd</sup> record for Wales of this rare species following a vague "Tintern" record published in 1979 that might not even have been on our side of the River Wye.

- *Epiblema costipunctana* at Blackwood (KH) and Uskmouth (LG), the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> records and the first since 1999.



- *Dichrorampha plumbana* by day at Penallt (IR), the 3<sup>rd</sup> record.
- *Dichrorampha acuminatana* at Dewstow Quarry and Ifton Quarry (LG), the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> records.
- *Cydia servillana* at Uskmouth (LG photo above), the 3<sup>rd</sup> record and first since 1980.
- *Pammene albuginana* to MV at Slade Wood (GT), the 5<sup>th</sup> record.



- *Oncocera semirubella* at Livox Quarry (NF photo above) confirming a resident population at this site, and at Uskmouth (KH) suggesting this species may be resident at Uskmouth as well.
- *Anania perlucidalis* at Newport Wetlands (KD) and Undy (Keith Jones), the 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> records.

## March 2020

. The first half of March was unsettled with westerly winds. After a cool showery start it turned milder. High pressure slowly built from the 16th to 19th, leading into a spell of generally dry sunny weather with warm days and cool nights, which peaked between the 22nd and 27th. It turned cooler and cloudier during the last four days but stayed generally dry. The mean temperature for the month was provisionally 0.1 °C above the long-term average. The anticyclonic spell in the second half ensured that it was a dry sunny month, with 81% of average rainfall and 140% of average sunshine.

Coronavirus restrictions played havoc with recording in the second half of the month and a high proportion of records are from the vicinity of people's own gardens. We could probably have lived with early versions of the restrictions, but once pictures emerged during the sunny weekend of 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> March of Welsh mountains and coasts being swamped with people, the butterflies and moths never stood a chance.

Seven species of butterfly were recorded during March (34 Peacock, 32 Small Tortoiseshell, 16 Comma, 9 Brimstone, 3 Small White, 2 Green-veined White and a single Red Admiral) compared to eleven species in March 2019.

The cool nights produced a poor month for macromoths, with only 35 species recorded (55 species in March 2019).

Selected records for March :-

1 <sup>st</sup> March	Small Brindled Beauty, Yellow Horned, Clouded Drab to light at Ravensnest Wood, Angidy Valley.	(Nick Felstead)
2 <sup>nd</sup> March	Red Admiral butterfly at Dingestow Small Tortoiseshell at Wilcrick Moor, Llandeenny	(Sam Bosanquet) (Nick Felstead)
3 <sup>rd</sup> March	Twin-spotted Quaker to light at Risca	(Martin Anthony)
7 <sup>th</sup> March	Shoulder Stripe, Brindled Pug to light at Tintern Engrailed and 6 March Moth to light at Croes Robert	(Hazel Mitchell) (Nick Felstead)
10 <sup>th</sup> March	Yellow Horned, Water Carpet among 11 species to light at Fedw Fach, Trellech Pale Pinion, Oak Beauty to light at Melbourne Way, Newport	(Nick Felstead) (Roger James)
13 <sup>th</sup> March	Small Eggar to light at Whitson (Moorbarn Cottage) Purple Thorn at Fryth Wood	(Lance Hutchings) (Nick Felstead)
14 <sup>th</sup> March	Yellow Horned, Twin-spotted Quaker at Buckle Wood, Chapel Hill	(Nick Felstead)
15 <sup>th</sup> March	Pale Pinion and Shoulder Stripe at Cwmyoy Grey Shoulder-knot to light at Abergavenny Early Thorn at Whitson (Moorbarn Cottage)	(Christine Knights) (Mike Hoult and Val Deisler) (Lance Hutchings)
16 <sup>th</sup> March	Brimstone and Peacock butterflies at both Penallt (Ian Rabjohns) and Llandogo (Gail Reynolds) 3 Peacocks at Newport Wetlands Yellow Horned to light at Melbourne Way, Newport	  (Kevin Dupé) (Roger James)



*Pale Pinion*  
(Christine Knights)



*Small Eggar*  
(Sam Bosanquet)

- 17<sup>th</sup> March Quakers! 76 Small Quaker, 22 Common Quaker and 9 Twin-spotted Quaker to light at Tintern. (Hazel Mitchell)
- 19<sup>th</sup> March Purple Thorn, Yellow Horned at Slade Wood (Nick Felstead)  
Early Tooth-striped at Risca (Martin Anthoney)  
Oak Nycteoline, Tawny Pinion (with another on 25<sup>th</sup> March) and Twin-spotted Quaker to light at Melbourne Way, Newport. (Roger James)
- 21<sup>st</sup> March 2 Small Tortoiseshell at Portskewett (Nick Felstead)  
another 2 at Llandogo (Gail Reynolds) and 1 at Abergavenny (Mike Hoult and Val Deisler)
- 22<sup>nd</sup> March Red Chestnut, Satellite at St Pierre's Great Wood (Nick Felstead)  
Brindled Beauty to light at Caerleon (David Brooks)  
2 male Brimstone and a Peacock at Yn-ys-Hywel (Martin Anthoney)  
1 Comma at Llandogo (Gail Reynolds)
- 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1 male Brimstone at Six Bells (Martin Anthoney)  
Small White and Peacock butterflies at Llandogo (Gail Reynolds)



24 <sup>th</sup> March	The best day and night of the year so far: Yellow Horned, Pale Brindled Beauty at Chepstow Park Wood (Nick Felstead) Water Carpet at Great Crwys, Hendre (Wendy Tyler-Batt) and at Ilandogo (Gail Reynolds) Small Eggar to light at Dingestow. Larval webs have been found nearby, but this is the first site record of an adult (Sam Bosanquet) Pine Beauty moths at Caerleon (David Brooks) and Chepstow Park Wood (Nick Felstead) 2 Brimstone, 5 Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell at Newport Wetlands (Kevin Dupé) and 1 Brimstone plus a Peacock at Ladyhill, Usk (Martyn Evans) 1 Comma at Risca (Martin Anthoney) Green-veined White and Peacock at Caerleon (Kevin Dupé) Small Tortoiseshell and 3 Peacock at Buckle Wood, Angidy Valley (Hazel Mitchell) 2 Small Tortoiseshell at Cwmbran (Bob Roome)
25 <sup>th</sup> March	Green-veined White, 7 Peacock, 7 Small Tortoiseshell and 2 Comma at Newport Wetlands (Kevin Dupé) Female Brimstone at Sirhowy Forest, Crosskeys (Martin Anthoney) 6 Comma, 6 Small Tortoiseshell and a Peacock at Abergavenny. (Mike Hoult and Val Deisler)
27 <sup>th</sup> March	White-marked, Powdered Quaker, Brindled Beauty to light at Great Crwys, Hendre (Wendy Tyler-Batt) Orange Underwing at Mynydd Dimlaith, (Bedwas) (Mike and Jackie Pointon) Small Whites at Ballan Wood, Crick and Queen's Way Llandeveyney (Nick Felstead) Herald and Early Thorn to light at Melbourne Way, Newport. (Roger James)
28 <sup>th</sup> March	Small Brindled Beauty to light at Caerleon, with another on 31 <sup>st</sup> . (David Brooks)
30 <sup>th</sup> March	Shoulder Stripe at Great Crwys, Hendre (Wendy Tyler-Batt) Pale Brindled Beauty at Abergavenny (Mike Hoult and Val Deisler)
31 <sup>st</sup> March	49 Scarlet Tiger larvae at Chepstow (Nick Felstead) Lesser Swallow Prominent to light at Caerleon (David Brooks)

## **Dates for your Diary 2020**

27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> August National **Moth Night**, with the theme *the various "Red" Underwings*

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October** S Wales Branch of Butterfly Conservation annual Members' Day and AGM, Due to the closure of Kenfig NNR's visitor centre, the meeting will be at a new venue.

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