



MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

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*A monthly newsletter covering
Gwent and Monmouthshire Vice County 35*

Editor: Martin Anthoney

Small Ranunculus Update

Kevin Dupé has been looking at Prickly Lettuce in Newport for larvae and eggs of the Small Ranunculus. On the Blaina Wharf site (Costain site entrance), he discovered 41 first / second instar and 22 third / fourth instar larvae. All of the plants on the bund of the Southern Distributor Road had gone over and the small mitigation site which was scheduled as a ruderal area following the planting of shrubs on the bund has been taken over as part of a garden!

A former haven for the Small Ranunculus, the area around the Newport Velodrome, was also looked at by Kevin. I say “former haven” because one of the areas has been strimmed and a bund which had a good stand of Prickly Lettuce has been removed! Given the transitory nature of the food plant and its association with “development” would anyone like to attempt an action and management plan for this species?

To the west of Newport, Kevin visited Fortran Road, St Mellons, ST 249 817, where he found a large amount of prickly lettuce (approx 100 plants). About half were searched, producing 30 Small Ranunculus larvae: 2 fourth instar, 10 first instar, 18 second/third. Plants were growing in front of an empty office unit where the grounds maintenance has been let slip. This is part of Cardiff which comes into VC35.

Roger James / Kevin Dupé

Cameraria ohridella on the move

I have discovered further trees in Newport colonised by this micro-moth (see records for 6th July in issue 47 of the newsletter). Blotch mines were seen on horse chestnut at the corner of Risca Road and the Ridgway. Trees on the north side and south side of the Ridgway Double View are also affected. I have discussed the situation with Newport’s Tree Officer who has asked to be kept informed of the progress of this moth as many of the trees infected are in conservation areas.

[*late news*: two more areas with infected trees have been found near Burton Alms Houses, Friar Road, and the children’s play area in Bellevue Park. *Ed*].

Roger James.

Newport Report

National Moth Night –11th August

We ran a total of eight traps at six sites in Newport for this national event. Although, in keeping with tradition, the weather was not ideal it was certainly better than other National Moth Nights we have experienced. In total we trapped 571 moths of 78 species. The commonest species was, unsurprisingly, Large Yellow Underwing with 195 individuals.

Highlights for my garden were Olive, Small Purple-bar and a first site record of Oak Eggar. Those who attended our trapping session at Mescoed Mawr saw, amongst others, Clouded Magpie, a species infrequently recorded in Newport, 5 Peach Blossom and 24 Black Arches. The records have been forwarded to Atropos who will publish national statistics in due course.

Butterflies

We had hoped that there might be a good end to the summer, but the bad weather continued through the end of July and into the middle of August. Better weather at the end of August did not produce butterflies in significant numbers. This depressing scenario has been experienced throughout Wales according to Russel Hobson of Butterfly Conservation (Wales) although he told me that there had been a significant increase in second generation Holly Blue – not a species frequently encountered on our own Newport Wetlands transect.

On the last day of July we recorded a scant 339 individuals of ten species, with Gatekeeper the commonest at 192 individuals. It was pleasing to see 20 Common Blue but the highlight was a single Wall Brown, the only record for the year. On 8th August numbers were slightly up with 286 butterflies of 12 species. The only record of note was one Small Heath. Numbers on 16th August were low with only 135 individuals of 7 species; numbers of Gatekeeper (39) and Meadow Brown (60) were very depressed compared to other years. The last record we have is for 25th August when, in near perfect conditions, we saw 226 butterflies of 9 species.

How much longer we continue doing the transect this year depends entirely on the weather. The pundits are forecasting an Indian summer. I have had an unconfirmed report of a single Clouded Yellow on the Newport Wetlands Reserve. If this report is substantiated then it will be the first and only record for Newport and Gwent this year.

Moths

Despite the gruesome weather we have managed to record 299 macro species in Newport for the year to date (29th August). This is despite virtually no boost to the numbers from immigrants. We are, however, picking up records of (presumably?) second generation moths which we did not see earlier in the year. Actual numbers of individuals are down on previous years with the exception of Large Yellow Underwing (eg 341 at Melbourne Way on 27th August).

Sheila ended July with a Gothic at Haisbro Avenue whilst Kevin recorded Straw Underwing at Goldcliff. The first Rosy Footman of the year came to my trap on 2nd August. On 6th August I had a Rosy Rustic and on 7th Kevin had a first site record of Double Kidney at Goldcliff. On 8th I had Barred Hook-tip at Melbourne Way and Kevin recorded Least Yellow Underwing at Goldcliff. A member of the public living in Constable Drive brought along a moth to our National Moth Night meeting which turned out to be the first Red Underwing of the year.

On National Moth Night (11th August), firsts for the year were two Buff Footman, Flounced Rustic and Clouded Magpie. At Haisbro Avenue Sheila had Small Dotted Buff and I recorded True Lover's Knot. I had a single Purple Clay on 14th but there was then a gap until Sheila had an interesting night on 19th: as well as Dusky Thorn and August Thorn she trapped an Elephant Hawk, the latest ever date for this species in Newport. The highlight of the night was a Crescent Dart, the first record outside Summerhill Avenue where it was a first VC record in 2006.

On 20th August I had Pinion-streaked Snout with Kevin recording Six-striped Rustic at Goldcliff. Dingy Shell was recorded at Uskmouth on 23rd (along with a trillion midges!) and Twin-spotted Wainscot at Haisbro Avenue. I had Tawny Speckled Pug on 24th, a seldom recorded species in Newport. The last record I have for August was Garden Dart at Haisbro Avenue on 25th. My thanks as always to the Newport moth-ers who have submitted their records.

Roger James

Recent Highlights

If “cold, windy and very, very wet” described July, words fail me for August as the worst summer for many years continues its dreary way. Records of any description are in short supply, never mind highlights.

3rd Aug Two Grayling on coal waste tip at Aberbargoed SO164 001 (Bill Jones)

4th Aug Silver-washed Fritillary in the Angidy valley at Hale End Cottage, Tintern at SO519003/520003. (Steph Tyler)

32 species of macros recorded at the public moth event at Waunfawr Park, Crosskeys, organised by Dave Beveridge. The two species which generated the most enthusiasm were an Old Lady which came to sugar and a number of Black Arches.

(Roger James / Martin Anthony).

8th Aug Two Silver-washed Fritillaries in Wet Meadow/Loysey wood at SO495073 and SO498069. (Steph Tyler)

Small Heath and Grayling both present in at least double figures at Rassau Industrial Estate SO117 147. (Rodney Morris)

19th Aug A female Crescent Dart at Haisbro Avenue, Newport. (Sheila Dupé)
This species was only recorded for the first time in the county last year when five turned up to Roger James’ previous address at Summerhill Avenue, Newport, and when Roger moved I was pessimistic about any further records.
[*Late news*: another individual was recorded at Caerleon on 1st Sept by Chris Jones. The species seems to be establishing itself in the Newport area, but what is the food plant? Paul Waring quotes “recorded on Thrift and reported fully grown among Rock Sea-Spurrey. Coastal cliffs and rocky shorelines.” Unlikely in Newport! Ed]



Crescent Dart

(female)

20th Aug Humming-bird Hawk investigating white phlox in my Risca garden.

(Martin Anthony)

21st Aug Chevron at Coedymoeth Rd., Aberbargoed. The first VC record of this species I have received since 2004, probably reflecting a lack of recording. (Chris Owen).

22nd Aug Great Brocade trapped at Mill Bank, Penallt. Only the third VC record for this immigrant, the others being in 1977 and 1982. Interestingly, one was also recorded over the border in Glos.
(Ian Smith)

24th Aug A clouded yellow butterfly near the second screen at Newport Wetlands Reserve. The only record of the species so far this year.
(Luke Phillips)

29th Aug When doing an afternoon butterfly transect next to Dan-y-Graig in Risca, I was surprised to see a large red insect gently wander by. It conveniently settled on a tree trunk to allow me to confirm its identity as a Red Underwing moth. This species is notoriously fickle and susceptible to disturbance, but it is a fast flyer. The gentle meandering of this individual suggested it was as determined to enjoy the unaccustomed sunshine as the rest of us....
(Martin Anthony)



Great Brocade (Ian Smith)

Dates for your Diary 2007

Saturday 20th October Butterfly Conservation (South Wales) Members' Day and AGM at Kenfig reserve centre.

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