



# MONMOUTHSHIRE MOTH & BUTTERFLY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No 49

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

*Editor: Martin Anthony*

## **Cameraria ohridella update**

I have continued my quest to find the extent of the spread of this micro moth which is far more widespread than my first investigation indicated (see Newsletter 48). Trees in the Glasllwch area of Newport are affected including those at the start of Brickyard Lane, the western access to Allt-yr-yn nature reserve. Virtually all the horse chestnut trees on this reserve, some twenty in all, have signs of infestation. One tree was moribund with no sign of the terminal sticky buds which should produce next year's leaves.

Rodney Morris and I looked at the avenue of trees at the Glebelands public open space. There are over a hundred trees extending about a mile around the perimeter, of which 25% showed signs of *Cameraria* damage. Other locations which proved positive were Royal Gwent Hospital, St Woolos cemetery, Park Square, St Julian's Avenue, the Stow Park area and Great House Farm, Nash, not far from the entrance to the Newport Wetlands Reserve. One interesting phenomenon in St Woolos Cemetery was a tree almost totally devoid of leaves on one side. This leaf fall and the recent milder weather had triggered the tree into producing blossom (in September!).

It would seem that it is now a case of find the horse chestnut, find the moth. I am grateful to Rodney Morris who helped with the tedious task of looking at over a hundred trees in one afternoon, to the gentleman in Stow Park Circle who offered coffee and biscuits because of my concern for the health of his trees and to the Welsh Assembly for my bus pass which allowed me to do this extensive survey for free.

The wider issue for conservationists, arboriculturalists and those responsible for trees in parks, public open spaces etc is that this represents yet another threat to the horse chestnut. There are at least two other problems: the fungus *Guignardia aesculi* and Bleeding Canker disease. Of particular concern for me is that the horse chestnuts become moribund and pose a threat to public safety. I have recently found a tree next to the main ride in Allt-yr-yn Nature Reserve which appears to be completely dead. It has very large overhanging limbs which if they break off, possibly during a gale, could pose a very real threat. I have referred the problem to the local authority tree officer for an expert opinion.

I found some information on the internet about other possible host trees for this moth. In "no choice" host specificity tests, full development was observed on sycamore, *Acer pseudoplatanus* and *platanoides* and Norway maple, whilst the larvae fed on hazel died. It is too early to assess the full impact

of the invasion by this micro moth but I believe that the outlook is bleak for horse chestnut. So far as the impact on other moth species is concerned there does not appear to be any great threat. Species such as Pale Pinion, Sycamore, Light Emerald and Swallow-tail may be found on horse chestnut but not exclusively so – perversely the Horse Chestnut moth feeds on heather and cross-leaved heath!

Roger James.

## European Moth Night

The 4th European Moth Nights will take place in the period **11–15 October 2007**. The principle is the same as the British National Moth Night, when lepidopterists are asked to count the macromoths recorded in one night and send in their results so that a snapshot can be obtained of species and abundance, in this case across Europe. Unlike the British NMN, the recorder can choose one night from within a short period. The data should be sent in the form of a list (preferably as a table in EXCEL or some other format) by 31st January 2008.

The co-ordinator for Wales is Ron Elliott, to whom results can be sent and from whom information can be obtained.

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Further information can be also be obtained from the web site <http://euromothnights.uw.hu/>

## An Unusual Peacock

Several times during the day I will look out of the window to see if any butterflies are flying, and many is the time I have turned to delight in a Peacock feeding on the flowers in my garden. Early this week, the phrase took on a whole new connotation and my eyes popped when, three yards away, was a

Peacock of the ornithological variety rather than lepidoptera munching its way through my flowers.

The benefits were that it seemed to regard dandelions as a delicacy and helped considerably with the weeding, and also I have never seen next door's cat cowering so much – it was a much more effective cat scarer than a dog. It would not let me approach and was last seen running towards a nearby SINC (site of importance for nature conservation); now that would make an interesting record...

Meanwhile, is anybody missing an expensive pet.....?



Martin Anthoney

## Newport Report

### Butterflies

The hoped-for Indian summer has not materialised and butterfly numbers have reflected this. We have managed four transect visits to the Newport Wetlands Reserve. On 1<sup>st</sup> September we recorded 62 individuals, with 38 Meadow Brown making up the bulk. We saw two Painted Ladies. Numbers increased to 109 butterflies on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept, with Meadow Brown again the most numerous. Large White increased to 24 individuals. On 9<sup>th</sup> Sept. we saw 87 individuals including three Red Admiral.

Sheila covered the transect on 27<sup>th</sup> Sept, possibly the last of the year. Just 13 individuals were recorded, the highlight being two Commas feeding on blackberry. The day started off with promise but increasing cloud cover and a wind coming from the north east put paid to any further butterfly activity. In the seven or so years we have been doing the transect this is undoubtedly the worst as far as numbers are concerned, reflecting conditions throughout Britain. Roll on next year!

On 18<sup>th</sup> September I saw three Clouded Yellow nectaring in the uncut hay meadows at Allt-yr-yn LNR. They were accompanied by two Painted Lady. The odd Red Admiral has appeared on the Michaelmas Daisies in my garden but nothing like the numbers I saw this time last year.

Roger James

### Moths

On 28<sup>th</sup> August Chris Jones recorded Tissue at Home Farm, Caerleon. This is only the third Newport record for this species; the two previous ones were at Uskmouth in 2001 and 2003. This was, incidentally, our 300<sup>th</sup> macro species for the year. On 31<sup>st</sup> August I caught another two species which are infrequently recorded in Newport, Lesser Treble Bar and Antler moth at Melbourne Way. I had further success on 2<sup>nd</sup> September with Mouse moth and Cypress Pug. On 4<sup>th</sup> September I trapped Centre-barred Sallow, whilst Kevin had Frosted Orange at Goldcliff on 5<sup>th</sup> and Ear Moth at Gaer Park Lane on 6<sup>th</sup>.

I had a first Newport record with Oak Lutestring on 7<sup>th</sup> September, with a Barred Sallow also in the same trap. Another good night at Melbourne way on 11<sup>th</sup> produced Brindled Green, Lunar Underwing and Autumnal Rustic plus another two Cypress Pugs.. On the same night Sheila had Elephant Hawk at Haisboro Avenue, the latest date we have for this species. A trapping session at Mescoed Mawr on 13<sup>th</sup> September produced three September Thorns though it was a poor night otherwise.

Further Autumnal Rustics appeared at my site on 14<sup>th</sup> together with Black Rustic and Sallow, and on 19<sup>th</sup> I recorded the first Blair's Shoulder-knot of the year. On 21<sup>st</sup> I found a very fresh Buff Ermine in my trap – the latest ever record for Newport (text books give mid-May to July as the flight period. On the same night Kevin trapped Large Wainscot at Uskmouth. Sheila saw two Beaded Chestnut at Haisboro Avenue on 22<sup>nd</sup> and I had Pink-barred Sallow on the same night. Prize of the month however goes to Kevin who had a new Newport record with two Feathered Ranunculus at Goldcliff on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

These are the latest records I have for this year, in which we have recorded 324 macro species, with numbers of moths holding up better than the butterflies despite an almost total lack of migrants. Thanks once again to my correspondents.

Roger James



*Tissue (Chris Jones)*



## Recent Highlights

### **Too much of a good thing?**

Oak Lutestring was a species I had not seen for twenty years and Roger James had never seen. Knowing it had been recorded from the Wye Valley in the past, on 5<sup>th</sup> Sept we set up a light at a likely looking site above Tintern on what looked (by this year's standards!) a reasonable night. After ten minutes the first moth came in and, delight, it was an Oak Lutestring! A few minutes later a second came to light, followed by another, and another and..... by the time we finished, 25 of the 34 moths caught were Oak Lutestring!

Two days later we were at Wyndcliff and two Oak Lutestrings turned up; a new site record. The same night, Roger had one to his garden trap in Newport, and the following night we saw yet another at a Gwent Wildlife Trust event at Magor Marsh. One previous county record this millenium, then 29 at four localities in four days – at least one species has had a good year!



*Oak Lutestring*



*Phyllonorycter muelleriella* (Simon Phipps)

Otherwise, September followed the disappointing trend of the previous three months with few interesting records.

25 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Bleached Pug at Llandogo	(Simon Phipps)
29 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Tissue at Home Farm, Caerleon	(Chris Jones)
	Phyllonorycter muelleriella, a micro not very often recorded, at Llandogo.	(Simon Phipps)
1 <sup>st</sup> Sept.	Crescent Dart at Home Farm, Caerleon	(Chris Jones)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept	Cypress Pug at Melbourne Way, Newport	(Roger James)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	In an area of less than 20 yards, 17 Small Tortoiseshell were counted on thistle along a track near Trellech at SO 498 054. Also, nearby 10 Small Copper along with 20+ Common Blues on heathland near Beacon Hill, SO5105. Unusually high numbers this season.	(Bill Jones)
4 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Sharp-angled Carpet at Llandogo	(Simon Phipps)

- 7<sup>th</sup> Sept Two Clouded Yellow in the Uskmouth end of the Newport Wetlands Reserve. Followed by a few more sightings during the next fortnight confirming the belated arrival this year of this immigrant. (Martin Anthony)
- 18<sup>th</sup> Sept Three Clouded Yellow at Allt-yr-yn LNR, Newport. (Roger James)
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept Two Feathered Ranunculus at Goldcliff. An uncommon species in Gwent. (Kevin Dupé)
- Up to 5 Clouded Yellow at Collister Pill. The latest record so far this year and also the highest number reported. (Haydn Jones)

### Dates for your Diary 2007

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October Butterfly Conservation (South Wales) Members' Day and AGM at the new Kenfig NNR visitors centre 10.30am to 4pm.  
Despite the name, non-members are welcome to attend. The speakers lined up are:

<i>Garden Moths Scheme in Wales – GMS Cymru.</i>	Norman Lowe
<i>“Moths Count” (National Moth Recording Scheme)</i>	Zoe Randle, BC Dorset office
<i>Butterflies in the Wider Countryside: opportunities in Wales</i>	Katie Cruickshanks, BC Dorset office
<i>Brief presentations on branch projects and activities</i>	Richard Smith
<i>BC's European Interest Group.</i>	Dr Simon Spencer
<i>Recent Highlights from Castle Martin in Pembrokeshire</i>	Bob Haycock.

To drive to Kenfig, leave M4 motorway at junction 37. At exit roundabout follow A4229 towards **“Porthcawl”**. At first roundabout (after 400 yds) **turn right** onto B4283 towards North Cornelly. Go under motorway and carry on right through village until cross-roads just beyond. Turn **left** here, crossing motorway on an over-bridge and following this road for another half mile, (past both “Angel” and then “Prince of Wales” pubs on your left), until you see the reserve car park on the **right**. Tea and coffee will be available. Bring your **own lunch** or there are food outlets within 5 minutes drive.

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