

Gwent Recorders' Forum Meeting

Saturday 20th February 2010
RSPB Centre, Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve

Theme: Aquatic Habitats and Species

The Gwent Recorders' Forum was chaired by Martin Anthoney. Starting us off was **Dr Elizabeth Chadwick** (*Cardiff University*) who gave a fascinating talk about her research into otter carcasses. Elizabeth pointed out that the post-mortem is much more than just looking into the cause of death. It can generate useful biological information that can guide conservation and be used as an index of condition of ecosystems.

Dai Roberts (*Riverfly Partnership*) outlined the work of the partnership and the importance of monitoring the riverfly population as they are essential indicators of the health of aquatic systems. **Dr Ingrid Juettner** (*National Museum of Wales*) provided a unique insight into diatoms—a group that most attendees knew very little about. Diatoms are very much underrecorded and their taxonomy needs considerably more work as many species have not yet been described, or have been grouped with others. The work of the Environment Agency (EA) with the reintroduction of water voles at Llangorse Lake was presented by **Selwyn Eagle** (*EA*). The reintroduction programme is going well despite the pressure of leisure activities around the lake and numerous predators, in particular, mink.

Outside the central theme, **Adam Rowe** (*SEWBReC*) gave an update on SEWBReC, and how to become a member of the company. **Jerry Lewis** (*Gwent Ornithological Society*) gave a talk on hawfinches. Jerry has developed a more successful methodology for ringing hawfinches. His studies have shown that it is probable that by using traditional bird ringing techniques we have been underestimating hawfinch population numbers. Jerry illustrated the talk with some amazing photos of these colourful birds. In the afternoon and in the last hour of the glorious winter sunshine, a few attendees took a walk around the reserve.

A big thank you to all the speakers at the fora. They made the day highly informative and very enjoyable.