

GWENT RECORDERS NEWSLETTER



Issue 8 December 2004

1. Gwent Recorders' Forum Meeting

The 5th meeting of the Forum is taking place on **Saturday 12th February 2005** at the Glen yr Afon Hotel in Usk. Invitations have been sent out with this newsletter. If you have not received one for some reason, please contact Martin Anthoney on 01633 612272.

At the meeting we will be finalising projects for applications to the Species Challenge Fund - species subgroups discussed possible species to take forward at the last forum meeting in January 2004. A new application round in January/February was confirmed earlier this month. A number of letters of complaint had been sent to the Countryside Council for Wales after they announced it may not be going ahead again next year, including one sent from Martin on behalf of the Gwent Recorders' Forum, which may have influenced this decision.

If you have any thoughts on potential species for projects and would like to discuss them prior to, or if you are unable to attend, our February meeting, the **Species Subgroup Coordinators** are:

Birds: Jerry Lewis, Monmouthshire County Council

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Invertebrates: Alison Jones, Caerphilly CBC

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✉ jonesa2@caerphilly.gov.uk

Mammals, Fish and Herpetofauna:

Melanie Sutherland, Caerphilly CBC

☎ 01495 235253

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Plants: Colin Cheesman, Blaenau Gwent CBC

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2. LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANS (LBAPs)

2.1 Blaenau Gwent

- 2 editions of 'Biodiversity Matters', the newsletter of the Blaenau Gwent Biodiversity Partnership, have been produced and widely distributed. 3rd edition is due out in February 2005. Most recorders should be on the mailing list to receive copies, however, if you would like to be put on the mailing list or have any articles you would like to contribute to future editions of the newsletter, please contact Deborah Beeson on tel. 01495 355702.
- Autumn/Winter 2004/05 Copy of the Biodiversity Events Guide has been produced and distributed. This will take us up to April 2005. Thank you to all recorders who have given their time to help lead events in Blaenau Gwent since it was launched. Despite considerable publicity, some events have been poorly attended which has been disheartening. The wet weather hasn't helped either! However, it is hoped that with an ongoing interesting and varied programme of free events, this will help raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity. It also represents a great opportunity for recruiting willing volunteers to undertake survey work. If you are willing to lead an event or have any ideas for volunteer training, please contact Deb Beeson.
- The Blaenau Gwent Biodiversity Partnership has produced a leaflet on helping badgers with the emphasis on acquiring data from the local community on local badger setts, recording badger sightings and road casualties, and reporting any badger crime incidents. It is hoped that this will be one in a series of leaflets focusing on helping Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species in Blaenau Gwent. If anyone recording in Blaenau Gwent comes across badger data, please pass onto Dave Cooksey on 07831 623627 or Deb Beeson. To report wildlife crime to badgers, contact the Wildlife Crime Officer at the local police station on tel. 01495 212021. We are also looking to undertake a badger survey of Blaenau Gwent in 2005. For this, a volunteer training event has been organised on the 20th March 2005 at 3pm. Please contact Dave Cooksey to book a place if you are interested.
- A series of Habitat Management Guidelines has been produced for Landowners and Managers on the management, restoration and creation of most priority habitats found in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. These include Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland, Upland Mixed Ash Woodland, Upland Oak Woodland, Wet Woodland, Hedgerows, Acid Grassland, Unimproved Neutral Grassland, Dwarf Shrub Heath, Blanket Bog, Lakes, Ponds and Temporary Water Habitat, Rivers and Streams, and Wildlife Habitats in Gardens. If you would like a copy, please contact Deborah Beeson.

Gwent Recorders' Newsletter January 2005

- The 'Go Wild' Event held on 20th June 2004 at Parc Bryn Bach was a great success with over 2,000 people attending. Many thanks to those recorders who were able to attend. It really is important that those involved in biodiversity conservation and recording work help support these events. Steve Clark from the Gwent Badger Group had 7 reports of possible sett information passed onto him; therefore, it is also a good source of information exchange to acquire survey data. 'Go Wild' is always held during Wales Biodiversity Week in June each year and alternates between Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly.
- Contact: Deborah Beeson, Blaenau Gwent CBC ☎ 01495 355702 📧 deborah.beeson@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

2.2 Brecon Beacons National Park

- Species surveys/research have been doing quite a lot this year:
 - Brecknock Wildlife Trust have led a LBAP project (1st of 3 years) on nightjar radio-tracking to establish how far our local breeding population forage to help influence forestry management
 - Worked with Butterfly Conservation to start a 3 year marsh fritillary habitat assessment on known & potential marsh fritillary sites in the National Park with the help of our local butterfly recorder.
 - BWT have helped lead water vole training & surveys in the National Park as part of the all-Wales surveys
 - The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) have undertaken great crested newt surveys, provided training days & have worked with Powys County Council to develop a site management plan for our best great crested newt site in the National Park
 - And will be working with PCC & Brecknock Wildlife Trust to create a new pond at the site.
 - BBNPA have undertaken moth surveys on a range of BBNPA owned land this year & have continued to fund the local moth group to buy equipment to encourage new recorders.
 - Finally BBNPA are leading a Wales National Parks project on bat habitat use in fragmented landscapes
- Habitat works:
 - as well as the usual deliberate heathland burning to manage our upland & lowland heaths (as opposed to the 'accidental' fires which keep occurring), the BBNPA have been undertaking bracken & gorse management on various sites to increase our area of acid grassland/heath mosaics in the uplands.

Gwent Recorders' Newsletter January 2005

- BBNPA have also undertaken reedbed management at Llangorse Lake & have been undertaking tree works to protect some of our raised bog habitats
- Awareness-raising
 - we held 2 successful joint events during Wales Biodiversity Week - one with Merthyr LBAP & one with Hereford LBAP with lots of new & interested faces present
 - The 3 National Parks of Wales concentrated on wildlife gardening at this year's Royal Welsh Show with lots & lots of information & kids activities (including native wildlife face-painting .. I got very good at bats!!).
- Finally up and coming events:
 - the next Powys & Brecon Beacons Recorders Forum will be held on February 19th 2005 at Rhayader Leisure Centre (for further information contact Janet Imlach, BIS Manager on 01874 610881).
 - The BBNP LBAP will hold a Big Biodiversity Vote for local residents from 18th January to 18th February - to identify some additional species for inclusion with the LBAP - voting will take place at 5 centres (including Abergavenny TIC) & you'll also be able to take part online (www.breconbeacons.org).
- Finally, finally - many will already know, but I am expecting my first baby at the end of April, so have decided to give up work to be a full-time mum at the end of February ... thanks to everyone who has helped & encouraged me over the years (in this post & previous ones).
- Contact: Andrea Rowe, Biodiversity Project Manager ☎ 01874 620470 📧 andrea.rowe@breconbeacons.org

2.3 Caerphilly

- Surveys this year included great crested newts, water voles and nightjar.
- Site management work has been carried out at the only known site of the Cornish Moneywort in Gwent. This involved fencing off a 2 metre stretch of bank on the Nant y Draenog to prevent further damage by sheep. The Countryside Service of Caerphilly CBC undertook the work, with permission from the landowner.
- The LBAP is yet to be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, but Cabinet and the Sustainable Development Advisory Panel have both supported the idea. It will be decided at the Council meeting on 11th January 2005. Once adopted, other partner organisations in the Caerphilly Biodiversity Partnership have been asked to look into a similar commitment to the actions and targets relevant to them.

Gwent Recorders' Newsletter January 2005

- The House Nesting Bird Survey 2004 was another success, following on from the first public participation carried out last year. Nearly 200 completed forms have been returned which means that over 300 householders have responded to the survey. Analysis of the 2003 results has shown that there is a relationship between the renovation of roofs and replacement of windows with uPVC with the reduction or loss of nests.
- Go Wild! is being organised for Saturday 11th June 2005 as part of Wales Biodiversity Week. If anyone would like to get involved, just drop me a line - we need all the help we can get in making it even bigger and better!! PLEASE contact me with ideas, to attend with a stall or species info. or to pass on contacts of people you think may be interested. I look forward to hearing from you!
- Contact: Melanie Sutherland ☎ 01495 235 253 ✉ sutherm@caerphilly.gov.uk

2.4 Cardiff

- In collaboration with the environment agency, Cardiff Council plans to extend an existing area of reedbed on the River Rumney at Llanrumney. This project will contribute to the implementation of the Reedbed HAP by increasing the area of this habitat in Cardiff.
- Recording highlights were a new colony of Marbled White Butterfly in St Mellons on 24th June (on a site with planning permission for housing) and 2 singing Cetti's Warblers at Hendre Lake on 18th April.
- Contact: Vaughan Grantham ☎ 029 2087 3227 ✉ vgrantham@cardiff.gov.uk

2.5 Monmouthshire

- After a gap of over 2 years since Georgina left for new challenges, Monmouthshire County Council has recently appointed a new Biodiversity Assistant. Kate Woolcock has a degree in Ecology and Environmental Management from Cardiff University and over two years experience of working in various areas of nature conservation, including biodiversity projects, surveying and site management at Avon and Brecknock Wildlife Trusts, English Nature in Wiltshire and ecological consultancies in Brecknock and Gloucestershire. Kate's initial focus will be the completion and publication of the LBAP and the re-instatement of the Monmouthshire Biodiversity Partnership.
- Anyone who thinks that they will be able to be part of the Monmouthshire Partnership should **contact** Kate Woolcock, Biodiversity Assistant, Countryside Service, Monmouthshire County Council, County Hall, Cwmbran, NP44 2XH ☎ 01633 644684 ✉ katewoolcock@monmouthshire.gov.uk

2.6 Newport

- Ran activities and an information stand at the Eisteddford held at Tredegar House in Newport.
- New Biodiversity Officer
- Consulted on draft Nature Conservation Strategy which includes cSINCs.
- Updating the LBAP targets and aim to consult partners on this before holding a partnership meeting early next year
- Run several biodiversity projects, assisted by CCW funding, including;
- Reedbed translocation to create new habitat at Tredegar House,
- Wildlife Gardening Seminar to launch the leaflets 'Go Wild in the Garden' and 'Go Wild in the Allotment'
- A series of 5 postcards have been produced encouraging people to send in records of popular species; otters, kingfishers, dormice, frogs and slow worms
- Running a questionnaire this year with local farmers to find out more about the distribution of tree sparrows and other farmland birds on the Gwent Levels, this will support the Gwent Ornithology Trust's survey.
- Contact: Abigail Lee ☎ 01633 232164 ✉ abigail.lee@newport.gov.uk

2.7 Torfaen

- Torfaen County Borough is exceptionally fortunate in that it supports a wealth of different habitats, several of which are important on an international scale. It is therefore, critical for us to safeguard and enhance these habitats if we want to halt the decline of biodiversity by 2010.
- Torfaen's Local Biodiversity Action Plan is now freely available to recorders but there is a charge to consultants. It contains 24 Habitat Action Plans and 38 Species Action Plans and has been accepted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- In recent years there have been many biodiversity successes, which have stemmed directly from the LBAP process. This could be because more and more people are considering the importance in conserving habitats and species.
- One example is that otters were once widespread throughout the South Wales Valleys, but pollution and diminishing fish stocks in many rivers caused a fast decline in their numbers from the late 1950s. Things are now looking better and in Torfaen the inconspicuous otter is showing great signs of recovery. Otters have been recorded again in places where they used to thrive, such as on the river, and in streams, canals and lakes.

- Twelve tributaries have also been identified as being inhabited by white-clawed crayfish and there is also one record from the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. One of these streams has a CPUE (catch per unit effort - 1 man hour) exceeding all the sites in the Usk and Wye combined as sampled by Coley (2000). Coley also notes that of 11 Usk catchment sites known to have native crayfish pre-1990, 8 (72.7%) had lost them by 2000. This clearly shows the importance of some of the tributaries in Torfaen on a national, if not international scale.
- There are not many records for the great crested newt in Torfaen County Borough, but they have recently turned up in Varteg. The great crested newt is a rare, but under-recorded, species within Torfaen, probably due to a lack of survey work. More research is planned for the near future to help safeguard and enhance the species.
- Many brownfield sites in Torfaen County Borough have been found to support a range of otherwise scarce and rare, and/or specialised invertebrates. These species include the long-winged conehead, scarce blue-tailed damselfly and Lesne's earwig. Some of these sites also offer great potential to reptiles, especially common lizard, slow worm and grass snake.
- Torfaen's volunteers have formed a habitat management working partnership with Pontypool to Blaenavon Railway volunteers. This is an example of how different volunteer groups can come together to support different interests. Scrub encroachment is restricting the movement of trains up and down the line; however, it is also taking over the acid grassland that supports species such as the small pearl-bordered fritillary, moonwort and a diverse range of fungi. Therefore, scrub management, although time consuming, has helped safeguard our green heritage in more ways than one.
- If anyone is keen to know more about the LBAP process in Torfaen, please contact Steve Williams ☎ 01633 648256 ✉ steve.williams@torfaen.gov.uk or Kris Roberts ☎ 01633 648308 ✉ Kris.Roberts@torfaen.gov.uk

3. RAF CAERWENT VISIT - MAY AND JULY 2004

Major Hughes, the base commandant, kindly agreed to allow members of the Forum to visit the Caerwent Training Area on Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th May, and Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th July. The site is a superb wildlife refuge of approx. 1,800 acres with limestone grassland, regenerating brownfield areas, woodlands, ponds, etc. which are largely free from public disturbance.

Extract from *The Silurian*, the Monmouthshire Moth and Butterfly Group Newsletter No. 17 July 2004, edited by Martin Anthoney:

A morning to remember!

On Sunday 18th July, I was lucky enough to accompany Sam Bosanquet on a visit to the MoD Caerwent training area (ST4791 and 4891) arranged through the Gwent Recorders Forum. In a walk to remember, 3 hours in the morning and an early afternoon produced 34 species of micro-moth, including no less than six species new to Gwent (VC35):

- *Infurcitinea argentimaculella*
- *Sophronia semicostella*
- *Thiotrichia subocellea*
- *Mecyna asinalis*
- *Pyrausta nigrata*
- *Stenoptilia pterodactyla*

Monmouthshire Moth and Butterfly Group

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4. THE 2004 NIGHTJAR SURVEY IN GWENT

[Jerry Lewis]

After being postponed in 2003, the 10 year assessment of the UK's Nightjar population took place this summer. In this part of the country, the majority of Nightjars are found nesting in forest restocks (the young stages of conifer plantations following felling and replanting), but in some parts of the UK the Nightjar is predominantly a heathland bird. A relatively large number of sample 1km squares (selected on the basis of suitable habitat) were allocated to Gwent and all but one or two were visited. In addition the Caerphilly recorders achieved almost complete coverage of their forest blocks, with lots of additional squares being visited. The survey involved a minimum of 2 visits to suitable parts of the square at dusk (or dawn), to listen for the characteristic churring of the male birds as they establish their territories and try to attract a mate. The weather during June and July was generally conducive to listening for the birds but several recorders had to contend with swarms of midges; who also found the conditions (and the additional food source), to their liking.

In 2003 the forests of the Trelleck plateau and Wentwood were surveyed for Forest Enterprise and an impressive 33 males were found - the highest number ever recorded in Gwent (see article in the Gwent Ornithological Society Report 2003 for more details). Even though results for the western half of Wentwood are still awaited it looks like this 2003 total will be exceeded.

The numbers of males recorded (by Local Authority area) were as follows:

- Blaenau Gwent - none found in the forest blocks in the south, potential sites in the north were not visited
- Caerphilly - 9 males in the Abercarn area
- Torfaen - none found in the forest blocks around Cwmbran
- Newport - 2 males in the west, and an additional 10 (estimated from 2003 results) in Wentwood
- Monmouthshire - 12 males in the Trelleck plateau area and 15 in Wentwood

The stronghold of this species in Gwent remains the large clearfells/restocks of Wentwood Forest with good numbers also found on the Trelleck plateau and in Abercarn forest. All of the birds were found in the restocks, the preferred age being 3 - 5 year old). This is a much under-rated habitat, and current moves by the Forestry Commission (to adopt continuous cover forestry in many areas), will mean that new areas of restocks are unlikely to be created in the future. Without the clear felling, nesting areas for Nightjar (and for other species that favour restocks during the breeding season, such as Linnet, Whitethroat, Grasshopper Warbler and Long-eared Owl), could well be in very short supply. Once the trees have grown, and become too tall/dense to attract these species, the plantation becomes suitable for other species such as Turtle Dove. This is another priority species, just hanging on in this corner of Wales, which could be adversely affected by a switch to continuous cover forestry.

It is known that young plantations are important for Nightjars to nest, but what of the rest of the forest block and the adjacent areas - are these important? To try and shed more light on the Nightjar's requirements in upland Wales, a radio tracking study commenced this summer in various forest blocks in the adjacent county of Brecon. The results of which are likely to influence how forests are managed in the future, both in Gwent and further afield.

5. ARABLE MOSSES IN MONMOUTHSHIRE

[Sam Bosanquet]

The last three years have seen a significant increase in our knowledge of the bryophyte flora of arable fields in South Wales, thanks to the Survey of Bryophytes of Arable Land (SBAL) run by the British Bryological Society. As part of the survey I have recorded in more than 30 fields in Monmouthshire, from the levels near Caldicot to the Monnow Valley at Monmouth Cap. This has produced several new species for the county and shown that other species previously considered rarities are in fact widespread.

Both mosses and liverworts grow in arable fields, with approximately 40 species of the former and 8 species of the latter occurring regularly in the habitat. Most of the mosses are small and rather obscure looking, but the liverworts tend to be large and striking. The range of species present in a field varies according to the soil pH and its clay content, as well as recent management. Light, calcareous soils support Bird's-claw Beard-moss *Barbula unguiculata*, Pea Bryum *Bryum ruderale*, Pill Bryum *B. violaceum*, Cuspidate Earth-moss *Tortula acaulon* and Common Crystalwort *Riccia sorocarpa*, whilst more acidic soils are characterised by Raspberry Bryum *Bryum klinggraeffii*, Field Forklet-moss *Dicranella staphylina*, Cylindric Ditrichum *Ditrichum cylindricum*, Minute Earth-moss *Ephemerum minutissimum*, Common Pottia *Tortula truncata* and Glaucous Crystalwort *Riccia glauca*. There is considerable overlap though.

Arable bryophytes have two main lifestyles. Some reproduce asexually using tubers (like tiny potatoes) on their rhizoids; this is a rapid process and can be completed before autumn ploughing kills of the plants. Others reproduce sexually using spores; this is slower and may not be completed by the time of ploughing. Some species, notably Hasselquist's Hyssop *Entosthodon fascicularis* and several *Weissias*, don't even begin fruiting until mid winter. In general, fields that are regularly ploughed in the autumn lose their more interesting sexual bryophytes and support only the commoner asexual species. Heavily cultivated Maize fields are usually bryophyte deserts. Ideal management for arable bryophytes includes spring sowing, rather than autumn sowing, of cereals and occasional two-year set-aside to allow late-fruiting species to set spores.

Monmouthshire's arable fields are rapidly gaining legendary status amongst arable bryologists. Some of them, especially in the well-recorded Dingestow area, have bryophytes providing 70% or 80% cover in the autumn and hold more than 30 different species. This is because the county has plenty of clayey soil, favoured by most of the more interesting arable bryophytes, and also because it is near the edge of Britain's arable area so cultivation tends to be rather less intensive than elsewhere.

Hornworts have declined dramatically in most of Britain and are generally rare, but Field Hornwort *Anthoceros agrestis* remains pretty frequent in the county and Carolina Hornwort *Phaeoceros carolinianus* is widely scattered. Spreading-leaved Beardless-moss *Weissia squarrosa* and Beaked Beardless-moss *W. rostellata* are both BAP species listed in the Red Data Book and both thrive in arable near Dingestow. The BAP priority Sausage Beard-moss *Didymodon tomaculosus* is a recently described British endemic known from fewer than 30 sites, one of which is in a Monmouthshire field. The books say that the rare Sessile Earth-moss *Ephemerum sessile* is restricted to woodland rides and reservoir margins, but here in south Wales it also grows in a few arable fields. Another pleasing recent find was Floerke's Phascum *Microbryum floerkeanum*, a tiny brown moss found primarily eastern England. A colony in a calcareous clay field near Caldicot was the first record for South Wales and the first anywhere in Wales since the 1890s.

The Survey of Bryophytes of Arable Land is in its final winter and results will be published in the *Journal of Bryology* some time in the next two or three years. Further information on the project can be found by following links from www.britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk.



Hornwort, *Anthoceros agrestis*



Bryophyte-rich stubble field

6. MONMOUTHSHIRE GREENWEB

[Sue Parkinson]

Monmouthshire GreenWeb is a network of organisations and groups working on a wide variety of sustainable development and environmental initiatives. There are currently 31 member groups, including Gwent Wildlife Trust, Gwent Badger Group, Gwent Ornithological Society, Wye Valley AONB, Butterfly Conservation Wales and Monmouthshire Meadows Group.

GreenWeb has a website www.monmouthshiregreenweb.co.uk where members can promote their work, get new volunteers involved and share and exchange information. Each group has their own page or area on the site with links to their own website, if they have one. There is also an events diary that combines the events and meetings of all members, an on-line newsletter and a bulletin board where requests for help and information about grants etc can be posted. The site is updated regularly and over recent months visits to the site have increased to > 9,000 a month.

Membership of GreenWeb is free, and open to any group in the County or its hinterland that aims to benefit the community by promoting sustainable environmental initiatives and wants to gain strength from sharing information, resources and ideas.

A paper newsletter was published in October to raise awareness of the network and the activities of its members to the general public. A second edition will be published in February. A public event is also being planned on an environmental theme.

If your group would benefit from being part of Monmouthshire GreenWeb, contact the Coordinator - Sue Parkinson on 0845 4580254 (local rate) or email admin@monmouthshiregreenweb.co.uk.

7. ORTHOPTERA HIGHLIGHTS 2004

[Steve Williams]

It's been another interesting year for orthoptera recording in the county. At long last the hard work of a few dedicated recorders has paid dividends and a better understanding of distribution and habitat preferences of some species is now emerging. Most of this year's fieldwork has concentrated on the Gwent Levels but with some additional coverage the Wye Valley and the western Valleys.

Records

The much predicted first county record for the long winged conehead (*Conocephalus discolor*) has now emerged. Credit goes to both Sam Bosanquet and Adrian Hickman (accompanied by Verity Pitken) for independently recording this species at separate sites during July and August. A clearer picture of the distribution of long winged conehead in south East Wales was enhanced by another record from a site south of Cwmbran. Once again thanks to Adrian Hickman for this. We now eagerly await the arrival of Roesel's bush-cricket (*Metrioptera roeselii*).

A close relative of the long winged conehead, yet much commoner, is the short winged conehead (*Conocephalus dorsalis*). This cricket is now regular in suitable habitat all over the Gwent Levels and elsewhere. It is most commonly associated with *Juncus* dominated marshy grassland as well as the vegetation fringed reens of the levels. It has also emerged that habitat suitable for short winged conehead can be equally attractive to the long winged conehead. In this case the aid of a bat detector is an invaluable identification tool for separating songs.

Bat detector survey technique!

Investment in a bat detector is now almost standard equipment for serious fieldwork. Unless you are lucky enough to have acute hearing the use of a bat detector will enable you to identify all British orthoptera by their songs. But how do you develop an understanding of 'orthoptera song'? Well one easy way is to obtain a copy of 'A Sound Guide to the Grasshoppers and Allied Insects of Great Britain and Ireland', available from Harley Books. But should you not want to part with that hard earned cash why not log on to the excellent website of the Environment Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly at www.ercis.co.uk, where you can download songs of all species found in the county.

Improve your field skills!

I've been asked to recommend a site where a novice recorder might be able to easily develop their grasshopper and cricket field skills. There are now a few hotspots in the county where a fair number of the county's lists are present. In this respect the Newport Wetlands is good value, as is Gwent Wildlife Trust's Magor Marsh Reserve. The foreshore between Magor Pill and Black Rock is especially good for the lesser marsh grasshopper (*Chorthippus albomarginatus*). But probably the most accessible and diverse is Llandegfedd Reservoir. Here, the muddy margins support healthy numbers of slender (*Tetrix subulata*) and common ground-hopper (*Tetrix undulata*); the rougher grassland patches contain short winged conehead and dark bush cricket (*Pholodoptera griseoptera*) and the oak bush cricket (*Meconema thalassinum*) is found in scrubby woodland margins.

Please send in your records

In a previous edition of this newsletter I made an appeal for more records from those of us who operate moth traps. This has again been prompted by a collection of records from Sam Bosanquet containing a number attracted to light, including the lesser earwig (*Labia minor*), house cricket (*Acheta domesticus*) and slender ground-hopper. As the recording of moths is

increasing in popularity any data moth recorders can supply on instances of orthoptera in traps would be most helpful.

Finally, I would like to make my annual plea for more information, however small, on any aspect of grasshopper, cricket and allied insect recording in the vice county. Should you have any records please provide details on species with date, location (with grid reference if possible) and habitat to: Steve Williams, Orthoptera Recorder

✉ 8 Snatchwood Terrace, Abersychan, Pontypool, Torfaen, NP4 7BP

✉ grasshoppersvc35@aol.com

8. NEW GRANT SCHEME FOR BLAENAU GWENT

[Deborah Beeson]

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has recently launched a new community grant scheme. The Biodiversity Action Grant Scheme – otherwise known as ‘B.A.G.S.’, is the first of its kind in South Wales and seen as one of the key mechanisms for delivering targets within the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Scheme will provide grants of up to £2,000 – 50% of the cost of the project - for proposals to conserve and improve local biodiversity in Blaenau Gwent in line with targets in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. B.A.G.S will fund £181,000 of conservation and enhancement projects in Blaenau Gwent over three years. This is financed with the help of the Countryside Council for Wales and European Objective 1 funding.

The Scheme is open to landowners, community groups, the private sector, and schools. It however, does not include private gardens.

The types of projects that may be suitable include:

- the creation or restoration of ponds, ditches, and other wetland features
- restoring or establishing heathland habitat
- native hedge planting and restoration
- The restoration or creation of small wildflower areas
- Projects associated with priority species identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Blaenau Gwent
- Providing nest boxes or platforms for wild birds, bat boxes, and otter holts

There is also money available for projects that raise awareness of the importance of Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats in Blaenau Gwent. This may include undertaking survey work, organising volunteer training courses and events, and producing interpretation material.

So if you have a proposal, contact the Biodiversity Project Assistant Mel Stewart straight away to discuss your idea and arrange a site visit. Please note: grants are being awarded on a first come first serve basis. Therefore, the sooner you get your bids in, the sooner you can get your project implemented!

Copies of the Biodiversity Action Grant Pack can be downloaded from our biodiversity website '*The Web of Life*' accessed through <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk> or from the office. For further information please contact Mel Stewart or Deborah Beeson on ☎ 01495 3356070.

9. GWENT AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE GROUP

Contacts:

Matthew Harris (chairman)

✉ 70 Upper Power St, Newport, NP20 5FT

☎ 01633 664662 (Home)

☎ 02920 872065 (Work)

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Melanie Sutherland (secretary)

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10. WALES BIODIVERSITY WEBSITE

The Wales Biodiversity Partnership now has its own website: <http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk> which includes information on all the Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) in Wales, events and a discussion forum. The aim is "to bring together key players from the public, private and voluntary sectors to promote and monitor actions for biodiversity in Wales". Pay it a visit and see what you think! Contact Emily Dicks in CCW,

Bangor (e.dicks@ccw.gov.uk or tel. 01248 385599) if you have any comments or would like to post a new subject on the LBAP discussion forum.

11. EVENTS

- **Identifying Wasps Workshop**

Date: **Saturday 12th March 2005**
Leader: **Mark Pavett**
Agenda: **A general introduction to identifying wasps**
Location: **National Museum, Cardiff**
Time: **10.30 – 16.00**
Contact Details: **029 20573259**

- **Conference – Lepidoptera as indicators of biodiversity conservation**

Date: **8 – 10 April 2005**
Leader: **Butterfly Conservation**
Agenda: **Butterfly Conservations 5th International Symposium will be organised as a series of thematic sessions covering a wide range of subjects involved in the conservation of Lepidoptera, including the management of habitats for biodiversity – converting science into practice. There will also be a field visit to the New Forest.**
Location: **Southampton University**
Cost: **To be confirmed**
Contact Details: **Butterfly Conservation on 01929 400209 or visit their website: www.butterfly-conservation.org**

- **Conference – Native flora for the future**

Date: **12 – 13 April 2005**
Leader: **Flora Locale**
Agenda: **This conference aims to unite the scientific, landscape, forestry and farming communities to consider issues and practicalities on the subject of sourcing and using native flora for habitat creation and restoration. Offers of poster presentations welcomed.**
Location: **Reading**
Cost: **To be confirmed**

Contact Details: **Liz Manley, Flora Locale on 01488 680457, email info@floralocale.org or visit their website: www.floralocale.org**

- **NFBR Conference 2005**

Date: **Friday 4th March 2005**

Leader: **National Federation for Biological Recording (NFBR)**

Agenda: **“Green Spaces, Living Spaces - biological recording and conservation policies in the UK's urban areas” This conference should be of interest to recorders, local records centre staff, Local Authority ecologists and planners, and all those involved in urban greenspace design and management.**

Location: **Swallow St George Hotel, Harrogate**

Cost: **Final details and full programme to be announced**

Contact Details: **<http://www.nfbr.org.uk/html/events.html>**

12. NEW PUBLICATIONS / WEBSITES OF INTEREST

- **Coppice Products Website**

A new website about coppice products has recently been launched. It contains information on wood products from woodlands across the country, an overview of coppice management and its benefits, an online directory of coppice craftsmen and women, an illustrated glossary of coppice and other woodland products, and links to sites on coppice and woodland management. It can be found at: www.coppice-products.co.uk

- **Soil Action Plan**

The Government has recently launched the first soil action plan for England. This can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/environment/landliability/soil/soilactionplan.pdf