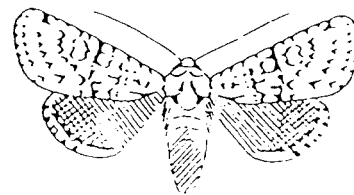


The Glamorgan Moth Recording Group

Founded 1995

President: Steve Moon
Recorder (West): Barry Stewart
Recorder (East): Dave Gilmore
Field Meetings Sec./Newsletter Editor: Mike Powell
Treasurer: Stefan Golaszewski



Dichonia aprilina

NEWSLETTER No. 28- JANUARY 1999

INDOOR MEETING, 24th FEBRUARY 1999

As mentioned in the December newsletter, we will be holding a second winter indoor meeting at Kenfig Pool NNR on 24th February, 7.30pm for 8.00pm. This will be an opportunity for members to show slides and to discuss the forthcoming season.

We also hope to have the provisional atlas available for distribution.

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Mike Wilson, Head of Entomology, Dept. of Biodiversity & Biological Systematics, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff as a new member to the group this month

Please also note that that Kevin Dupe has moved to 44, Gaer Park Lane, Newport, NP9 3NE.

MEMBERS WEEKEND TO PORTLAND

Full details of the members weekend to Portland on the weekend of Friday 16th to Sunday 18th July 1999 appeared in the December newsletter. Accommodation for 22 people has provisionally been booked at the Portland Bird Observatory and Field Centre at a cost of £7.00 per person per night for the Friday and Saturday nights. Places have started to fill and if you wish to attend what is likely to be an excellent weekend for moths, butterflies as well as birds, **please** complete the attached form and return it no later than 20th February enclosing a cheque in full payment.

After this date no further places will be available, as final numbers have to be confirmed with the warden.

MOTH SURVEY AT COED CEFN PWLL DU, DRAETHEN

Enclosed with this newsletter is a detailed 20 page supplement prepared by David Gilmore on behalf of the group. The report gives details of the constant effort trapping that took place between March and October at Coed Cefn Pwll Du, Draethen. Special thanks go to David for the considerable work that went into this supplement. A copy has been sent to Forest Enterprise.

EAST MOORS aka THE CARDIFF HELIPORT, R.I.P.

Well I suppose it was inevitable really that after twenty years of relative obscurity the bulldozers have finally arrived and the *coup de grace* is about to take place. The last piece of decent grassland, albeit partly manmade, on the Cardiff coast namely the Heliport at East Moors is about to be destroyed. I recently took my son Robert down to see the helicopters only to discover that the site has been partially dug up and will be totally redeveloped shortly to make way for a bigger heliport with a departure lounge. This, as you can imagine, has made me rather sad as I have been a regular birdwatcher there for the best part of fifteen years and over the last few I have combined this with moths.

I wrote to CCW back in late 1997 about this site on behalf of the moth group and I received a nice wellworded reply but unfortunately they couldn't do anything personally but advised me to get in contact with the environmental department at Cardiff City Council telling them about this site and if it fitted into their Nature Conservation Strategy plans for Cardiff in anyway. Well having written and spoken to the officers concerned I was then informed that they knew about the site and had designated it a SSSI [Site of Nature Conservation Importance], which in the context of things remembering that the Taff/Ely Estuary [Cardiff Bay] which was a government designated SSSI and part of the upper Bristol Channel SPA & Ramsar site doesn't seem to mean very much.

The destruction of this site means the loss of a very diverse piece of local habitat, I'm no botanist but the place was packed with various grasses and plants like Bee Orchid, Mullein, Vetch and Bird's-foot Trefoil, not rare but in the Cardiff context not common. This was it the best place to go to see butterflies in Cardiff, over 25 species have been recorded including Grayling which bred there.

Where now can you see breeding Skylark within the city limits, this species which has declined so much over the last thirty years on a national scale. The site also held several pairs of Meadow Pipits, Greenfinches, Blackbirds, Robins and the summer migrants Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat. It was also an excellent stop-over site for migrating birds in spring and autumn with Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Grasshopper Warbler, Pied & Spotted Flycatchers, Redstart, Whinchat & Wheatear all recorded there, most annually. Winter has regularly brought Redwing, Fieldfare, Woodcock and Snipe and if you are lucky Short-eared Owl, Barn Owl or Snow Bunting. I could go on with the bird list but you'll just have to read through your old GBC bird reports to see what you'll now miss.

As for the entomological argument the destruction of this site may prove to be a total disaster. We, the Glamorgan Moth-Recording Group, have only recently started to study this site and have already come to the conclusion, through our trapping that it holds many species of grassland moths that only occur here and nowhere else in the Cardiff area. In fact we have a record for a micro-moth which has only occurred here and nowhere else in Wales. This site is one of only of three in Glamorgan that holds the Six-belted Clearwing *Bembecia scopigera*, a nationally notable moth as well as a moth that away from Kenfig is rare for the rest of eastern Glamorgan and is unknown in Gwent that of Yellow Belle *Aspitates ochrearia*.

Unfortunately what is more disheartening is that we might never know the true potential for this site. As with the passing of the Taff/Ely Estuary, due to be enclosed and permanently flooded in the autumn of 1999, this site, although smaller and only really known locally is never the less just part of the on-going destruction of the Cardiff coastline. With the development of the Bay area, the building of the giant Food Park at Wentloog * [another SSSI] and now the destruction of the heliport, it makes one wonder where its all going to end. I know people need houses and factories and the use of the old inner city industrial sites has been put to good effect, but surely with a little more thought the coastline could have been better protected and developed with a green aspect to it. A coastal pathway for instance, planted with native trees and left as a corridor for birds and animals to use and local people to walk and enjoy. This would have been a lot better than the mess we're left with now. My mind is now focused on the last place left along the coast of Cardiff that is as yet undeveloped - the Rhymney Estuary, when that goes we shall have....nothing!

* : I understand that a breeding bird survey will be undertaken for this area in March/May 1999 commissioned by Cardiff Council, as the GBC Newsletter article suggests this would be rewarding to both individual and club. But I wonder what the real reason is for this survey. My guess is that, if nothing of any value is found birdwise then the developers will take the lot saying that, we did commission a bird survey and everything was done above board. Just remember what the US Government said to the Indians in the last century "we only want a little bit of your land".

IN SEARCH OF A TICK ON NEW YEARS DAY, 1999

On the 1st January each year, I am always full of enthusiasm for what the coming year will bring. As a keen birdwatcher I traditionally enjoy going out and usually end up ticking off well over 50 species without too much effort, but this year I wanted to do something a little different. Although moths are seriously scarce in January I was determined to see something, and preferably something that I had never seen before. This meant going for an obscure micro!

The species I chose to target was *Coleophora maritimella*, the larval cases of which can be found, according to Tutt (1902), on the old flower heads of Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*). The adult moth of this species flies in the height of summer and is said to frequent the drier parts of saltmarshes where isolated clumps of the foodplant grow. However, it is the larval stages of this genus that are generally easier to find and identify. Coleophorids spend at least the latter larval stages inside a portable case that is usually constructed from silk and material from the foodplant, hence the common name for the group being the 'case-bearers'. Individuals of our target species live within a single seed head, with a hole just large enough for the head and thoracic legs to poke out from, thus enabling them to feed and move around without leaving the protection of the 'case'. Consequently, each larva looks identical to every other Sea Rush seed on the marsh. Knowing that extensive stands of Sea Rush occur at Llanrhidian Sandra and myself set off with the dogs, full of confidence that we were about to get a new-years tick.

As we were driving down North Road, Gower, vast stands of Sea Rush were evident, covering acres of saltmarsh, but with the persistent wet and windy conditions we opted to search the roadside stands between Crofty and Llanrhidian. We first stopped at Pwll-y-froga (just west of Crofty) and collected a dozen or so seed head samples, then made another brief stop at Wern Halog (just east of Llanrhidian) and collected some more. Because of the wild weather, no attempts were made to find the larval cases in the field, but once home and with suitable light refreshments, the samples were spread onto paper (as prescribed by Tutt (1902)) where we waited for any dislodged or sufficiently annoyed larvae to make their moves.

After five minutes wait, and after examining several seed heads that had holes with silk collars where larvae had previously fed, the first larva betrayed its presence as it made a bid for freedom off the paper. This in effect looked just like a seed on the move, but careful examination under the microscope revealed the fine detail of the front half of the larva and the silken collar from which the larva was projecting from the seed.

Having only occasionally dabbled with coleophoran larvae in the past, this new year experience has whetted my appetite for further recording of this unobtrusive, yet fascinating group of moths. There are just less than 100 species of

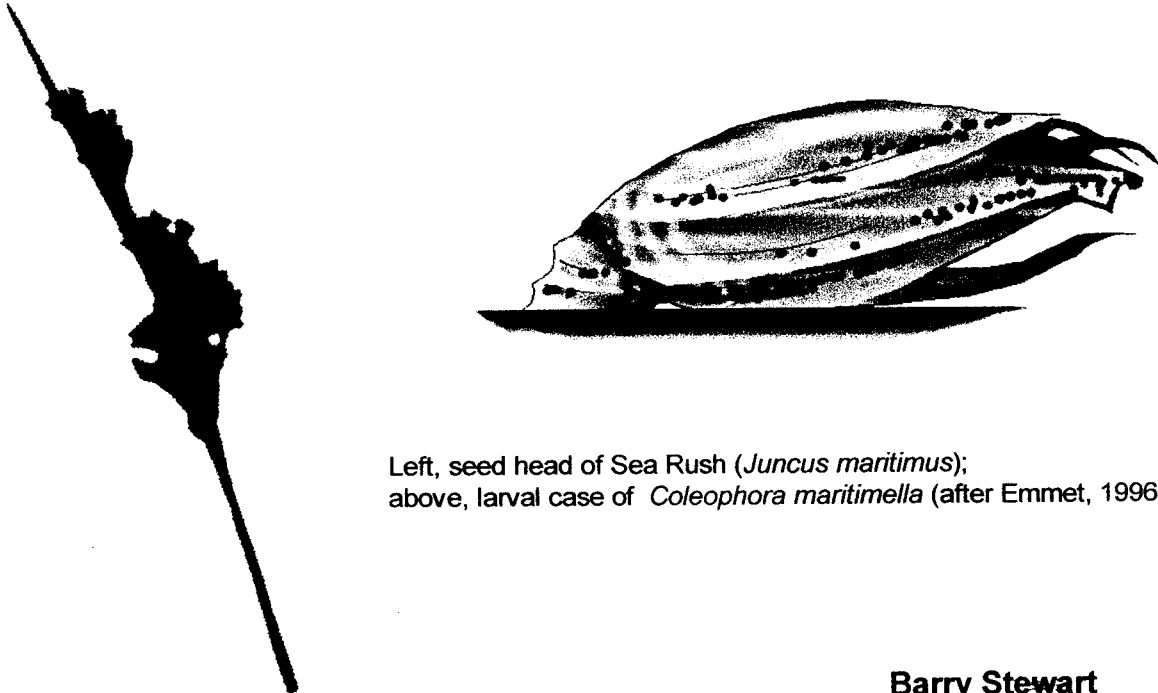
Coleophora in the UK with 44 being recorded in Glamorgan, although very few have been recorded since 1980 (Gilmore, unpublished data). Most have specific host plant associations, making it easy to target and plan trips for each species. The above account illustrates how time-consuming detecting some species can be, but the rewards are satisfying and the data generated invaluable. Anyone with a little patience and a bit of spare cash to buy volume 3 of MBGBI (Emmet, 1996), which is beautifully illustrated and provides excellent keys for both adults and larval cases, could not wish to find a more rewarding project than to record this group of moths. The only other equipment needed is a x10 hand-lens (a microscope is a luxury) and a flora. Anyone interested who would like more information can contact me anytime at home.

References:

Emmet, A. M. (1996) *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland, Volume 3*, Harley Books.

Gilmore, D.R. (unpublished data) Provisional Checklist of Micro-lepidoptera for Glamorgan, Glamorgan Moth Recording Group.

Tutt, J.W. (1902) Practical Hints for the Field Lepidopterist, A Facsimile Reprint, *The Amateur Entomologist*, 23, part II.



Left, seed head of Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*);
above, larval case of *Coleophora maritimella* (after Emmet, 1996).

Barry Stewart

WELSH BREWERS ANNUAL DONATION

Welsh Brewers have again generously donated £150 to the group for 1999. This is the third year running that the company have supported our monitoring work and we thank them for their continued generosity.

BRITISH ENTOMOLOGICAL & NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

BENHS have just published their field meetings programme for 1999 and as corporate members, all members of the Glamorgan Moth Recording Group can attend.

Meetings that are likely to be of interest are as follows:

May 8th, Wye Valley woodlands led by Roger Gaunt.

June 12th, Simonsbath, Exmoor National Park, Somerset led by Keith Brown.

July 10th, Gilfach Farm SSSI, Radnorshire led by Tony Davis.

More details will appear in future newsletters closer to the dates given above.

In addition our own meeting to Gower on 21st August led by Barry Stewart is a joint meeting with BENHS.

1999 FIELD MEETINGS

Full details will appear in the next Newsletter but the dates have now been confirmed as follows:

Friday 23 rd April	Neath Valley	Barry Stewart
Friday 21 st May	Rudry Common	David Gilmore
Saturday 5 th June	Merthyr Common	Mike Powell
Saturday 26 th June	Kenfig Pool NNR	Steve Moon
Saturday 10 th July	Gower	Barry Stewart
Friday 30 th July	Parc Dowlais, Llantwit Fadre	Dave Gilmore
Saturday 21 st August	Gower	Barry Stewart
Friday 10 th September	Llantrisant Common	Mike Powell

RECENT REPORTS

It hardly seems worthwhile to run a moth trap during the cold winter months, but on nights when the temperature is forecast to be above about 4 degrees it can be worthwhile. Often moths recorded at this time prove to be of species regarded as common but the records are never the less very important as so few people actually do any trapping during November to February.

Stefan Golaszewski recorded Pale Brindled Beauty at his Llanishen garden on 6th January and Dave Gilmore recorded a male December Moth at Whitchurch on 13th January.