



Ymddiriedolaeth Natur De a Gorllewin Cymru

Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales

**North Ceredigion
&
Cardigan/Aberteifi
Local Groups**

Ceredigion Newsletter

September 2022

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**To swap roles on 1 October*



A pair of barn owl chicks being ringed by Tony Cross in north Ceredigion in early August. By the beginning of September, the birds were flying around in the barn where they had been born. (Photo Roger Matthews)

1. Welcome (Fiona Corke, Chair of North Ceredigion Group)

I have been chair since 2016; not an arduous task with such a great team of people on the committee, but it is time for a change. Naomi and I are swapping roles so I will become secretary and she will be chairperson of the group. I have enjoyed my time leading the group, which has included the challenge of leading meetings on Zoom. Despite the pandemic our group is still very active in terms of providing talks and walks. We are looking forward to resuming our indoor meetings in the University in October.

Are you still excited by nature? On my daily ride to work I spotted a young Slow-worm on the side of the road. I had heard previously that Slow-worms have trouble getting traction on smooth tarmac so I stopped to move it off the road, but it did not need my help! This one had perfected its technique. It stretched out straight and then proceeded to roll sideways, which was remarkably effective. I watched as it reached the woodland edge and disappeared.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard Spencer who has been the warden at Cwm Clettwr reserve for a considerable number of years, including installing and monitoring 50 bird nest boxes. He is migrating south in Wales so I have now taken on the monitoring of these boxes, unless anyone else is keen to take on the task.

2. Cardigan/Aberteifi Local Group Meetings (Paul Taylor, Chair)

The group had a very successful Bio-Blitz and Bat & Moth evening at St Tygwydd Church, Llandygwydd in June, with a good number of people attending and the event being filmed to help promote the Churches Count on Nature initiative.

Our next outdoor meeting will be a Bat & Moth evening at the Welsh Wildlife Centre on 16 September, from 7.30 pm onwards. This will be followed on Saturday 17 September at 10 am with the emptying of the moth traps and recording the catch. For both events all equipment will be provided, but if you do own a bat detector and would like to join us, please bring that along, and a torch may also be useful.

The October outdoor meeting will probably be a Fungi Foray, with the venue and date still to be decided.

On Saturday 19 November, starting at 10.30 am, we will be at the Naturewise Community Forest Garden, Parc Teifi, Cardigan where we will be doing a Brown Hairstreak Butterfly egg hunt. We hope to resume our indoor meetings on Wednesday 12 October. These will be held at a new venue, Theatre Mwldan, Cardigan. At the time of writing no details have been finalised but all events will be published on our Facebook page (*See contact details on page 1*).

3. North Ceredigion Group Indoor Meetings (Ian Scott)

Monday 3 October 2022 at 7 - 9 pm. *Frustrating Flowers and Puzzling Plants.* Talk by author John Warren. Theatre C22, Hugh Owen Building, Aberystwyth University. Car parking at Aberystwyth Arts Centre.

Monday 7 November 2022 at 7 - 9 pm. *The Cambrian Wildwood.* Talk by Project Officer Nia Huw. Theatre C22, Hugh Owen Building, Aberystwyth University. Car parking at Aberystwyth Arts Centre.

Monday 5 December 2022 at 7 - 9 pm. *Wildlife at the Centre for Alternative Technology.* Talk by Dulcie Fairweather (CAT Natural Resource Officer). Theatre C22, Hugh Owen Building, Aberystwyth University. Car parking at Aberystwyth Arts Centre.

4. Meetings of the Aberystwyth Botanical Society (Chloe Griffiths)

Saturday 15 October 2022 at 10 am (morning outing) - *Afon Cletwr Fern Walk*, led by Red Liford. Meet in Tre'r Ddol at SN659922. Parking Tre'r Ddol or by permission at the Cletwr Café.

November Waxcap Foray – details to be confirmed.

5. North Ceredigion Group 100 Club (Carolyn Lynn)

The winners of the final 100 Club draw for the 2021/22 season in April, were:

1 st prize	Cynrig Williams	2 nd prize	Shân Hayward
3 rd prize	Alex Maltman	4 th prize	Liz Kelly
5 th prize	Andrew Agnew	6 th prize	Eleri Hood
7 th prize	John Ferguson	8 th prize	Ariana Lloyd Williams



Congratulations to all of this year's winners.

We now need 100 members for the 2022/23 season!

£10 buys a number that will be entered into each of the draws held during the winter talks season. The money raised is divided equally between funding the cost of work on the Ceredigion reserves

and providing cash prizes for Club members. Winning numbers receive cash prizes of between £10 and £100. Please buy your tickets now, in time for the first draw at the October meeting.

Please send payment of £10 for each ticket required, together with your contact details to Carolyn Lynn at Glanyrafon, Pontygeifr, Talybont, Ceredigion SY24 5DJ, with cheques made out to 'WTSWW North Ceredigion'. Alternatively, please contact Carolyn directly for details of how to set up a regular standing order.

6. Ceredigion Butterflies (Paul Taylor, County Butterfly Recorder)

Once again, many thanks to everybody for sending in their records, it is good to see new names appearing on the record sheets and we appear to be covering a wider area of Ceredigion. At the time of writing this report, we are now busy with the annual Marsh Fritillary Larval Web Surveys. This will be followed by the Brown Hairstreak Egg hunts which start in November as described in item 2 above. If you would like to volunteer to help with any of our surveys, please do contact me.

7. The Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum* (Geoff Powell)

When at rest as usually shown in moth books, the Hummingbird Hawk-moth (hereafter the HBHM) doesn't look a lot like a hummingbird and you could be forgiven for thinking that its English name is one of those fanciful inventions which seem to abound in moth books. But in flight it becomes that hummingbird, a miniature exotic bird-mimic, distinctly un-moth-like, flying in, hovering and reversing out of flowers, its wings a humming blur and its improbably long, straw-like proboscis (the 'macroglossum' of its Latin name) rapidly poking and probing for nectar. It's a wonderful thing to watch and hear, convincing many people that they have seen an actual hummingbird.



Hummingbird Hawk-moth. (Photo Geoff Powell)

The Wildlife Trusts website reminds us that "The hummingbird hawk-moth is the only 'hummingbird' in Europe: real hummingbirds are found in the Americas." In fact the relationship between the moth and the bird is an outstanding case of convergent evolution: not only does the flying moth resemble some of the smaller species of the bird in both appearance and behaviour, but moth and bird occupy similar ecological niches in their respective continents (allowing for the fact that the bird supplements its diet of nectar with insects). So, for instance, both moth and bird are excellent pollinators and therefore our moth comes to resemble a bird that has come to behave like a pollinating moth.

There is evidence for the existence of trichromatic colour vision in the HBHM which, along with scent detection, allows it to locate its nectar sources. It has an innate preference for blue which might explain why it is attracted to the purple buddleia in my garden and not the yellow buddleia or the abundant ragwort. It is also drawn to strong and sweet scented flowers such as honeysuckle and tobacco plants which provide nectar high in the sucrose that the moth tends to prefer over fructose and glucose (in contrast to honey bees which favour a mixture of the three sugars).

Although recent hot weather has increased hawkmoth immigration from southern Europe, mild winters have also increased the HBHM's ability to survive hibernation in Britain, both as pupae and

adults, unlike other hawkmoths that tend not to survive as adults. It is also a very powerful flyer, and with 85 wing beats per second it outperforms most hummingbirds, which manage about 50 beats per second. This energy is displayed when a pair makes its ascending and descending courtship flights, after which eggs are laid on various species of bedstraw and on Wild Madder. The larvae pupate under these food plants and emerge as adults in June and September with some extra broods in extended periods of fine weather.

My 1974 copy of *The Observer's Book of Larger Moths* celebrates the abundance of HBHMs in the summer of 1946 when they enjoyed the general state of neglect of gardens in the post-war suburbs of London where bedstraw grew on uncut lawns. The lesson here for modern gardeners is clear: nature abhors a tidy garden!

8. Reports of Aberystwyth Botanical Society Field Meetings

(i) Farm Walk at Tangro, Ysbyty Ystwyth, 24 July 2022 (Sheena Duller)

The rain was torrential, but so welcome after such a hot dry spell that no-one minded and a handful of hardy souls turned out for a walk in the wet. The farm is at 950 ft asl rising to 1200 ft. It supports a small herd of Welsh Black cattle and is a mosaic of species-diverse grassland, rocky outcrops, bog, permanent and temporary ponds, a stream and some improved ground, along with some areas that are strongly influenced by historic mining activity.

In a short space of time 53 species of moss were identified by Tom and his intrepid collaborator Sue, and Steve Chambers confirmed populations of *Alchemilla glabra* and *Genista tinctoria*. Additional species were added to the already long list of flowering plants on the farm and more investigation is needed to confirm some of the other plants present (possibly three *Rubus* species and an elusive *Rhynchospora alba*, which was present in 2017). Both Tom and Steve are keen to revisit to continue to check out the lichens and bryophytes, and the list of waxcaps has sparked interest in a second walk later in the year.

(ii) Field Meeting at Rhos Glyn yr Helyg, 13 August 2022 (Carolyn Lynn)

Four of us met Doug Lloyd, our Reserves Manager, in the middle of the heat wave in August for a tour of Rhos Glyn yr Helyg, one of our Wildlife Trust Reserves, near Gors Goch in the south of the county.

As stated on the reserve website, it is an SSSI and an unimproved sedge-rich pasture. Much of the southern half of the site is wet grassland, with Purple Moor Grass, Sharp-flowered Rush and Soft Rush. Among this sward are large amounts of Sneezewort, Whorled Caraway and Devil's-bit Scabious, the larval food plant of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly. It is one of the best sites in the county for Marsh Fritillaries. Many adults were seen on the wing this June and over 140 larval webs were recorded in August this year. By contrast, the northern part is a drier grassland, rich in flowering plants such as Black Knapweed, Cat's-ear, Eyebright and Lousewort with Dyer's Greenweed and some Heather. Scarce species include Moonwort and Frog Orchid. The interest in the site is enhanced by the presence of depressions thought to be remnants of glacial features known as pingos. These hollows support a rich mire community, including Bog Asphodel, bog mosses, Bottle Sedge, Cross-leaved Heath and Marsh Cinquefoil.

We spent some time looking at the flora of the damp pasture, now dry in the drought, just before entering the gate into the reserve. We were surprised to find quite plentiful Floating Sweet-grass here. Other wetland plants included Lesser Spearwort, Marsh Ragwort, Marsh Cudweed, Water-pepper, Redleg, Marsh Willowherb, Marsh Bedstraw and Creeping Forget-me-not. The reserve had not been grazed for some time because of management issues, hopefully soon to be resolved, and

this together with the relative lateness of the season meant there were fewer visible flowering plants but we did see plentiful Devil's-bit Scabious and Sneezewort together with a few late Heath-spotted Orchids in the southern half of the reserve with the high spot for me being my first Whorled Caraway. The pingos were hard to access because of an unfriendly barbed wire fence but those who ventured in found a selection of mire plants including Round-leaved Sundew and the seedheads of Bog Asphodel and were able to sample the Cranberries. Down by the River Grannell, which runs through the reserve, we found a single plant of Pink Purslane. Eighteen species of butterfly have been recorded on the reserve and we were fortunate to see an end-of-season Silver-washed Fritillary on the wing.

In all it was a most enjoyable outing in spite of the extreme heat and a big thank you to Doug for giving up a day of his holidays to show us round.

9. Endangered Butterfly Found in Penparcau (Chloe Griffiths)



Our MP Ben Lake called it "a wonderful discovery" and it certainly was unexpected! One sunny afternoon in July I was walking home through Penparcau, past some elm trees at the entrance to Bodlondeb Care Home, only to be startled by a small butterfly with obvious tails flying straight past my head! I thought we might have an unusual immigrant species brought in on the hot winds of summer, but following it to an elm leaf I discovered it was in fact the endangered White-letter Hairstreak Butterfly (*left*). This butterfly had never been reported in the village before, so it was a huge thrill to see it.

Elm is the only food this butterfly's caterpillars can eat, so if the trees were ever removed or damaged, this rare butterfly would die out. The elms at Bodlondeb, and the ones close to it at the edge of Llwyn yr Eos School grounds, are now vital to this butterfly's survival because these hairstreaks survive on a single small clump of trees or even an individual tree. They will not move from one area to another and will return to the same trees year after year. Removing even one of these elms might mean effectively wiping out this endangered butterfly from our village.

With this in mind I contacted the County Council and Ben Lake, letting them know that "This is wonderful news, but it does mean that we now have a responsibility to ensure these trees are protected from any future development. This butterfly is one of the protected Section 7 Species: Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Section 7 – a list of the living organisms of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales."


I was pleased to have quick and promising responses from various members of Ceredigion County Council, giving me assurances that "we will recognise that we need to protect the butterfly and the trees". I join Ben Lake in thanking "everyone who has already undertaken action to ensure the necessary measures and protections are in place to safeguard the butterflies" and look forward to seeing these endangered butterflies floating around Penparcau again next year.

10. ... and in praise of Penparcau Wildlife Group (Dean McCullough)

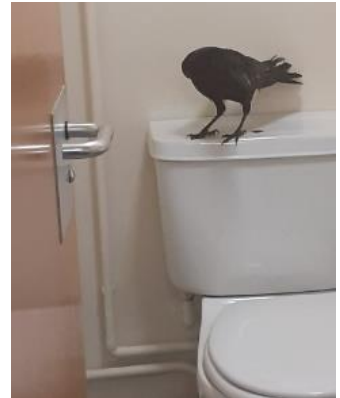
Penparcau Wildlife Group managed by Chloe Griffiths is a wonderful local project, collating spatiotemporal data for wildlife in the village and I have been involved in some of the wildlife

surveys. Chloe runs a rewarding project, encouraging community engagement and helping create a space for nature. She provided me, a budding wildlife conservationist fresh out of university, with the opportunity to learn about and survey everything from bumblebees to Water Voles. I am quite proud to have recorded the first Slow-worm and Speckled Wood for the village in 2022, providing valuable information for Chloe's project. If you love nature and want to contribute to improving the understanding of wildlife in Penparcau then I cannot recommend Penparcau Wildlife Group enough!

11. A Memorable Wildlife Encounter (Louise Rogers)

I am a cleaner in the halls of residence at Aberystwyth University. I love wildlife, so whenever my colleagues find things of interest they always call me over for a look. This summer, my team and I were cleaning a house and as it was very hot we left all the doors and windows open while we went for our break. I was the last of the team to return and found the others refusing to enter the house. When I asked what was wrong, I was told there was a bird upstairs and it was wrecking the place. Right on cue the team leader arrived and the two of us went inside to see what all the fuss was about – and found this ... 

The crow was understandably a little stressed and a bit nippy, but I managed to manoeuvre the poor bird down the stairs using the nearest thing to hand - a toilet brush - to where the team leader was ready to assist with a broom. Although the crow protested loudly, we got it to the doorstep and after a short stand-off, away to freedom. The rest of the team popped out from around the corner, cheering; to which I replied that nobody likes to be threatened with a toilet brush!



12. Reserves Report – May to August 2022 (Doug Lloyd)

When writing these updates I first have to look back through my calendar and it turns out that during the start of May I was moving house to Tregaron, which seems like an age away! Since then we have had a summer that was not exactly conducive to hard graft but in general was a good one for a lot of wildlife.

There are too many sightings to cover but Rhos Glandenys stands out; a small and easily overlooked site but one which provided us with seven Marsh Fritillary butterflies (previously only one web has been found on this site), which no doubt have expanded onto the reserve from the nearby NRW-managed Rhos Talglas due to the warm summers over the past few years.



(Photo Doug Lloyd)

Another new addition was the Scabious Sawfly (*left*) found by my daughter Seren while we were looking for the aforementioned marsh frits. This appeared to be *Abia candens*, though this has not yet been confirmed and it could have been the more common *Abia sericea*. *Abia candens* is a rare species with only 21 records for Wales and 83 for the UK. If confirmed, this would show how even small areas of habitat that are well managed can be vital for very rare species.

There was also a survey day for Water Voles at Cors Ian with Rob Parry. Although this ended with no conclusive evidence that they are still using the site there was enough evidence of runs adjacent to the stream edges to justify further surveys to ascertain whether the voles are still present – fingers crossed!

A volunteer task in late June was carrying out the annual Greater Butterfly Orchid count at Caeau Llety Cybi. Previous surveys have typically recorded 150 – 500 spikes a year, with a peak of 912 in 2014. This year there seemed to be a slightly better coverage across the fields and after all the counts were in we finished with an amazing total of 2033 Greater Butterfly Orchids along with, surprisingly, only five Common Spotted Orchids.

A lot of work has gone into the reserves and again a big thank you to all who have helped. One project has been the provision of new steps and bridge at Coed Maidie B Goddard, constructed from a felled Douglas Fir from this reserve and Sweet Chestnut from Old Warren Hill. This work utilised the new drills purchased with monies raised by the North Ceredigion 100-Club. A very useful addition to our equipment, so my thanks to the 100-Club members!

There has been more work carried out through the Nature Networks Recovery Fund and 700 m of new fencing, new gates and pedestrian gates are now in place at Rhos Pil bach, with cattle now grazing one field at a time, instead of the “ranching” previously employed. This should mean more accurate control of the grazing, hopefully creating better habitat for wildflowers and species such as marsh frit which have declined markedly here over the years.

Looking beyond the Wildlife Trust reserves, the Trust is currently involved with a pilot project for lowland hay meadows in Ceredigion and North Carmarthenshire and while most of the survey work is being carried out by the new trust Ecologist Josie Bridges, I have been involved with some survey training and have surveyed a couple of sites. This is in partnership with ADAS and the Welsh Government and is likely to provide information to feed in to the new Welsh Government land management and farming subsidy schemes.

I have also visited a few sites to provide land management advice. The largest of these, at 32 ha, is near Maesyrcrugiau in the south of the county, with a southern boundary of approximately 2 km along the river Teifi. The farm was previously managed intensively but it still has lots of nice old overgrown hedges, veteran trees and of course the river margins. The current owners are grazing it extensively with horses and it is already looking quite diverse and rich in wildlife!

As usual diolch yn fawr pawb!



*The new bridge under construction at Coed Maidie B Goddard.
(Photo Doug Lloyd)*

13. Obituary: Peter Walters Davies, 1 July 1928 – 10 April 2022 (Meg and David Kirby)

Peter was born in Llanfarian and was in primary school with Arthur Chater. He came from Welsh farming stock; his father was director of the Welsh Agricultural Development Service.

Peter’s academic career was interrupted by National Service. A period in the Royal Engineers took him to Egypt and East Africa, giving him great opportunity to watch big game and bird life but leaving him with some hearing impairment and an army disability pension.

Back in Aberystwyth he completed his degree and was then a research student in Oxford University working with David Lack on Swifts and the Song Thrush. Peter then joined the Nature Conservancy Council (later CCW) as the Regional Officer for South Wales and became a driving

force for change in Welsh nature conservation. He set up nature reserves in Pembrokeshire and was then instrumental in establishing Cors Caron as the first National Nature Reserve in Ceredigion. He then worked to establish Cors Fochno, a harder task, as unlike Cors Caron it was not in the ownership of a single person. Once on a visit to Cors Fochno with his two young daughters he saw an Adder. Both children starting crying, one leapt into his arms because she was frightened whereas the other was crying because she had not seen the snake.

Peter is perhaps best remembered for setting up the Welsh Kite Trust. As chairman he was responsible for the successful establishment of breeding pairs of kites in Wales, which at that time had shrunk to only about twelve pairs. He was recognised for this work in 2006, receiving an MBE jointly with Peter Davis (from Aberaeron) for services to Red Kite Conservation in Wales.

Promotion took him to Bangor and for a while he commuted from Aberystwyth, often stopping off on his journey home to fish in Trawsfynydd lake. However, Peter's heart was in Aberystwyth and he did not move house. He was involved in ringing Starlings at night under Aberystwyth pier and enjoyed telling the story of how the birds would roost on the girders. You could pick one up, ring it, and replace it from whence it came without significant disturbance to the apparently sleeping bird.

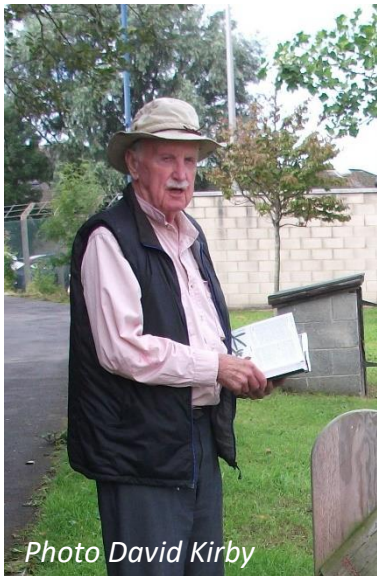


Photo David Kirby

Though he retired from CCW before it was incorporated into NRW, Peter never retired from active involvement in nature and the environment. He was the first chairman of Parc Natur Penglais, the woodland behind his house. As one of the "four founding fathers" he persuaded Ceredigion County Council to set up Parc Natur Penglais in 1991 and gave advice on its organisation and management. He was successful in having this woodland recognised as a Local Nature Reserve so giving it some legal protection for the benefit of future generations in Aberystwyth. Peter was chair of the PNP Support Group for its first seven years and a member for 21 years before retiring in 2013. He was also a founder member of the Greener Aberystwyth Group, with particular interest in street trees. He surveyed in detail all the street trees in Aberystwyth in 2005, so providing an excellent baseline for future development in town.

In 2010 Peter was instrumental in calling a meeting of interested parties leading to the formation of the Ceredigion Moth Group. He became the first County Moth Recorder for Ceredigion and when obliged to move in his old age to Sussex to be near his elder daughter, he continued with this interest in moths. His son-in-law would set a trap in his garden and bring the specimens to Peter in his nursing home for him to identify.

Active to the end, Peter died after a short illness in April 2022.

A total of £625 was collected in Peter's memory in lieu of flowers at his funeral with the monies to go to the North Ceredigion branch of the WTSWW. It is the family's wish that this be spent on the work on our reserves.

Newsletter Editor - Steve Cuttle (sputcutte@btinternet.com)

Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue. The next newsletter is due in January and contributions about any aspect of wildlife in Ceredigion (up to 500 words) will be most welcome. Just ask if you are unsure whether a particular topic would be suitable or not.