

WILDLIFE ON YOUR PATCH

NANT-Y-COY MILL & TREFFGARNE ROCKS



JULY 2007

1. Introduction

We spent a day at Nant-y-Coy mill observing and recording a variety of birds, plants and insects and their habitats. This short report highlights some of the more obvious, interesting or rare species that we found and looks at the main types of habitats present in the locality. The walk took in the sheltered valley of the Nant-y-Coy brook, the heathland and rock outcrops around Treffgarne rocks, as well as the hay meadows above the Mill.



The “Wildlife on your patch” group in the Nant Y Coy valley

2. Nant Y Coy Brook and valley

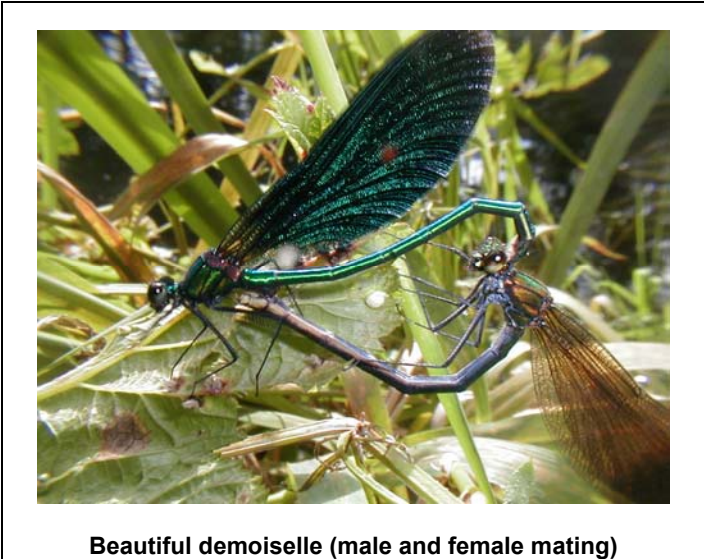
Oak, Ash and Beech dominate the drier parts of the woodland along the valley sides whilst the wet woodland on the valley floor has Willow, Alder and Ash. Hazel, Holly and Hawthorn are the commonest shrub species but occasional bushes of Guelder Rose occur.

The fairly dense tree canopy casts a deep shade over much of the wood and consequently a rich fern community has developed; we looked at several species including Bracken, Broad Buckler, Scaly Male fern, Harts Tongue, Hard fern and Lady fern. However, the best find was a large clump of the scarce Royal fern growing in a damp marshy area. This species of fern was collected heavily in Victorian times and is now a rare plant throughout most of its range.

Several species associated with ancient woodland occur throughout the wood including Wood Sorrel and Yellow Pimpernel. More open glades along the streamside support a range of marsh species such as Common Valerian, Wild

Angelica, Marsh Thistle and Hemlock Water Dropwort. It was in one of these glades we saw a small group of Long Tailed tits feeding in the Willows. A range of typical woodland birds can usually be seen around Nant-y-Coy Mill including blue tits, great tits, sparrows, greenfinches, chaffinches, chiff-chaffs and robins.

The stream itself runs swiftly over a clean rocky and gravelly bed and



Beautiful demoiselle (male and female mating)

supports numerous aquatic invertebrates as well as fish and birds such as Dipper and King Fisher. We weren't lucky enough to see either of these during our visit but both are regularly seen throughout the Cleddau Rivers. Turning over stones in the stream we found Caddis fly larva in their cases made of tiny stone fragments cemented together, leeches, mayfly larva and the often overlooked

freshwater limpet. These tiny limpets live under stones in clean rivers and streams and graze on algal films growing there, just like the more familiar limpets on beaches. Beside the stream were several dragon flies and damselflies including the iridescent green Beautiful Demoiselle.

3. Heathland and rock outcrops

The rock outcrops above the Gorge are made of Rhyolite, rock that was



Treffgarne Rocks

originally (C.600 million years ago) molten magma. Around these tors is an extensive area of heathland, acidic grassland scrub and bracken. This range of habitats provides a home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Birds up here included a pair of Buzzards wheeling over the nearby Treffgarne Woods as well as several Linnets flitting through the heath. Whilst eating lunch at the mill we were able to get a view of a Peregrine Falcon across the gorge. These

birds are often seen here and almost certainly breed on the steep cliffs of the gorge.

Despite the breeze it was warm and sunny up on the rocks and insects were plentiful, grasshoppers, beetles, bees and ants being the most noticeable. In late summer the heathland here is ablaze with the purple and yellow flowers of Heather and Gorse. On warm days the almond-like scent of Gorse can fill the air, attracting many butterflies and bees. Traditional methods of grazing and cutting are needed to keep this rare habitat in good condition but unfortunately grazing has now ceased here.

There is detailed information leaflet about the Geology & Scenery at Treffgarne Gorge available for purchase from Nant-y-Coy Arts for 80p.

4. Hedgerows

The hedges are dense, sprawling and rich in species. There are there are some good-sized trees in the hedgerows too, mostly Oak and Ask. Some of these trees are quite large and many have holes suitable for birds and possibly bats too. These hedgerows link the woods, scrub areas meadows and heath and form valuable wildlife “corridors”, allowing birds, mammals, invertebrates and plants to spread and colonise other areas. As well as being wildlife corridors, the hedgerow plants provide important shelter and food sources in the form of nectar and pollen for insects. Birds also feed along the hedges, attracted by the insects and berries. The hedge bottoms were found to be full of tall grasses and plants such as Red Campion and Hedge Woundwort, one of the great “all heals” of the medieval herbalists that was used for many centuries, in many countries, as a cure for a wide variety of ailments.

5. Meadows

Between the high tors and the Nant-y-Coy Brook lies a cluster of small hay meadows surrounded by tall, species -rich hedges. These fields have been agriculturally improved in the past but are now being managed as organic hay meadows and the range of species present should increase as time goes on. The steeper unimproved field edges are known to support a more diverse range of species including orchids, Devils-bit Scabious and Pignut and these are showing signs of beginning to spread into the meadows already.



Ringlet Butterfly

During our visit and we saw common meadow plants such as Meadow Buttercup and Common Knapweed, as well as a wide variety of grasses. One surprise was the finding of a single plant of Salad Burnet in one of the meadows, a species more typically associated with unimproved limestone grasslands. Below the meadows and fringing the brook is an area of rough grassland, low bramble scrub, and shrubs with a number of young oak trees growing up through the scrub. These sorts of areas can be of great importance for a range of birds, mammals and invertebrates, providing a range of nesting, feeding or hibernation sites. The sunshine ensured we saw numerous butterflies here including, Small Coppers, Meadow Browns, Small Skippers and Ringlets as well as the day flying Silver-Y Moth. We also found both Field and Meadow grasshoppers, as well a variety of spiders and beetles.

6. Conclusion

Many species of animal and plant are unable to travel over large areas of improved farmland. These areas tend to lack food and shelter from predators, or are simply too large for small creatures to find their way across. Therefore, many species may become confined to small 'islands' of habitat. If these islands become unsuitable for a species, the population may die out and. If the next nearest population is too far away, local extinctions result.

The interlinked habitats at Nant-y-Coy provide excellent opportunities for species to move from one place to another, and create new colonies, helping avoid local extinctions. This connectivity of habitats helps maintain the richness and diversity of our wildlife at both local and national levels; Communities such as yours can play an important role in this.

Report produced by: Jon Hudson (Countryside Council for Wales)

Species list - Plants

Common name	Scientific name	Common name	Scientific name
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	hedge bindweed	<i>Calystegia sepium</i>
Annual Meadow grass	<i>Poa annua</i>	Hemlock water Dropwort	<i>Oenanthe crocata</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Herb-Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Beaked hawksbeard	<i>crepis vesicaria</i>	Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Bell Heather	<i>Erica cinerea</i>	Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Bilberry	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	Lady-fern	<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Lesser Spearwort	<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	Lousewort	<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Marsh Thistle	<i>Cirsium palustre</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Meadow Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>
Broad Buckler Fern	<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>	Meadow-grass	<i>Poa trivialis Rough</i>
Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>
Cat's-ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Navelwort	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>	Oak	<i>Quercus Sp.</i>
Climbing Corydalis	<i>Ceratocarpus claviculata</i>	Opposite-Leave-Golden	<i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i>
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Saxifrage	<i>Carex ovalis</i>
Common Bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Oval Sedge	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Common Bird's-foot-trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Perennial rye grass	<i>Conopodium majus</i>
Common Hemp-nettle	<i>Galeopsis tetrahit</i>	Pignut	<i>Polypodium sp</i>
Common knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Polypody Fern	<i>Molinia caerulea</i>
Common name	<i>Scientific name</i>	Purple Moor-grass	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Common Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Red Campion	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>
Common Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Red Clover	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Common Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Red Fescue	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>
Common Valerian	<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	Rhododendron	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
creeping bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Ribwort Plantain	<i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Rosebay Willowherb	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
creeping soft grass	<i>Holcus mollis</i>	Rowan	<i>Osmunda regalis</i>
		Royal Fern	

Crested Dog's-tail	<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Salad Burnet	<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Scaly-Male Fern	<i>Dryopteris affinis</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum agg.</i>	Selfheal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina agg.</i>	Sheep's Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella agg.</i>
Downy Birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	sheep's-fescue	<i>Festuca ovina agg.</i>
Early hair grass	<i>Aira praecox</i>	silver hair grass	<i>aira carophyllea</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Silverweed	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>
Elm	<i>Ulmus sp</i>	Soft Rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>
Enchanter's-nightshade	<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>	Sweet Vernal-grass	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>
English stonecrop	<i>Sedum anglicum</i>	Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
European Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>
			<i>Deschampsia cespitosa sens.lat.</i>
False oat grass	<i>Arhenatherum elatius</i>	Tufted Hair-grass	<i>Vicia cracca</i>
Field Wood-rush	<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Tufted vetch	<i>Ulex gallii</i>
Fools Watercress	<i>Apium nodiflorum</i>	Western Gorse	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	White Clover	<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>
Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Wild Angelica	<i>Geum urbanum</i>
Geulder Rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Wood Avens	<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>
Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil	<i>Lotus uliginosus</i>	Wood Sage	<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>
Greater Stitchwort	<i>Stellaria holostea</i>	Wood Sorrel	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>
Greater Wood-rush	<i>Luzula sylvatica</i>	Woody Nightshade	<i>Ulmus Glabra</i>
Grey Willow	<i>Salix cinerea subsp. oleifolia</i>	Wych Elm	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Ground Ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Yarrow	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>
Hard Fern	<i>Blechnum spicant</i>	Yellow Iris	<i>Lysimachia nemorum</i>
Hart's-tongue fern	<i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i>	yellow pimpernel	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Yorkshire-fog	
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>		
Heath Bedstraw	<i>Galium saxatile</i>		
Heather (ling)	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>		
Heath-grass	<i>Danthonia decumbens</i>		

Species list – Invertebrates

Common name

Silver Y Moth
A Bumble Bee
Beautiful Demoiselle
Green Meadow Grasshopper
Seven-spot Ladybird
Gold-ringed Dragonfly
A Pondskater
Whirligig Beetle
An Ant
Small Copper
Meadow Brown
Common Green Grasshopper
Speckled Wood
Gatekeeper / Hedge Brown
Yellow-dung-Fly
Small Skipper
Six-spot burnet

Scientific name

Autographa gamma
Bombus ?terrestris/lucorum
Calyopterix virgo
Chorthippus parallelus
Coccinella 7-punctata
Cordulegaster boltonii
Gerris ?lacustris
Gyrinus natator
Formica fusca
Lycaena phlaeas
Maniola jurtina
Omocetus ruipe
Parage aegaria
Pyronia tithonus
Scathophaga stercoraria
Thymelicus sylvestris
Zygaena filipendulae

Species list - Birds

Buzzard
House Sparrow
Jackdaw
Chiffchaff
Stonechat
Swallow
Whitethroat
Wren
Linnet
Long tailed tit
Magpie
Peregrine Falcon

WILDLIFE ON YOUR PATCH HELPERS



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