



WWBIC Bulletin No. 28

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In this Bulletin read about the LERC Wales 10th Anniversary event held in Carmarthen and WWBIC's busy summer of recording days and training days. There's also interesting contributions from around our region.



© WWBIC
Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

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And more . . .

Sea Trust: Gathering Data to Inform Conservation

Sea Trust was first formed in 2003, before that we existed as an “ad hoc” group of sea bird enthusiasts with an interest in marine wildlife, in general, known as “Strumblers” from the main location of our operations; Strumble Head, Pembrokeshire. Ten years later we became a Community Interest Company (not for profit). Since then we have been based at the Ocean Lab on the seafront of Fishguard Harbour, where we also maintain a marine exhibition and work with school groups and other educational establishments. Most of our research is carried out in the waters surrounding and adjacent to Pembrokeshire. Recently we have also set up another research group aboard the Stena Superfast Ferry on the route between Holyhead and Dublin.

Our mission statement is: “Local people looking after their marine wildlife” and our aims are conservation, education and awareness raising. We have a core group of around twenty experienced volunteers that help us out on a regular basis with more than a hundred experienced volunteer observers on call for our ferry or small boat surveys. Our workforce has also been greatly enhanced over the years by graduate and post-graduate interns from all over Europe and the UK.

Since our formation, Sea Trust Volunteers have been surveying the waters around the Pembrokeshire Coast, including the Southern Irish Sea, Bristol Channel and beyond into the Celtic Sea. Our data is handed on to the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre. Sea Trust has provided more than 95% of all their offshore records.

On a recent survey trip to the Celtic Sea we recorded hundreds of Common Dolphin, Blue Fin Tuna, Blue shark, Minke Whale, and a Leatherback Turtle! As a one-off survey, it would be seen as extremely successful in itself, but the real value of our work is that this is only one of hundreds of surveys carried out by Sea Trust volunteers over the past two decades. No comparable area of sea around the UK’s shores has been so comprehensively surveyed over such a large timescale.



Probably our most innovative work, currently being undertaken by Sea Trust volunteers is our Porp-Fin project. Photo ID of animals such as Bottlenose Dolphins and Humpback Whales has been carried out by various groups over the years. They are large animals and relatively easy to study. Porpoises however, have been considered too difficult because of their small size, undemonstrative behaviour, and general antipathy to boats.

A major objective of Sea Trust has been the protection of the Strumble Head Tidal System where we have spent nearly two decades studying the porpoises there from the land. We know they are present all year round and have recorded them breeding there throughout the year. It has long been our assertion that they inhabit the area in exceptional numbers and deserve special protection. This has been borne out spectacularly by empirical evidence collected by our Porp-Fin Volunteers.

Our Sea Trust volunteer team trained by expert photographer Ken Barnett and led by Holly Dunn MSc, who recently authored a paper on porpoise published in a scientific journal, have taken thousands of images of the Strumble porpoises. Currently 56 individuals have been identified by features such as nicks in their fins or other damage and scars. Several of these particularly well marked individuals have been photographed at Strumble on several occasions over several years. This is ground breaking, world leading research that has proven our case beyond doubt. In this we have totally lived up to our mission statement “Local people looking after their own wildlife”.



(the images are of an animal that was first photographed in 2010 and has been photographed at Strumble on several occasions since including this year 2017)

Cliff Benson
Sea Trust CIC

Celebrating 10 years of the Welsh LERC Network

The Local Environmental Records Centres Wales celebrated a decade of close collaboration at a special event at the University of Wales Trinity St Davids, Carmarthen, on Friday, July 14th 2017.

Wales is the only nation in the UK with a complete network of LERCs. The network started with the establishment of Biodiversity Information Service (BIS) for Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park in 2000, followed by South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) in 2005, and Cofnod also in 2005. In 2007, the network was completed with the launch of West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre in Carmarthenshire. The four LERCs have closely collaborated and shared expertise since 2007. Recognition of this close collaboration and shared vision grew over the years, culminating in the formation of a consortium to formalise the partnership in 2015 under the banner Local Environmental Records Centres Wales.

The invited audience at the celebration event came from all over Wales with representatives from the LERCs, our public sector partners, ecological consultants and NGOs. The event included talks from the LERCs, and the official launch of the Aderyn website (aderyn.lercwales.org.uk). A number of demonstrations by LERC staff all provided the opportunity for attendees to see the range of tools available including; online recording, website based projects and search modules for planners and ecological professionals.

Jane Hodges chaired the event and the keynote address was delivered by Andy Middleton, cofounder of the TYF Group, and funding partner of the DO Lectures. Andy's talk inspired us to collaborate more, not only with those present, but to think creatively about how we might use the vast experience and skills in sectors outside our own to help us in our work. After lunch our guest speaker, Ray Woods, took to the stage with his wonderful talk "Why Value Wildlife". Ray's talk was both thought provoking and engrossing. Dr Paul Sinnadurai summed up and closed the event.



LERC staff and directors at the launch of the complete network of LERCs in Wales. Cardiff, 2007.



LERC staff at the 10th Anniversary Celebration Event of LERC Wales. Carmarthen, 2017.



Speakers and LERC managers at the 10th Anniversary Celebration Event. Carmarthen, 2017.

Interesting records



Lynne Sharpe discovered this rather unique looking fungus in one of her cut meadows near Llansawel, Carmarthenshire in September. Lynne emailed the record and photograph to WWBIC saying that she thought it was 'Devil's fingers'.

We didn't recognise the fungus from the photo or by name so sent Lynne's email to Philip Jones. Philip described it as a 'very nice find', he confirmed that it was *Clathrus archeri* (Devil's Fingers) and said that it is the first record of this species in Wales! *Clathrus*

archeri is one of the 'stinkhorn' fungi, the spores are in a smelly substance lining the inside of the 'tentacles'. The smell attracts flies which distribute the spores.

Philip went on to say that Devil's fingers was originally described from Tasmania and is found in Australia and New Zealand. It was first recorded in Europe in 1914 from the Voges region of France. (Could Australian troops have brought it over? -- just a thought). In Britain it was recorded in 1945 in Penzance and then in 1976 in West Kent. The majority of British records are from the south; Cornwall, Kent, Sussex and the Channel Isles. In 1994 it was found in Gloucestershire and in 2014, Shropshire.

Steve Chambers contributed the summary below which flags up the amazing undiscovered diversity in this group in Wales.

Over the last year a total of 16 species of lichenised and lichenicolous fungi have been newly discovered, or confirmed from older collections, in Wales by SPC, all from VC 46 Cardiganshire unless otherwise indicated.

Abrothallus parmotrematis (on *Parmotrema crinitum*, nr. Pontrhydfendigaid)

Acarospora moenium (above Bow Street)

Didymellopsis pulposi (on *Collema tenax* var. *ceranoides*, VC 41)

Didymocyrtis slaptoniensis (on *Xanthoria parietina*, Cwm Mwyro)

Inoderma byssaceum (syn. *Arthonia byssacea*; 2nd British record)

Laetisaria lichenicola (on *Physcia tenella* at 4 sites, c. 4th & subsequent British records)

Micarea inquinans (on *Dibaeis baeomyces* above Cwmystwyth),

Micarea lapillicola (forestry track, Twyi Forest),

Minutoexcipula tephromelae (on *Tephromela atra* at c. 5 sites, all churches)

Pronectria anisospora (on *Hypogymnia physodes* near Caerwedros, c. 3rd British record)

Pronectria oligospora (on *Punctelia subrudecta* at several sites)

Roselliniopsis ventosa (on *Placopsis lambii* at two sites, by Claerwen & in Cwm Mwyro, 2nd & 3rd British records)

Sarcogyne clavus (confirmed as a Welsh species, from scree below Pumlumon)

Toninia subfuscae (on *Lecanora muralis* on a memorial at Penrhyn Church)

Vahliella atlantica (wall top in Llechryd).

A collection of a *Staurothele* species from Pen-uwch Chapel is an undescribed species having similarities to the rare montane *S.rugulosa* but with smaller ascospores and a different thallus-type. There is one other collection, also from a church, in lowland England. More details can be found in the 'New, Rare or Interesting British Lichens and Lichenicolous Fungi' section published in the biannual bulletins of the British Lichen Society.

Expanding Lizards!

The Nature of our Village project is just finishing off the second year of a Reptile Survey on Pen Dinas, the Local Nature Reserve in Penparcau, near Aberystwyth. The site provides some excellent habitat for reptiles, as it has plenty of scrub and tall grass for them to hide in, and shorter grass and stony areas where they can bask and feed. Our survey was set up to build on the data found by the Wildlife Trust in their survey of the same site back in 2011-12.

As well as checking our 30 pieces of coroline roof sheet, placed in suitable locations, we have undertaken walks around the whole extent of the village, aiming to test our hypothesis that the reptiles may be using a larger territory than we originally thought. Carrying out visual searches in ideal weather conditions (sunny, especially after rain or cold weather) has meant we have been able to re-draw what we thought was the home range of the Common Lizards of Penparcau.



We are particularly pleased to have discovered them on the nearby Site of Special Scientific Interest at Tanybwllch, where our records now form part of what is known about the particular biodiversity of this important site. This SSSI includes a vegetated sand and shingle spit, which has grassland on the leeward side of its bank. This area benefits from larger cobbles, which warm up in the sun and make ideal basking locations for the lizards. They have been observed there on 3 separate occasions in 2017, both adults and juveniles, and this leads us to an interesting question: are they swimming across the narrow but fast-flowing river to interact with the larger population on Pen Dinas, making them a metapopulation, or have they established an independent population of their own, without access to the genetic diversity of their neighbours?

We will continue our Reptile Survey in 2018 and hope to make more discoveries about these fascinating animals. If you would like to take part, for which no previous experience is needed and training will be offered, then please contact Chloe Griffiths on chloe.griffiths.ecology@gmail.com.

Chloe Griffiths

WWBIC Online Records

We have recently made some changes to the WWBIC Online Wildlife Recording Database. Records are now visible to iRecord verifiers. If you use our website to record your sightings it is now possible for your record to be verified online by an expert in the relevant taxonomic group. If this happens, you will receive an email from iRecord stating whether your record is considered correct or otherwise and some additional information may also be provided in the email. Only iRecord verifiers can see these records, they cannot be seen by other people using iRecord. This is useful for taxonomic groups where we do not have a VC recorder in the region.

If you are a VC recorder for the WWBIC region it is possible for you to become a verifier on iRecord and in doing so can verify records as they are submitted.

It will continue to be WWBIC procedure to ask VC recorders to verify all records in the database. Records submitted via our website are a small but growing proportion of all WWBIC recent records.

WWBIC Recording Days

This year's recording days took us to beautiful and diverse areas of our region.

Carmarthenshire

We visited Rhydarwen, Llanarthne on the 16th of June and two sites in Cwrt Henri, Ffos y broga and Parciau on the 18th of July.

Rhydarwen is a beautiful, medieval house with 3 acres of broad-leaved woodland and 6 acres of what was poplar plantation restored to traditional parkland with lake and wetland. Several species of odonata were recorded around the pond and wetland, Southern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) was recorded on a section of grazed semi-natural pasture.



© WWBIC
Wetland at Rhydarwen



© WWBIC
Bog Pimpernel at Ffos y broga

Ffos y broga is 5 acres, made up of willow coppice, a sheep grazed field, two hay meadows and an area of recently planted trees. Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) and Bristle Club-rush (*Isolepis setacea*) were seen in a wet area of a semi-improved, grazed field. Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) was also recorded and 11 species of butterfly were seen including Large (*Ochlodes sylvanus*) and Small skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*).

Parciau is 17 acres of mainly improved grassland and several ponds. Giant Fescue (*Schedonorus giganteus*) was recorded on a bank of the Afon Dulas. Several damselfly species were seen around the ponds including a beautiful demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*) by the river. Large numbers of Gatekeeper butterflies (*Pyronia tithonus*) were seen along the hedge lines.



© WWBIC
Beautiful demoiselle at Parciau



© WWBIC
Tissue moth trapped at Werndeg

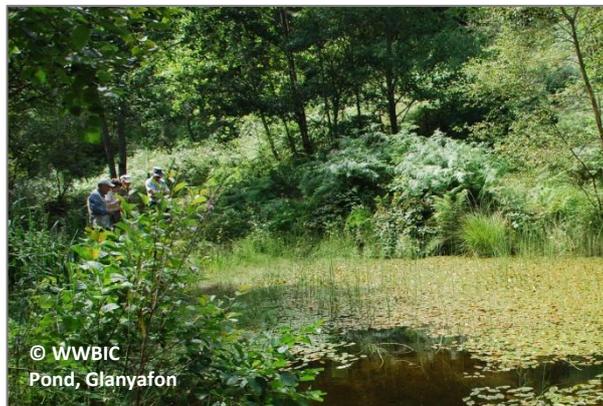
Ceredigion

On the 25th of July we visited two sites in the beautiful Cwm Leri.

Werndeg, a steep 66 acres made up of oak woodland, areas of scrub and bracken and hay meadows and Glanyafon, 6 acres of unimproved grassland, ponds and Willow carr adjacent to the Afon Leri. Moth trapping proved successful with 91 macro moth species trapped at Werndeg and 49 at Glanyafon. The rarest catches were the Tissue moth (*Triphosa dubitata*) and the Marsh pug (*Eupithecia pygmaeata*). 4 odonata species were recorded

around the ponds at Glanyafon including a Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*). *Plagiochila bifera*, a bryophyte quite scarce in the county was the most note-worthy species of the day.

Felinbedw, Plwmp, a 10 acre small holding was the location of the final recording day of the year on the 11th of September. It has areas of alder and willow carr running alongside the Afon Bedw, marshy areas and a couple of ponds. Pink Purslane (*Claytonia sibirica*) was recorded on the streamside and Least Duckweed (*Lemna minuta*) was observed in one of the ponds. Dot moth (*Melanchra persicariae*) larvae were photographed on buttercup.



© WWBIC
Pond, Glanyafon



© WWBIC
Willow carr, Felinbedw

Pembrokeshire

The wettest recording day of the year was at Penrallt, Letterston on the 11th of July. There was persistent heavy rain all day, however, the previous night was dry and the moth traps were jam-packed. 147 different species were recorded - a fantastic catch. The most notable species were Haworth's Pug (*Eupithecia haworthiata*), Larch Pug (*Eupithecia lariciata*) and Sloe Pug (*Pasiphila chloerata*). Due to the weather other recording was limited but we plan to return to this interesting site for a second recording day next year.

We visited Tregroes Moor Wood on the 15th of August. A site of 60 acres made up of conifer plantation, native woodland and moorland. 12 species of butterfly were recorded during the day and several species of odonata were observed around the ponds. A patch of Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) indicated the site may be a potential habitat for the Marsh Fritillary butterfly.



© WWBIC
Southern Hawker
Tregroes Moor Woods



© WWBIC
Swallow-tailed moth trapped at Penrallt

A big thank you to the owners of the sites we visited this summer. Everyone gave us a warm welcome and refreshments (even lunch on two occasions!).

Thanks also to all recorders who attended any of our recording days this year.

Buglife Cymru's Autumn Oil Beetle Hunt

Last spring we asked for your help in recording oil beetles in Wales, and thanks to your help we now have a much better idea of where these threatened beetles are; we can now use this information to help to protect and enhance the wildflower-rich habitats upon which the beetles rely.

You may have now caught the oil beetle recording 'bug' and can't wait until next spring to get out and look for more beetles. Fear not though, as this is the time of year that our third and most elusive species of oil beetle in Wales – the Rugged oil beetle - emerges.

Rugged oil beetles (*Meloe rugosus*) are primarily nocturnal and the adults can be active between September to April, in grasslands on chalk, limestone and sandy soils. In Wales, the Rugged oil beetle is only known from a small area in South East Wales. However, given that the beetle is most active at night and during the winter months it is likely that its presence has been overlooked in Wales – it may be more widespread.

This Autumn we need your help! Please let us know if you spot a Rugged oil beetle in Wales, there is every chance that your sighting could be a new discovery!

Already, the project has led to the discovery of many new sites for oil beetles in Wales, and in England we rediscovered the Mediterranean oil beetle after we thought it was extinct in the UK! Like its Rugged counterpart, Mediterranean oil beetle (*Meloe mediterraneus*) is also nocturnal and active during the Autumn and Winter months. This species may be present in South Wales and your sightings can really make a difference.

If you see any large, conspicuous black beetles on your travels please submit your sightings and a photo to our [Oil beetle survey page](#). Our [Oil beetle Identification guide](#) will help you identify your beetles, but even if you're unsure please send in your record anyway as we have experts at hand to identify them from your photographs.

Diolch!
Buglife Cymru



© John Walters
Rugged Oil Beetle

Another interesting record

Whilst visiting Pembrokeshire over the August Bank Holiday weekend Hannah Shaw and family were thrilled to hear and find a Great Green Bush Cricket (*Tettigonia viridissima*) at Freshwater West. Here's a photograph of Hannah's nature-loving son studying it.

WWBIC holds 49 records for Great Green Bush Cricket in Pembrokeshire all except one are in the south of the county.



© Andrew Shaw
Great Green Bush Cricket

WWBIC Training



Funding from Wales Biodiversity Partnership made it possible for us to run two plant identification training events in July and we were fortunate to have Dr Tim Rich lead them. The first, 'Oodles of Umbellifers' took place at the National Trust Dinefwr. The second was a repeat of 'The Terror of Yellow Composites' training that we held last year, only this time at Carmel. Tim supplied thorough handouts, gave clear presentations and brought lots of specimens so attendees had plenty of opportunity to practice keying out different species. Both groups were enthusiastic, keen to learn and made the most of Tim's expertise.

We would like to thank the National Trust, Dinefwr for providing the room and to Dr Tim Rich for leading the training. Thanks also to participants on both days.

WWBIC Training Opportunity

There will be a second opportunity to learn how to use **TomBio Multi Access Keys** on Thursday 8th February 2018 when Richard Burkmar, of the Field Studies Council (FSC), will return to WWBIC and repeat the training he ran in April 2017.

If you are interested in attending then please email kate@westwalesbiodiversity.org.uk
Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

And finally . .

Pembrokeshire Fungus Recorder, the biannual publication of Pembrokeshire Fungus Recording Network made an unlikely appearance on BBC1's 'Have I Got News For You'. Those of you familiar with the show will know that they have a missing words round using a guest publication and for the first episode of the new series (aired Friday 6th October) Pembrokeshire Fungus Recorder was the guest publication! Ray Woods, Pat O'Reilly and Mike Crutchley all featured in sentences with missing words, Mike also had a photograph displayed on this prime time show. Great publicity for the group!

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter. If you have any feedback or comments please email kate@westwalesbiodiversity.org.uk



@wwbic1



West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre