



**BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION SERVICE**  
FOR POWYS AND BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK  
**GWASANAETH GWYBODAETH FIOAMRYWIAETH**  
POWYS A PHARC CENEDLAETHOL BANNAU BRYCHEINIOG

## **RECORDERS NEWSLETTER**

### **ISSUE 8 – December 2009**

**Welcome** to the eighth edition of the Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park recorders newsletter.

This issue is heavy on the invertebrate side of things, so if all you non-invert recorders want to see other things than six and 8 legged beasts wandering over these pages, then please send me some articles. Otherwise I may re-name the newsletter 'Recorder's **Invertebrate** Newsletter' – so be warned! I have stacks of invert stuff alone to keep the newsletter going for several years!

*Phil Ward – Editor*



Figwort sawfly *Tenthredo scrophulariae* (Norman Lowe)

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## BIS update

### Staff

We are very pleased to welcome 2 new members of staff to BIS, since publication of the Spring newsletter in May. Michelle Wienhold joined us at the end of May in the newly created position of Data Officer. Michelle graduated from the University of Iowa in 2000 with a BA in Anthropology. Before moving to the UK, she worked for 7 years as a field archaeologist in the Midwest and Southwest United States. Her primary responsibilities included using GIS to study and analyse archaeological datasets and managing data collection in the field. Michelle completed her M.Sc. in GIS and Spatial Analysis in Archaeology at UCL's Institute of Archaeology in 2008. Michelle will lead on managing the BIS spatial species and habitat datasets, and analysis and predictive modelling projects.

Dave Cope moved on to pastures new in early September and we were very fortunate that Piotr Ged was available to take up the post of IT officer a week later. Piotr graduated from Wroclaw University of Technology in 2008 with a MSc in Computer Science. Before moving to UK he worked nearly three years for a consultancy company based in United States. He is settling in well and has cheerfully got to grips with the present BIS IT systems and meeting partner deadlines.

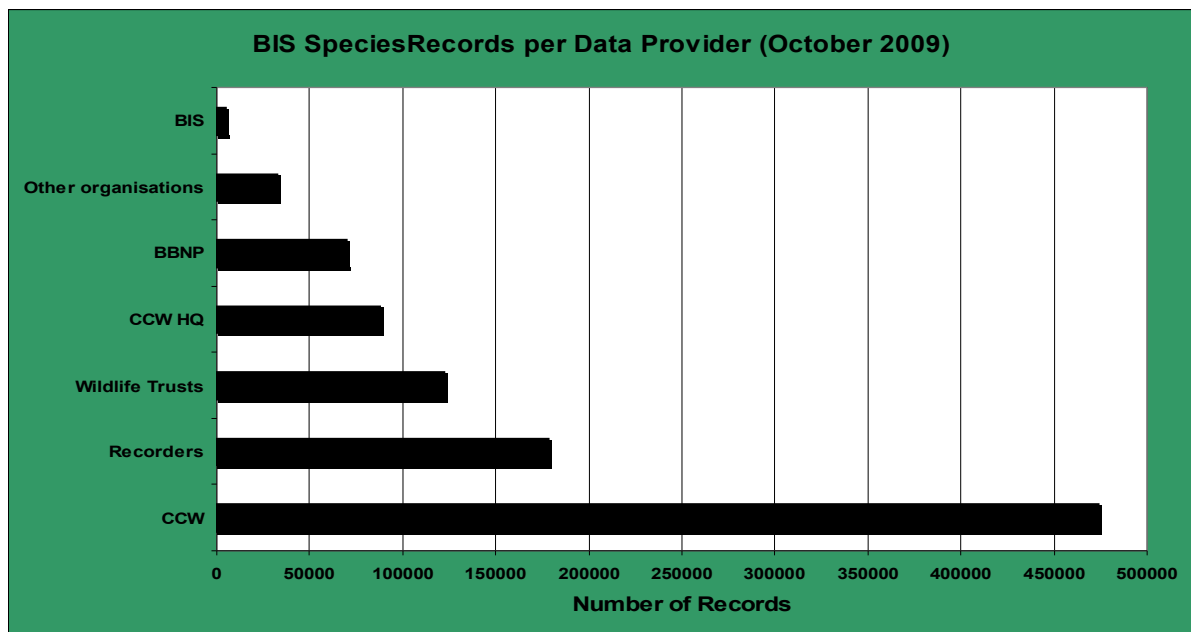
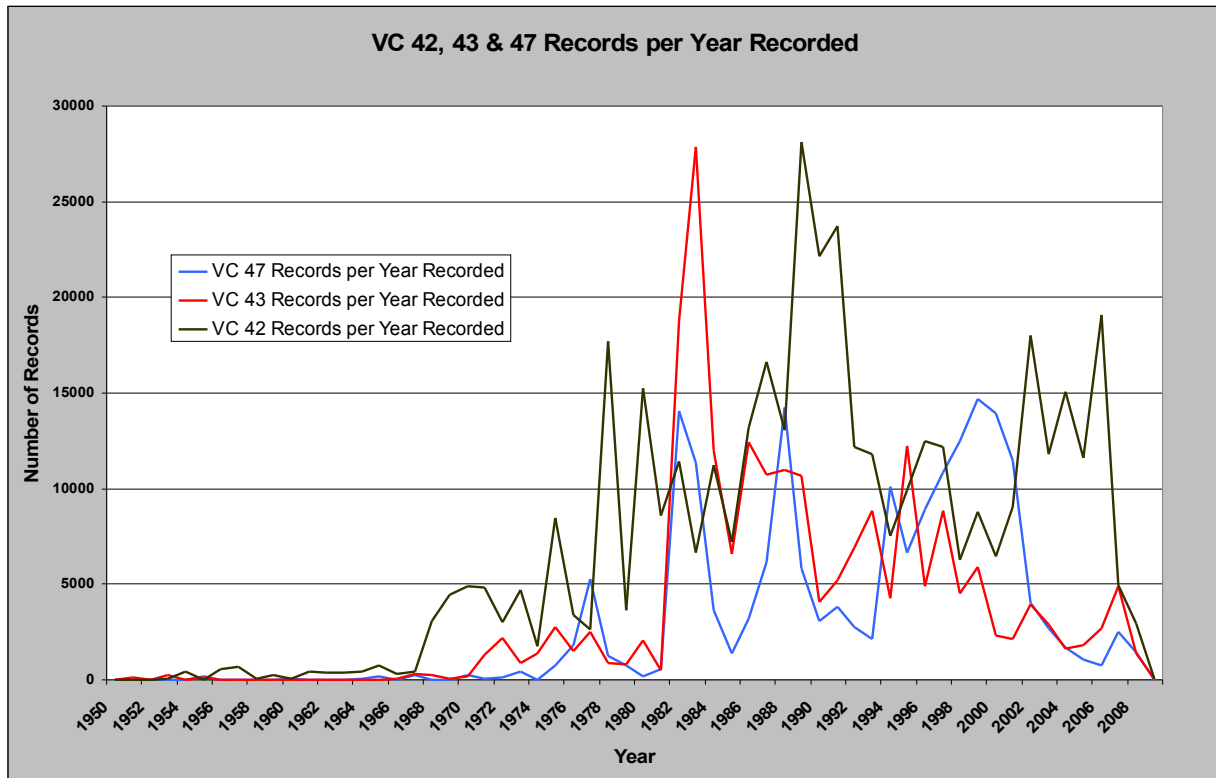
Anna Georgiou, the Biodiversity Information Officer, will be taking maternity leave from the 18th December. Naomi Stratton has been offered a GO Wales work placement and will start work at BIS the first week of December. After an initial training period we hope she will be able to assist with the enquiry service until Anna returns in April.

### Data

At the recent BIS Recorders Forum I gave a short presentation on the data we currently hold at BIS and some analysis of the data. I have updated the list of datasets held by BIS in Recorder 6 up to the end of October 2009. This shows the Survey, data provider, number of records, date range and survey type. This will be circulated to recorders on the e-mail list and also put on the BIS website.

Currently BIS has 975,197 records held in the Recorder 6 database but some of these are from Wales wide CCW HQ datasets. There are 912,600 records of these records in the BIS area.

Below is a graph showing number of species records held by BIS per year recorded in Vice-counties 42, 43 and 47. It is seen that Brecknock has a good range of records, particularly over the last 5 years. However we have a lot of work to do to improve the number of recent records held by BIS for Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire.



I also include above a breakdown of the data suppliers of the species records held by BIS. At the moment CCW is very high because of the data mobilisation project we had with them. We are also holding more CCW Head quarters data sets. However we recognise that a lot of the data held by CCW and the other organisations was originally provided to them by the voluntary recording community.

Michelle demonstrated at the Recorders Forum the types of analysis she can now do with ArcGIS that would be useful to the BIS partners but also of great use to the

recorders. She also demonstrated the free ArcExplorer (Java version) GIS software that is available which VC recorders may like to use to look at distributions of their data and the VC data that BIS holds for their taxon group. She would be very pleased to give any interested recorder a demonstration and this could be very useful to make displaying and verifying records a lot easier.

### **GIS Alert layers**

Although we provide an efficient enquiry service the Wales LRC Partners are asking more and more to have the species data readily accessible on their work desk-tops. This is so they can instantly react to emergencies they may have to deal with in their operations, and ensure biodiversity is always taken into account. Our aim at BIS has been to provide access to the BIS data remotely for the partners and we hope to do this over the next couple of years, by working with the 4 Wales LRC's and possibly NBN Gateway. Meantime an answer for some partners is to provide species GIS Alert layers.

Alert layers are a sub-set of species point data held by BIS. This maybe records within a buffer of the organisations' estate, or just Protected and Priority species in the LRC area. This data is released under licence to ensure security of the data is as high as when held at BIS and that they comply with the data providers wishes. For instance it takes into account that some species records are sensitive at full resolution and should only be available at that resolution to the ecological team within the organisation.

At the moment we do not provide the recorders name and full comments in these alert layers. This is partly to comply with agreements we have made with recorders in the past. However we feel that it is very important that the recorders name is part of the record, partly to show ownership of the record and also to give a level of confidence. I hope to contact soon recorders whom we have Data exchange agreements with, to confirm whether they are agreeable to releasing the recorders names in such alert layers.

*Janet Imlach (BIS Manager)*

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## Raft Spider *Dolomedes fimbriatus* – 2<sup>nd</sup> Radnorshire & Powys record?



(Photos: Steph Coates)

Whilst bottle trapping for newts at Nigel Isaksson's pond near Glasbury, Steph Coates and colleagues found this 'water spider' on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2009 and took photos. From the photos, it does look like the Raft Spider *Dolomedes fimbriatus* (although spiders are not my main group) which if so, is extremely local, although with quite widespread British records. This very exciting find which at first I thought may well be the first Powys record of this species (need to check with vice-county recorders yet), but a check on the BIS database produced a previous record by R Green, albeit nearly 38 years previously from Colwyn Brook Marshes SSSI, which is a good 18km north of Nigel's pond. Otherwise, I am unaware of any other recent records at present. This is one of two Raft Spiders in Britain, the other being the rare, famous and protected Fen Raft Spider *Dolomedes plantarius*, which occurs mainly in fens in East Anglia and Sussex, but with a couple of recent records for South Wales. *Dolomedes fimbriatus* prefers more acid bogs and pools where it will often sit on floating leaves to feel for vibrations with its front legs on the water surface. It then darts out over the water to grab its prey. If disturbed, they can quickly submerge themselves for short periods.

Perhaps a visit by spider recorders next year will confirm its present.

Amphibian surveyors are obviously in a very good position to discover many other aquatic species and I thank them for bringing this to my attention.

*Phil Ward, Radnorshire Invertebrate Group*

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### **Powys Land and Water Bugs (*Heteroptera*) records**

I have been thinking for some time now of taking on the Radnorshire vice-county role as 'Bug' recorder. However, in view of a scarcity of recording across the whole of Powys, and the fact that I do now seem to spend much more time recording further afield than just Radnorshire, I am happy to take on the county recorder role for True Bugs (*Heteroptera*) –excluding hoppers that is, unless someone else would like to, of course!

Obviously if you have any records past or future, not already sent to BIS, I would love to hear from you. I am particularly keen at the moment to encourage recording of aquatic species. If anyone would like help in identification of these or have any queries, please contact me below.

Phil Ward

Email: [philthebugman@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:philthebugman@hotmail.co.uk)

Tel: 01597 811049

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### **Montgomeryshire Wildlife Highlights**

As the Biodiversity Officer for the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust and a naturally obsessive recorder, I am ideally placed to encourage biological recording in, what is, a very under-recorded vice-county. Although I am the mammal recorder for Montgomeryshire, my recording passion is not limited to all things furry, so I thought it would be interesting to take a look back at some of this seasons highlights (many thanks to all those who contacted me with their sightings).

The big surprise for the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust this year was the discovery of a sleepy Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) under a large stone slab at Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve near Machynlleth in February. This site is a bog, but the willow scrub (and brambles in the drier areas) must be sufficient to provide the dormice with what they need.



Dormouse (*Tamasine Stretton*)

Apart from the huge influx of Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) in May and June, butterflies appear to have had another largely poor season. Thankfully, the Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria euphrosyne*), which remains at six sites in

Montgomeryshire, managed to improve on the record poor year of 2008; at all sites these rare butterflies had either increased or remained stable.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Tamasine Stretton*)

The spring migration didn't just bring in the butterflies. At Llyn Coed y Dinas Nature Reserve on the outskirts of Welshpool, May saw the second ever Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*) and Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*), as well as a pair of Lesser Blackback Gulls breeding on the reserve for the first time. At Cors Dyfi, the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust ran a hugely successful osprey project, following the return of a pair of Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*). This is the second year that these spectacular birds of prey have shown interest in an artificial osprey platform erected in the winter of 2007, although unfortunately they have yet to breed.

July was good for Odonata records with the first Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*) record since 2001 and most exciting, the first ever Montgomeryshire record of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura pumilio*) on private land near Llanbryn-mair. The introduction of Exmoor ponies created plenty of shallow, trampled, muddy pools which are the ideal habitat of this delicate species and the presence of numerous females and 'mating wheels' point towards attempted breeding; we wait to see if they were successful.

It's not only animals which have been making the record books this year. Following an annual count in September of the flowering Meadow Saffron (*Colchicum autumnale*) at Llanmerewig Glebe Nature Reserve, near Abermule, we were thrilled to discover the highest ever count of 1,196!

Finally, my gut (and several records!) tells me that the European Hornet (*Vespa crabro*) is having a good year in Montgomeryshire; I would be most interested to find out if this is a more widespread phenomenon.

Also, (and as always) I would love to hear your mammal roadkill sightings. I have seen the largest ever quantity of dead mammals on the road during this late summer/autumn, including a number of Polecats (*Mustela putorius*) and Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*). The latter has been having a tough time of late, UK-wide, so I am fascinated (and a little relieved) to see so many dead on the road, as this is an indication that there are more about; I would be most interested to hear about other people's observations Powys-wide.

*Tamasine Stretton, Biodiversity Officer, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust*

## BIS Field Recorder's Day 2009

### Y Fan lead mine, Llanidloes

A fine summer's day on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2009, saw nine recorders gather together at Y Fan mines (SN943875), just north of Llanidloes in Montgomeryshire. This site was former lead mines before being reclaimed and is now owned by Powys County Council. Emma Durward (Powys LBAP Officer) very kindly came along - having temporarily escaped from her family duties - to introduce the site to us, before we all dispersed for the rest of the day. Its amazing that even on a relatively small site, you don't bump into fellow recorders very often!

Initially, we were all impressed by the abundance and variety of flowering plants on the site, and particularly so when Alastair Hotchkiss and Isobelle Griffith recorded hoary plantain *Plantago media* – which would have been the first Mont vice-county record - but later we discovered from Emma that the site had been re-seeded sometime in the past. Even so, Judi Stretton did record 82 species of plants including several broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* hiding under the hedges, and a good selection of meadow species including yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, cowslip *Primula vulgaris*, bladder campion *Silene vulgaris*, musk mallow *Malva moschata* and field scabious *Knautia arvensis*.

Common frog *Rana temporaria* and common toad *Bufo bufo* were recorded by Lorraine Jones, with dozens of common lizards of all ages also seen, many of them sitting sunning themselves along the bottom rails of the roadside wooden fences.



Common lizard *Lacerta vivipara* (Mark Walters)

Five species of common mammal were recorded by their signs, droppings, burrows etc by Tammy Stretton as well as two different spraint locations of otter *Lutra lutra* found along the Afon Cerist.

On the invertebrate front, Alastair recorded a good list of 26 hoverflies *Syrphidae* including *Pipiza noctiluca*, as well as 11 species of butterflies. Among the six *Odonata* recorded by Mark Walters, were male and female brown hawkers *Aeshna grandis* hunting high around the trees and a single adult migrant hawkers *Aeshna mixta* also hunting in trees and along the road corridor.



Female common darter *Sympetrum striolatum* (Mark Walters)

Mike Paskin and myself recorded a moderate selection of common Diptera, Coleoptera and other orders, about 70 species of inverts in total, with the rather wonderful site of literally hundreds, indeed rafts, (I counted 350+) of adults and nymphs of the large river skater *Aquarius najas* - being twice as big as a normal pond skater. This is only the 4<sup>th</sup> confirmed Powys record! It is a species which is probably under-recorded, but still of very local occurrence in the UK, which inhabits tree-lined streams. I have recorded it previously in Radnorshire on the River Marteg in 1997 and River Wye this year, both of which lie north of Rhayader, and Adrian Fowles has recorded it from the Dyfi near Machynlleth in 2000. So keep your eyes peeled, and please send me any sightings.

*Phil Ward, BIS Recording Officer*

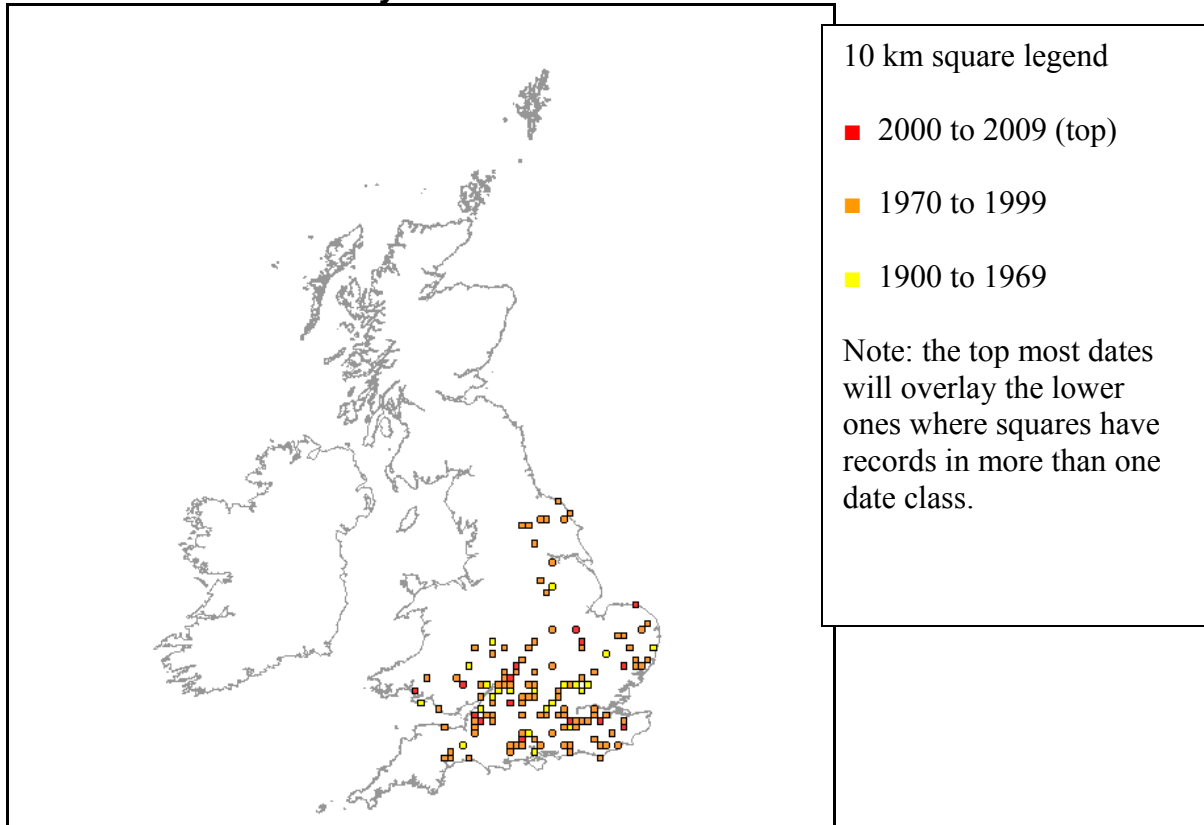
## The net-winged beetle *Platycis minuta* (F. 1787) in Brecknock

Four species of *Lycidae* or net-winged beetles occur in Britain. These are quite large, attractive red beetles which are found as adults during autumn, although it is stated in the literature that these are short lived. Their common family name of net-winged beetles refers to the cross-like pattern of raised ridges on the elytra. Three of these have restricted distributions and are Nationally Scarce or Red Data Book species. The fourth species *Platycis minuta* is also a Nationally Scarce insect but has a widespread distribution in England and South Wales as the map below shows. *Platycis minuta* is associated with ancient broad-leaved woodland and other areas with old trees, chiefly known from beech, but also ash, oak and other trees.

On 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009, whilst sweeping vegetation composed mostly of dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and *Luzula* under semi-mature ash/sycamore woodland adjoining the River Wye just north of Erwood in Brecknockshire, I found one adult specimen of this beetle. I am aware of only four previous records of this species in Powys, all in Brecknockshire. These four previous records all lie in an area roughly between Llangorse Lake and Tal-y-bont. The earliest records are from 1996 with a September record by PM Pavett and October record by Adrian Fowles. There is also a 1997 record with unknown recorder. More recently, Wolfgang Schaefer (VC47 beetle recorder) took this species in a pasture by Llangorse Lake in September 2005. This current record is approximately 17km further north than any previous Powys ones. I just need to find it across the river in Radnorshire now!

*Phil Ward, Radnorshire Beetle Recorder*

### 10km distribution of *Platycis minutus* in Great Britain and Ireland



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Photo page  
(A selection of recent photos sent in to BIS)



Hedgehogs, Llangattock (DG Williams)



Hazel leaf-roller weevil *Apoderus coryli* at Gilfach (Alastair Hotchkiss)



Male 4-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* at Y fan. The mining bee *Andrena nitida* (Andy Lord) (Mark Walters)



*Andrena nitida* (Andy Lord)



Leucistic *Bombus* probably *pascuorum* (Pauline Oldroyd, via RWT)

## Aberystwyth University Lifelong Learning Courses

### **Animal diversity**

There are a huge number of different animal species on planet earth and scientists need to find some order out of the chaos. Find out the science behind sorting out members of the Animal Kingdom. By examining their structure and studying the evolutionary processes that resulted in this diversity of form, you will be able to place animals in to related groups.

*Welsh Wildlife Centre, Cilgerran, Cardigan*

Starting:10/10/09, End Date: 05/12/09, Tutor: Peter Brown, Course Code: AD101

### **Butterflies of Various Habitats**

Butterflies have evolved to occupy almost every kind of wild and semi-natural habitat in Britain and are an important group as they are sensitive indicators of the health of the environment. You will learn how to identify a good range different species and gain knowledge of their habitat requirements.

*Aberystwyth Old College*

Starting: 26/06/10, End Date: 14/08/10, Tutor: Red Liford, Course Code: AA302

### **Ponds and streams - invertebrate life**

Explore further the lives of the many invertebrate animals that make up a freshwater ecosystem. Field visits, different sampling techniques, diversity, adaptations and life cycles, monitoring and management of ponds and streams to both assess their general status and to improve their biodiversity will be covered.

*Lampeter Denmark Farm*

Starting: 14/05/10, End Date: 16/05/10, Tutor: Peter Brown, Course Code: AB300

*Machynlleth CAT*

Starting: 01/10/10, End Date: 03/10/10, Tutor: Peter Brown, Course Code: AF100V

### **Understanding British Bats: An Introduction**

This new course gives a thorough introduction to British bats and is one in a planned series. Species identification, life cycles, habits and habitats, practical and field exercises will involve a guide to summer and winter roosting sites and flight corridors, feeding patterns and behaviour, distribution and status of these mammals, including BAP species and Wildlife Law.

*Machynlleth CAT*

Starting:02/07/10,End Date:04/07/10, Tutor:Richard Crompton, Course Code:AF306

### **Understanding British Mammals 1: Gnawers, Nibblers & Insect Crunchers**

This new course covers an exciting range of mammals including insectivores, rodents, rabbits, hares and deer. Species identification, life cycles, habits, field-signs, tracks and trails, feeding remains, droppings, nests and burrows together with population and monitoring techniques.

**Machynlleth CAT**

Starting: 07/05/10, End Date: 09/05/10, Tutor: Rob Strachan, Course Code: AF301

&

*Lampeter Denmark Farm*

Starting: 21/05/10, End Date: 23/05/10, Tutor: Rob Strachan, Course Code: AB301

### **Understanding British Mammals 2: Predators & Hunters**

This new course covers an exciting range of mammals including the carnivores, seals and cetaceans. Species identification, life cycles, habits and habitats, practical and field exercises,

field-signs, tracks and trails, feeding remains, droppings, nests and burrows together with population and monitoring techniques

*Machynlleth CAT*

*Starting: 04/06/10, End Date: 06/06/10, Tutor: Rob Strachan, Course Code:AF304*

&

*Lampeter Denmark Farm*

*Starting: 02/07/10, End Date: 04/07/10, Tutor: Rob Strachan, Course Code:AB304*

### **Migrant Breeding Birds**

The course is mainly field-based, it will concentrate on how to identify these migrant breeding birds. Their breeding habits, the habitats which they utilise and their migration behaviour will be investigated.

*Aberystwyth Old College*

*Starting:17/04/10, End Date: 19/06/10, Tutor: Red Liford, Course Code:AA300*

&

*Welsh Wildlife Centre, Cilgerran, Cardigan*

*Starting:19/04/10, End Date: 24/05/10, Tutor: Red Liford, Course Code:AD300*

### **Biospheres and the Unesco Dyfi Designation**

Biosphere Reserves are designed to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity and biological resources with their sustainable use. During the course, the mechanisms for establishing Biosphere Reserves will be explored in the context of the Dyfi Estuary Biosphere Reserve

*Machynlleth CAT*

*Starting:21/05/10, End Date: 24/05/10, Tutor: Barry Thomas, Course Code:AF302*

### **Plant Diversity**

Find out the science behind sorting out members of the Plant Kingdom. By examining their structure and studying the evolutionary processes that resulted in this diversity of form, you will be able to place plants in to related groups.

*Aberystwyth, Llanbadarn DIS 114*

*Starting:07/10/09,End Date:02/12/09, Tutor:Margaret Howells, Course Code:AA103*

&

*Machynlleth CAT*

*Starting:28/05/10,End Date:30/05/10, Tutor:Margaret Howells, Course Code:AF303*

### **Identifying the Flowering Plants**

Examine specimens to become familiar with the huge variety of flower and leaf forms and the equally huge and often confusing terminology used in the wild flower books and 'keys'. You will be given the confidence to use a 'flora?' and 'keys', identifying unknown flowering plant species on your own.

**Lampeter Denmark Farm**

*Starting:18/06/10, End Date:20/06/10, Tutor:Margaret Howells, Course Code:AB302*

&

*Machynlleth CAT*

*Starting:02/07/10, End Date:04/07/10, Tutor:Margaret Howells, Course Code:AF307*

### **Identifying Grasses, Sedges & Rushes**

Learn the fundamentals of grass, sedge and rush identification, essential and valuable skills for any field and conservation ecologists. Emphasis will be on practical skills with

identification taking place mainly in the laboratory where there is the time and equipment to fully examine specimens.

**Lampeter Denmark Farm**

*Starting:25/06/10, End Date 27/06/10, Tutor:Margaret Howells, Course Code:AB303*  
&

*Machynlleth CAT*

*Starting:09/07/10, End Date:11/07/10, Tutor:Margaret Howells, Course Code:AF308*

**Identifying Mosses, Liverworts & Lichens**

If you are prepared for a challenge and something both fascinating and different try the identification of mosses and lichens. Mosses, liverworts and lichens make up an important but often a neglected component of many habitats and are particularly abundant in the clean and moist air of west Wales.

*Lampeter Denmark Farm*

*Starting:25/09/09, End Date:27/09/09, Tutor:Margaret Howells, Course Code:AB100*  
&

*Machynlleth CAT*

*Starting:26/03/10, End Date:28/03/10, Tutor:Margaret Howells, Course Code:AF101*

To enrol on any of the above courses, please complete an enrolment form. Download the form from: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/sell/courses/llearn/science/index.html> or email [learning@aber.ac.uk](mailto:learning@aber.ac.uk) <<mailto:learning@aber.ac.uk>> to request a copy of the form. For further information about the courses, please email [mth@aber.ac.uk](mailto:mth@aber.ac.uk) <<mailto:mth@aber.ac.uk>>

**Water Sticks near you!**



Water Stick Insect *Ranatra linearis* from Penlan Ponds, Brecon (Keith Noble)

This species is certainly expanding its range in Powys with records now turning up all over the place in well vegetated ponds. It's hard to believe that this very large and charismatic insect has been missed up till now! So keep a look out  
*Phil Ward*

## **Biodiversity Information Service**

First Floor Offices, Coliseum House, 7 Wheat Street, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7DG  
Tel:01874 610881 Fax:01874 624812 Email: [info@b-i-s.org](mailto:info@b-i-s.org) Website: [www.b-i-s.org](http://www.b-i-s.org)

### **Working in Partnership with:-**

Countryside Council for Wales  
Powys County Council  
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority  
Brecknockshire Wildlife Trust  
Radnorshire Wildlife Trust  
Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust  
Forestry Commission for Wales  
Mid-Wales Trunk Road Agency  
Environment Agency

### **Directors**

Norman Lowe (Brecknockshire Wildlife Trust representative) – *Chairman*  
Steve Packer (Powys County Council) - *Secretary*  
Colin Young – *Vice-chairman*  
Peter Seaman (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority) - *Treasurer*  
Estelle Bailey – (Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust representative)  
Bronwen Jenkins (Radnorshire Wildlife Trust representative)  
David Mitchell (CCW representative)

### **Steering Group**

Paul Sinnadurai (BBNPA) - *Chairman*  
Gareth Ellis (BBNP LBAP)  
Bev Lewis (BWT)  
Tammy Stretton (MWT)  
Julian Jones (RWT)  
Michelle Delafield (Mid-Wales Trunk Road Agency)  
Emma Durward (PCC LBAP)  
Ken Perry (CCW)

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