



## Llythyr Newyddion Mehefin 2009/June Newsletter 2009

### LBAP Species No.5. Yellowhammer

The yellowhammer is a declining breeding resident with a patchy distribution in the county, being absent from large areas of countryside. They feed on seed and grain and insects and, therefore, prefer arable farmland with hedges, bushes and other scrubby vegetation. The females build quite bulky nests low down in hedgerows, lined with grass, moss and even hair. Yellowhammers produce two or three broods per season. Found across most parts of the UK, it is least abundant in the north and west.

In Carmarthenshire they are seen all year round, most frequently on dry bracken-covered hillsides and arable land in coastal areas. In winter they often join mixed flocks of finches and buntings. Recent population declines have made it a Red List species.

This decline is most likely a result of modern farming practices: autumn sowing of crops and the loss of winter stubble, which is affecting many other arable farmland birds, such as skylarks, finches and buntings.

The distinctive *'little bit of bread and no cheese'* song characterises the species. The male has a bright yellow head and breast and uses high perches to defend its territory singing loudly. Both sexes have white outer tail feathers and a chestnut rump.

Its habitat preference in the county can be split into two broad categories: the dry, steep bracken-covered hillsides of the north east and the better agricultural land bordering Pembrokeshire and the coastal belt in the south and west. This leaves a large gap in the middle of the county where they are not found.

In south and west of the county, yellowhammers prefer large well-drained fields and perhaps dislike the smaller fields of damper pasture more typical of the central areas.

In the north east they have become increasingly scarce in the Rhandirmwyn area, perhaps as foraging with silage takes over from hay, although local reports indicate significant flocks coming to bird tables in the winter.

Corn and seed is most likely to attract them into the garden, especially in winter and spring when natural food supplies are short and this is a good way to help this species out. In addition sympathetic management of hedges allowing thick dense habitat to develop provides good breeding habitat for these birds.





## Day-flying moths in Carmarthenshire - Ian Morgan

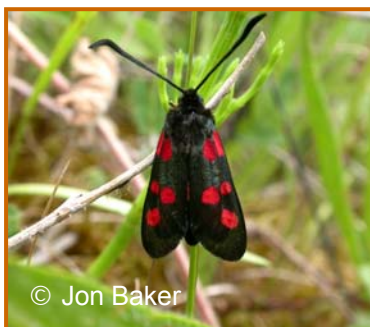
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Most of us (correctly) think of moths as night-flying insects, but there are also species that can be seen by day. The following brief account offers summaries of a selection of the species that are diurnal (active during the day rather than at night), followed by a photographic section that will help readers identify what they have seen. The photos have been supplied by the County Moth Recorder, Jon Baker and others. Records should be passed to Jon, either directly (Jon's address is 14 Jobs Well Road, Johnstown, Carmarthen SA31 3HG, tel: 01267 221681, email: mothboy@btinternet.com). We are lacking recent records of many of the species discussed below and whilst many species have declined due to habitat loss, others remain unrecorded (or simply unreported), so please look out this season *and pass on records*. Jon also produces an interesting regular e-mail newsletter in the spring and autumn.

**Be** aware that some of the night-flying moths may be found or flushed in daytime and some, such as the Silver Y, regularly flying in daytime when they visit nectar sources. One may come across other species too that tend to be easier to flush, such as some of the carpet moths, the (very common) Brown Silver-line, the Magpie, the Latticed and Common Heaths, Treble Bar, Oak Egger and many micro-moths such as the plume moths or Pyralids. And, of course, there may be that delightful Hummingbird Hawk-moth on your garden butterfly bush or other flowers. Some caterpillars are also distinctive and obviously abroad in the day....but that's another story!



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**Forester** *Adscita statives* – a dark Sherwood-green species found on rough acidic pastures, where the larvae feed on common and sheep's sorrel. May–July.

**Burnet moths** *Zygaena* spp – the six-spot *Z. filipendulae stephensi* and the five-spot *Z. trifolii palustrella* fly in July–Aug on flower-rich grassland where they feed on bird's-foot trefoils; the five-spot tends to occur on damper grassland.

**Chimney Sweeper** *Odezia atrata* – a little blackish species that occurs on neutral-calcareous grassland (now a rare habitat in the county). It feeds on pignut in June–July. It would be worth looking for on the limestone ridge that runs through the county from Carreg Cennen, via Carmel and Mynydd Llangydyryn, but it is by no means confined to this rock outcrop.



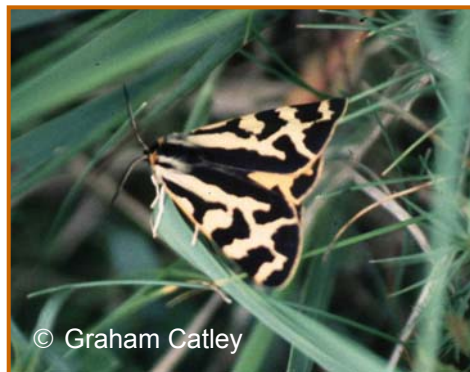
© Jon Baker

◀ **Mother Shipton** *Callistege mi* – thus called because of the wing markings that resemble the face of a celebrated 'Yorkshire hag'! Feeds on legumes such as clovers and is on the wing in May–June.

**Burnet Companion** *Euclidia glyphica* – another legume-feeder flying in May and June.



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**Yellow Belle**  
*Semiaspilates ochrearia* – a moth of dry coastal rough ground eg at Machynys and North Dock, Llanelli. June–Sept.

**Speckled Yellow** *Pseudopanthera macularia* – surprisingly scarce, as the larval foodplant (wood sage), is frequent. I've only seen it twice – at Abergorlech and Capel Dyddgen near Crwbin. May and June.

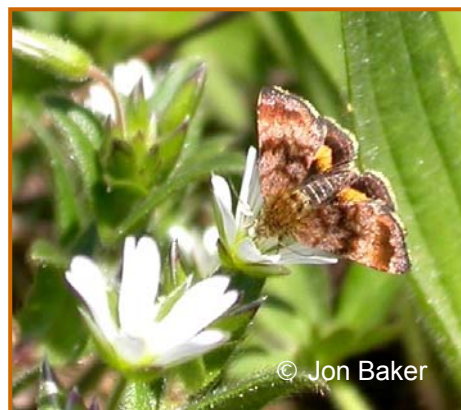
**Wood Tiger** *Parasemia plantaginis plantaginis*. This is a moth of moorland and wood edge, last seen in the county in 1993. May–July.



**Garden Tiger** *Arctia caja* – an unmistakable, but much-declined species. July–August.

**Clouded Buff** *Diacrisia sannio* – again a little-seen upland species. Orange and yellow in colour and last recorded at Nant y Rhaeadr on the edge of Mynydd Mallaen (near Cilycwm) in late June 1986. June–July.

**Scarlet Tiger** *Callimorpha dominula* – a colourful cream, black and red moth associated with wetlands where the caterpillars feed on comfrets or hemp agrimony. Not infrequent in the coastal parts of the Llanelli. June–July.



**Cinnabar** *Tyria jacobaeae* – a well-known black and crimson day-flier with the even better known orange and black-striped caterpillars that feed on ragwort. May–July.

**Beautiful Yellow Underwing** *Anarta cordigera* – occurs on heathland or bogs where it feeds on heather, e.g. Cors Goch Llanllwch. April–August.

**Small Yellow Underwing** *Panemeria tenebrata* – a local May–June flying moth, with caterpillars that depend on mouse-ears *Cerastium* spp.



### **Spring clean at Morfa Berwig!**

Over 25 volunteers turned up to help out with vital management work at the water vole project site on 1st May. Volunteers from Keep Wales Tidy, the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and Swansea University all helped with path maintenance, fixing gates and litter picking to ensure that the site is safe to use this summer. It is hoped that continued collection of litter will further discourage the fly-tipping of material that occurs at the site entrance.

The ponds that the Environment Agency created are vegetating up already and should soon provide useful extra habitat for the water voles to expand into.

The brownfield area that was cleared for use as a temporary car park for the new Scarlets rugby ground has not, as yet, been used and it looks like valuable habitat may have been lost unnecessarily. Nature, however, can bounce back and it will be interesting to monitor the species as they recolonise the area.



### **Garden Moths Count in the week of 20–28 June**

Garden Moths Count is a nationwide survey to discover which moths live in our gardens. Anyone can take part using simple methods to attract moths then reporting via a website which species you found.

It's easy to join in - [www.mothcount.brc.ac.uk](http://www.mothcount.brc.ac.uk) has information on how to attract moths, identify them and how to send in your results. Photos are provided of the moths you are likely to catch and hints on how to identify them. Maps of previous years results are shown so you can compare results with previous years!





## **Council and Carmarthenshire Bird Club start project to help dippers**

Dippers are attractive, plump birds with a low, whirring flight. They have a characteristic bobbing motion when perched on rocks and a distinctive white throat and breast, which contrasts with its dark body plumage. Feeding on insect larvae and shrimps in fast-flowing rivers it can actually walk under water in search of food. It is mainly found in upland areas of the county.

Nest sites are used by successive generations of birds. The RSPB reports that one site is said to have been used continuously for 123 years! They are usually located in a natural crevice in a stream-side cave or waterfall, but birds will use man-made structures such as bridges, walls, weirs and culverts.

Many of the bridges within the dippers range in Carmarthenshire are used for nesting but unfortunately when these are replaced or repaired the crevices and ledges used by dippers for nesting are lost.



Now the Carmarthenshire Bird Club and the Bridges Section and Countryside Section within the Council are working together to help dippers. When bridges are repaired or replaced by the bridge engineers, dipper boxes will be provided, made by the Countryside Section with the help of volunteers to provide valuable nesting sites for these birds.

During the summer Bird club members throughout the county will be asked if they know where dippers used to breed until the bridge was replaced. A list of sites will be drawn up and then boxes installed in early winter ready for the spring. Monitoring of the sites will be carried by bird club members.

## **Carmarthenshire Bat Group – new pages on biodiversity website**

The Carmarthenshire Bat Group is raising their profile through the addition of pages for the group on the Carmarthenshire Biodiversity website ([www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk)). Information about the group's meetings, annual bat counts and information on the bat species found in the county will be added to the site, along with news and the facility to report sightings to the group.

The Bat Group aims to increase awareness about bats in the county and to help improve the protection, conservation and welfare of bats, their roosts, habitat, feeding areas and hibernacula in Carmarthenshire. It also promotes the training of members for licensing as volunteer bat workers. It welcomes new members and information about significant roost sites.

Meetings this summer include: monitoring of a large pipstrelle roost at Login, surveys of churches and churchyards, bat walks at the National Trust Llandeilo and Cwm Oernant ponds, Carmarthen. Go to the website for more information or contact Steve Lucas on 01792 643 152 (daytime) or [slucas@bats.org.uk](mailto:slucas@bats.org.uk).



Natterer's bats © Tom McOwat