

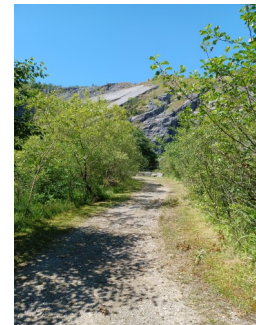
## South Wales Field Trip July 2022

In July a small group of dedicated coleopterists met in Swansea to take part in ColSoc's first organised field trip. The purpose of the trip was to record as many beetle species as we could, visiting both the rich and deservedly well known sites in the area, and also other sites which looked promising but whose beetle fauna had never been explored. Over the six days we visited eight localities and, despite the exceptionally dry conditions, succeeded in finding 436 species and generating 926 records of the beetle fauna.

Our trip began on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July at Crymlyn Burrows, where members of the party joined as they arrived in the area. The site is a SSSI, a survivor of the once extensive sand dune systems which once characterised much of the South Wales coast. It amply illustrates the way in which the coastal dunes have been broken up, as it is bordered on one side by a newly built Swansea University campus, built on what had previously been a tank farm for an oil refinery, giving way through docks to the urban development of Swansea. On the other side of the Neath river a power station and other industrial sites lead to Port Talbot and thence to a major steel works. Despite the fragmentation of the original habitat Crymlyn Burrows retains many original features, with mobile dunes, dune slacks, wetland areas with reed beds and successional scrub growth at the fringes.



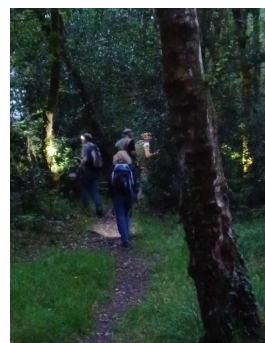
Carmel National Nature Reserve in Carmarthenshire is very different. Luxuriant flower rich meadows with wooded areas at the western end and former quarries in the east. The eastern part of the site has a turlough lake, fed entirely by groundwater with no incoming or outgoing streams. This site had never been surveyed for Coleoptera prior to our visit on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July.



On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> July we visited Cwm Taff Fechan, a reserve jointly managed by Merthyr Tydfil Council and the Wildlife Trust. It comprises a linear reserve surrounding the Taff Fechan, one of the tributaries of the river Taff which reaches the sea in Cardiff Bay. The banks of the river are wooded with pasture grazed by a few horses, and steep slopes above shingle stretches. Although the reserve is now entirely within what is considered to be Glamorgan, at one time the river formed the boundary between Glamorganshire (VC41) and Breconshire (VC42).



That evening we visited Coed Maesmelin, owned and managed by the Woodland Trust (Coed Cymru), to search by torchlight after dark to see if we could find *Carabus intricatus*, the Blue Ground Beetle, which has recently been discovered in the wood. The woodland is on the steep southeast facing slopes of a hillside above the town of Skewen, and the beetle was discovered when some individuals were washed into a local resident's garage after torrential rain. The Trust and Buglife have collaborated to survey the wood and the surrounding area for the beetle and to develop a management plan to incorporate its needs. They have worked with volunteers and the local community, who have proudly adopted their newly discovered neighbour. Although it was late in the year to easily find the beetles, we were lucky enough to see one.



Whiteford Burrows was our site for the following day. This reserve at the north west corner of the Gower peninsula is a well known site for wildlife, owned and managed by the National Trust. It is an area of sand dunes with some conifer plantations, separated by a marsh from the nearby Cwm Ivy woods. Because of the collapse of a sea wall the marsh is in the process of transitioning to a salt marsh. As salt marsh is considered to be a more valuable habitat by NRW and the National Trust, the sea wall has not been repaired – to the chagrin of the local residents who used the footpath. Whiteford Burrows is one of the few remaining strongholds in South Wales of *Eurynebria complanata*, the Beachcomber or Strandline

Beetle, and we were fortunate to find one under almost the first piece of driftwood that we turned over. Other notable Coleoptera found included *Arenaria tabida*, *Aleochara obscurella*, *Halacritus punctum*, *Hypocaccus crassipes*, *Hypocaccus dimidiatus*, and *Stictoleptura rubra*





On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July we visited the Butterfly Conservation reserve at Seven Sisters in the Dulais valley north of Neath. This is an upland reserve maintained for Marsh Fritillary habitat. It comprises rhos pasture, plantation woodland and upland scrub. Amongst some 54 beetle species we found *Stictoleptura rubra*.

Later the same day we went to Penllergare Valley Woods. At one time these were the garden of a large country house. The house is no longer there, but the gardens are being restored and managed both to improve the visitor experience and biodiversity. We were only there for a short visit, but we found nearly 80 species of Coleoptera, including *Oxystoma cerdo*, *Stictoleptura rubra* and *Polydrusus formosus*.

Our final visit was to Oxwich Bay NNR. The beach is a very popular one, but the sand dune systems and the extensive wetland are managed for biodiversity. This is a well known site which has a rich fauna and flora. We found 134 species of Coleoptera, including *Agonum nigrum*, *Amara spreta*, *Cercyon tristis*, *Silis ruficollis*, *Oxytelus fuscipes*, *Sepedophilus testaceus* and *Opatrum sabulosum*.



In addition to fieldwork we had a stimulating discussion about the future of recording when we met in Swansea's Environment Centre with Adam Rowe, CEO of the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBrEC). We are very grateful to SEWBrEC for their financial support of the field trip, and to many individuals from NRW, the National Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Coed Cymru, Swansea University, the Wildlife Trust of West and South West Wales and others for their support, encouragement and permission to visit their sites, without which this field trip could not have taken place.