

An introduction to Rust-fungi Course



On 15 May 2011, Cofnod ran an identification course on Rust-fungi, Mildews and Smuts at the picturesque Treborth Botanic Gardens, Bangor. The course was led by local expert Debbie Evans who provided a comprehensive introduction to this overlooked, unusual taxonomic group.

Debbie supplied an astounding array (60+) of fresh specimens which immediately highlighted the diversity of this group, as well as the assortment of plant hosts that they parasitise. Indeed, the aroma and vivid colours from the plant material and rust-fungi greeted attendees on their arrival which provided an immediate talking point and allowed people to informally discuss and observe the specimens.

The laboratory session allowed participants to follow the methodology outlined in the lecture in which Debbie demonstrated how to prepare slides in order to examine microscopic and macroscopic features. Debbie also explained how simple it was to collate and preserve specimens, so that as a novice, although identification may prove difficult initially, a specimen could be prepared for a local expert to verify and record.



The afternoon field session was somewhat disrupted by the driving rain, but all participants had waterproofs and were enthusiastic to get outdoors and find some specimens of their own. Despite the weather, 15 specimens were collected and recorded which comprised: 10 species of rust-fungi, 4 Downey mildews, and 1 Smut fungus. **Excitingly, this included 2 new host species (*Euonymus europaeus* and *Frangula alnus*) which supported 2 common rust-fungi: *Melampsora epitae* var. *epitae* and *Puccinia coronata* respectively.**



The course feedback was very good and people were particularly impressed with the quantity and diversity of specimens they were able to examine and observe in the laboratory.

Cofnod will also be running An Introduction to Odonata Larvae Course (26 June 2011) and a Bumblebee Identification course (23 July 2011) as part of a Summer series of courses. Please visit our

website regularly for more information.