



# FACTsheet 5

## Fantastic beasts...

If you were to travel back in time to the Victorian era and flick through the popular newspapers or journals of the time, you'd find articles of 'gossip', much like the tabloids today. But this gossip wasn't about celebrities, it was about science!



'Science gossip' articles and journals were written and illustrated by both renowned scientists and amateur enthusiasts who were interested in the natural world. There was not much academic rigor, and journals often contained drawings of impossible creatures and fantastical plants that had no scientific basis.

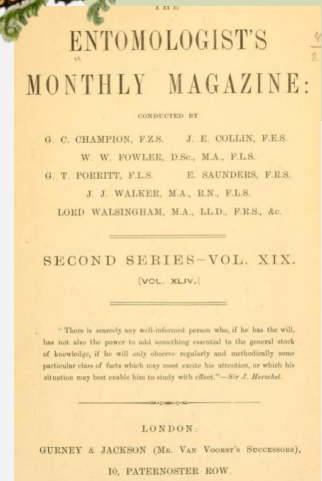
These images would simultaneously fascinate and terrify curious members of the public and students, and they became 'hot topics' of conversation. Amongst the fantasy, there were valuable discoveries and illustrations that meticulously recorded different species, some of which no longer exist.

The Carneddau landscape above Penmaenmawr was of great interest to scientists during this period. Alfred Owen, the 19th century Entomologist, wrote articles for journals to spread the word about the unusual moths he had found here. He was so determined for these moths to be recorded by his fellow Entomologists, that he spent the last month of his life in Llanfairfechan with Samuel James Capper (who wrote for the Entomological Society of London), to ensure the knowledge he'd learned could be passed on before his death.



## ...and where to find them

Penmaenmawr and its surrounding landscape continued to feature in journals such as 'The Entomologist', 'The Naturalist' and 'The Entomologist Monthly Magazine', throughout the 20th century. Eminent scientists such as B.H Crabtree studied butterflies and moths here, and his collection and papers ended up in Oxford University's Museum of Natural History.



Thanks to the work of Pensychnant Nature Reserve, Penmaenmawr is still a major contributor to scientific knowledge about the natural world. Scientists and Naturalists visit to study the Ashworth Rustic and Weaver's Wave moths that are prevalent in the area, and Pensychnant has perhaps the best recorded moth history and collection in North Wales.

Recently, the Carneddau Project that the museum is involved with, has been recording insects on the landscape immediately around the town. The figures from the recordings are astounding! They include:

- 27 types of butterfly
- 576 types of moth
- 38 types of beetle
- 18 types of dragonfly
- 7 types of centipede
- 103 types of spider



When everything gets back to a 'new normal', the museum will be developing its work with the Carneddau Project through 'citizen science' initiatives. We are going to be installing a powerful microscope for people to study species of plants and insects they have discovered through these projects, and we'll be working with local conservationists to develop accessible ways of sharing the learning and getting children and young people involved.

