

HANTS MONTHLY



December Moths, Freshwater, 30 December 2009 (Dave Cooke)

NUMBER 9 - January - March 2010

Welcome to the first Hantsmoths newsletter of 2010. It's been a cold start to the year, but spring has arrived over the last couple of weeks and the moths are starting to appear in numbers. It will be interesting to see how our moth populations respond to this cold start, although there is no reason to suspect that our resident species will have suffered - in their European ranges, they will experience longer and colder winters than anything the British Isles are likely to encounter and have evolved over millennia to adapt to far worse winter conditions than that experienced today. The same may not be true of some of our adventive species, although even our most successful introduction, *Epiphyas postvittana*, originating in temperate Australia, appears to be able to survive cold winter spells. In practice, a cold winter is likely to be advantageous in preventing the early emergence associated with mild temperatures, which lead to a species becoming out of synch with its foodplants, disrupts breeding and may increase the risk of fungal infection in the larval and pupal stages. Cold winters may also reduce the winter survival rate of predators.

Apologies for the late date of this first newsletter of 2010. It's been a busy start to the year, and the last couple of months have been fully occupied with writing and editing Hampshire & Isle of Wight's 2009 Moth Report, which we hope will be out to members in May. Looking forward to next year's report, I hope we will have enjoyed a good summer for mothing and make a plea to all recorders and photographers out there to send in records as early as possible and to keep the excellent photographs coming - the more the better!

MJW

FIRST QUARTER 2010 WEATHER SUMMARY

JANUARY

The cold that we saw in December returned with a vengeance early in the month bringing some severe frosts with -7.4°C on the morning of the 4th. From late on the 5th, a southward moving weatherfront brought an exceptional event to much of Hampshire as a low pressure area formed close to the English Channel and caused a spell of persistent heavy snow that extended well into the 6th. Many places had nearly a foot (25cm) of snow from this. It wasn't until mid month that temperatures recovered somewhat, although it was never that warm. As a whole, it was a very cold month thanks to the prevalence of winds from an easterly quarter with temperatures roughly between 2 to 3°C below normal.



FEBRUARY

A cold winter was completed this month although the averages suggest that it was not that far from normal. Another easterly month, probably the third most easterly dominated in 100 years! It started a bit milder than it had been for weeks with 10.1°X being reached locally on the 5th. A quiet colder mid-month gave way to unsettled and wet weather towards the end to leave it a wet month overall

MARCH

In all aspects, March ended up a near average month. This belied a cold start though with more easterly winds. Southerly winds later in the month brought a good recovery in temperature although it remained unsettled. Local temperatures peaked at 15.5°C on the 24th.

DBO

JANUARY - MARCH 2010 SUMMARY

Please note that in accordance with the usual convention where referring to overnight light-trapping the evening date not the morning date is used.

The first species of moth reported in 2010 to Hantsmoths, Winter Moth *Operophtera brumata*, Early Moth *Theria primaria* and Satellite *Eupsilia transversa*, did not appear until the second half of January and had to brave the sub-zero temperatures which continued throughout much of the first two months of the year. The year's first Winter Moth, two on 16th January, were recorded at Greywell (PBo); with three Satellite between 17th and 20th January, at Fordingbridge (PGLT), Alton (DBO) and Martin, the latter accompanied by four Winter Moth and three Early Moth (PA).

The first Spring Usher *Agriopsis leucophaearia* of the year was found in a Brockenhurst garden on 21st January (RBW), but, apart from a scattering of Early Moth, nothing further was

reported until 24th February; on which date an example of *Duponchelia fovealis* was found inside a house in Pennington (RCr) - this is an increasingly recorded adventive species, introduced to our island with houseplants. On the same date, the first significant catches of the year were recorded. At Brockenhurst came reports of good numbers of Pale Brindled Beauty *Phigalia pilosaria* and Tortricodes alternella, and a scatter of March Moth *Alsophila aescularia*, Small Brindled Beauty *Apocheima hispidaria*, Dotted Border *Agriopis marginaria*, Spring Usher, Common Quaker *Orthosia cerasi* and Chestnut *Conistra vaccinii* (RBW). At Chilbolton, a similar mix of species included Small Brindled Beauty, Pale Brindled Beauty, Dotted Border, Satellite, Chestnut, *Agonopterix heracliiana*, *Tortricodes alternella*, *Acleris ferrugana/notana* and *Acleris cristana* (GCE).

March began with the first butterfly of the year reported in 2010 to hantsmoths – a Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni* in a Sherborne St John garden on the 2nd (NJM). A female Dotted Border was found in a moth trap in Spearywell (JG), while a male on the 5th was the first record of this species for a garden in Stubbington (DPH). The first Oak Beauty *Biston strataria* of the year was recorded at Linwood on 6th March, with an impressive 70 Small Brindled Beauty there on 9th March (AGP). At Brockenhurst on 13th March, Dotted Chestnut *Conistra rubiginea*, Satellite, Twin-spotted Quaker *Orthosia munda*, Yellow Horned *Achlya flavicornis*, Oak Beauty, Small Quaker *Orthosia cruda* and *Acleris cristana*, were all new for RW's garden



Satellite, Sherborne St John 15 March 2010 © NJM



Herald, Sherborne St John 16 March 2010 © NJM

in 2010.

In mid March, with night-time temperatures approaching 9°C, there was a marked increase in the number of people submitting records to hantsmoths and several species were recorded for the first time in 2010 (all on 17th March, except where noted): Shoulder-stripe *Anticlea badiata* at Greywell on the 16th (PBo); Herald *Scoliopteryx libatrix* and Early Grey *Xylocampa areola* at Sherborne St John on the 16th (NJM); Clouded Drab *Orthosia incerta* at Cadnam (MP); *Ypsolopha mucronella* and Early Thorn at Mottisfont (GCE); Red-green Carpet *Chloroclysta siterata*, Grey Shoulder-knot *Lithophane ornitopus* and Hebrew Character

Orthosia gothica at Grayshott (RTu); *Emmelina monodactyla* at Alton (DBO); Dark Chestnut *Conistra ligula* at Sherborne St John (NJM); *Acrolepsiopsis assectella* (Leek Moth), *Epiphyas postvittana* and *Amblyptilia acanthadactyla* at Stubbington (DPH); Red Sword-grass *Xylena vetusta* (with 55 Small Brindled Beauty, 31 *T. alternella*, 21 Satellite and 13 Dotted Border) in the New Forest at Rhinefield (RCo, JBI).

The remainder of the month of March produced the following highlights: *Acleris literana*, *Acleris cristana* and three White Marked *Cerastis leucographa* at Leckford on 21st (GCE); Engrailed *Ectropis bistortata* in Alton on 21st (DBO); Diamond-back Moth *Plutella xylostella* at Fordingbridge on 26th (PGLT); *Caloptilia semifascia* in Gosport on 27th (DRA); Lead-coloured Drab *Orthosia populeti* on Hayling Island on 27th (AJ) with another at Ashurst on

27th (TAP). In addition, there was a marked emergence of Brimstone butterflies on 24th March.

Dave Cooke in his first winter of mothing - having started last year in Freshwater, Isle of Wight - has provided some highlights of his trapping in January and February, showing four attractive geometers that are on the wing at this time.



Above: Mottled Umber
Below: Red-green Carpet



Above: Spring Usher
Below: Pale Brindled Beauty



Dotted Chestnut is a highlight for a few lucky observers at this time of year, and Maurice Pugh had the good fortune to see two, taken in Cadnam on 6th and 7th April.



In January/February, Maurice Opie reports that the Fareham Moth Group just managed one meeting with two lamps at Wickham Common on 18th February, which returned the sum total of one *Ypsolopha ustella*, four Winter Moth and three Chestnut. In his home trap at Funtley, the only moths seen in weekly running for the Garden Moth Survey were on 16th January: a single Winter Moth and two December Moth.

Patrick Fleet has provided a summary of his mothing experiences over the winter: the early year was so cold that a December Moth which appeared on the 9th December remained unmoved in its egg box in his garden trap in Basingstoke for over a month! He continues

"MAGDALEN HILL DOWN

On Jan 18th a large number of late Winter Moth appeared at dusk e.g. 12 were counted in 10 mins along the diagonal footpath, along with 2 Early Moth. One Lappet larva was found at the base of a 3 foot high Buckthorn bush whilst I was cutting scrub on Jan 21st. Considering that Buckthorn is notoriously late coming into leaf I wonder if it will chew off the buds and eat itself out of house and home? The hedgerow is a good few yards away from this isolated shrub.

Dave Shute came across a fine example of *Acleris cristana* while working on the reserve on Feb 3rd. It was a form of this extremely variable species with attractive orange patches on the wings. Colin Beyer found a *Ypsolopha mucronella* during a brush-cutting session near the tumuli on Feb 12th. It was nice to see one that had come through the winter after he had originally photographed another near the central trees on Oct 30th.

At least three *Emmelina monodactyla* were disturbed from vegetation on Feb 26th when an Angle shades larva was also found amongst Common Mullein. The "furry" rosettes of this plant offer a comparatively warm and dry environment for hibernating larvae. I have previously found several Ruby tiger caterpillars curled up in the leaves. A very late Winter moth was found near a Blackthorn thicket on Feb 25th.

BUTTERFLIES

Jan 18 th	Red admiral at Holbury - Keith Plumridge
Mar 1 st	Peacock at MHD
Mar 2 nd	Brimstone at Oakley
Mar 8 th	Small Tortoiseshell at MHD (All P.D.F)

THE WOODS AROUND DUMMER

Two members of the "40 Fahrenheaters" extreme mothing group ventured out at dusk on Jan 17th. Despite a starting temperature of 3°C (that's even lower than 40F!), six species were recorded before it reached 0°C at 8pm. An MV lamp attracted one December Moth, three Mottled Umber, two Chestnut and no less than seven Satellite including one with orange spots on one wing and white on the other. The tree trunks nearby produced four Winter Moth and what turned out to be a Grey Arches larva. On Feb 2nd an actinic light was run between 5 and 10 pm but nothing new turned up: - one Winter Moth, six Chestnut and three Satellite. More interesting was an unidentified caterpillar found on the sheet beneath the trap. Quite a few larvae (and wingless females) have been found on and around the trap and I wonder if the actinic light attracts them?

Four Herald were found hibernating in a garage at Dummer on Feb 5th. The first night of the year when the sunset temperature was above 5°C occurred on Feb 24th. As it was raining until mid-evening I didn't set up the actinic until nearly 11pm. Even so, seven species appeared including Spring Umber, Dotted Border, Pale Brindled Beauty (first seen this year on Feb 22nd at Dummer Garden Centre) and 21 *Torticodes alternella*. March Moth was added to the list on Mar 5th and Small Brindled Beauty on Mar 11th. "Wonderful Wednesday" the 17th saw 62 moths to the actinic (14 Species) when four of the five common *Orthosia* were observed - I didn't see Small Quaker until Mar 27th. The most numerous species were

Chestnut (23), *T alternella* (10) and March Moth (8). New for year were Yellow-Horned and Oak Beauty, but a probable Engrailed flew off before I could get a good look at it. Shoulder-stripe was a new one on 27th.

BRIGHTON HILL - Garden light

I didn't run an MV light until mid March. The backdoor light attracted Pale Brindled Beauty, Dotted Border, Chestnut and Winter Moth on the few nights that were above freezing. On Mar 17th *Amblyptilia acanthadactyla* and Small Brindled Beauty were new for the garden, as was an Early Tooth-striped on 27th.

ELSEWHERE

Orange Underwing were observed at Winchfield on Mar 24th and Crab Wood (2) on Mar 27th."

PDF

--0--

Moths Count Moth Recorders Conference January 23rd 2010

The event was well attended by around 120 people including speakers and stand-sellers. Tim Norriss and Mike Wall attended as County Recorders for the Hampshire vice counties for macro and micro moths respectively. I also attended.

Maurice Avant, National Chairman of BC, gave the welcome address. He had consulted the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations for those related to moths, none of which were at all complimentary. So many people have yet to discover the magic of moths! However the lectures by Richard Fox on the growth of the Moths Count project, Zoe Randle on the National Moth Recording Scheme and Dave Grundy as Garden Moth Scheme Co-ordinator illustrated the massive growth in the amount of recording now being undertaken. Richard reassured those present that Butterfly Conservation is committed to continuing the NMRS after lottery funding runs out, albeit with less staff and less training events. The lecture by Dr Eleanor Slade on a landscape-scale study of woodland moths undertaken by the University of Oxford and involving volunteer recorders on placement from HSBC bank had also had similar success in stimulating peoples interest in mothing. A county level perspective was provided by Adrian Russell talking about changing moth distributions in Leicestershire and Rutland.

Extreme Mothing was the title of the lecture given by Dr Paul Waring and it covered the ends of the spectrum like the most tranquil place, the noisiest place, the coldest, the hottest etc.. One African venue featured his highest moth count ever! All extremes were beautifully illustrated and wittily described by Paul.

Dr Adrian Spalding concentrated on the ecology of the Sandhill Rustic, which has four sub-species in its four different coastal locations. He has studied *leechi* intensively. Interestingly this sub-species was found at Loe Bar in Cornwall by Barry Goater in the 1970's. Adrian showed pictures of how the moth appeared to swim well and could also remain under water for some time. His observations have shown that the females do not fly much but prefer instead to walk over the sand from one plant to the next on which to lay. Dr Spalding has a website dedicated to this fascinating species, www.sandhillrustic.org, which is well worth visiting.

The wonderful day of lectures was brought to a close by Dr Roy Sexton whose subject "Darwin, moths and butterfly orchids" was a fascinating and well-illustrated talk on the interaction between insects and orchids. He promised one day to write up his work but in the meantime he urged moth-ers take their traps to meadows with flowering orchids to identify the different moth species that pollinate them (just as Darwin's son had done over 100 years ago). Pyramidal, Fragrant and the two Butterfly Orchids are all moth-pollinated. In visiting the flowers for nectar the plant's pollinia become stuck to the moth's proboscis or eyes ready to fertilise the next flowers that are visited. These pollinia are easy to see and Roy will be pleased to receive people's photos and reports. He already had a number showing this process quite clearly (including a remarkable shot of a Hummingbird Hawk-moth in flight leaving a Pyramidal Orchid with pollinia attached to its proboscis) but he is keen to learn of all

the moth species that pollinate the different orchids. Another point of interest was that he had established that the different petals of the orchids produced different scents which he believed enabled moths to find the flowers in complete darkness and to locate themselves on the flower to best trigger the complex pollination process that in turn ensured the flowers are not self-pollinated.

Lynn Fomison

--0--

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Moth Recorders Conference,

Saturday 13 March 2010

Chaired by Andy Barker this turned out to be a most splendid and informative afternoon. Tim Norriss and Mike Wall gave an overview of the mothing year in 2009 and discussed which species had fared well and not so well, using the 115,000 moth records that have been submitted so far. Tim then spoke about eleven rare or declining regional macro-moths (Dark Marbled Carpet, Argent and Sable, Annulet, Plumed Prominent, Garden Dart, Double Dart, Triple-spotted Clay, Silvery Arches, Dark Brocade, Anomalous and Shoulder-striped Clover) and asked people to look out for them.

Mike spoke on the recent colonists and adventives in our region over the past twenty years, from the tiny Horse Chestnut Leaf-miner *Cameraria ohridella* to the ubiquitous Australian invader *Epiphyas postvittana*.

After a break for coffee and biscuits, Maurice Pugh showed some interesting photos of moths taken in his own garden and gave some tips on how to get a nice picture (lichen twigs can make a good setting with a plain background).

Lynn Fomison described how the management of the reserves (in particular leaving patches of scrub for shelter and additional food plants) benefitted moth species as well as butterflies, although we often don't know enough about the ecology of many species to plan properly for them.

Dave Green spoke about the Apennines in Italy and Farm Lator in Hungary as two splendid foreign mothing locations where species which are great rarities or non-existent in the UK are common and easy to see, illustrated by some fantastic photographs. He also talked about different moth lamps suitable for foreign travel and how to set them up.

About 30 people attended and all those moth-ers who did not missed a really excellent event which included the chance to meet others and hold informal discussions during a decently lengthy tea interval. I, for one, hope that it will be repeated next year.

Juliet Bloss

Contributors:

DRA	Debbie Allan	NJM	Nick Montegriffo
PA	Peter Allen	TJN	Tim Norriss
JB1	Juliet Bloss	MLO	Maurice Opie
PBo	Paul Boswell	DBO	Dave Owen
DC	Dave Cooke	AGP	Andy Page
RCr	Richard Coomber	TAP	Therasa Paul
GCE	Glynne Evans	MP	Maurice Pugh
PDF	Patrick Fleet	PGLT	Peter Thompson
JG	Justin Groves	RTu	Robin Turner
DPH	Dan Houghton	MJW	Mike Wall
AJ	Andy Johnson	RBW	Russell Wynn

And with thanks to everyone who posts on the Hantsmoths Yahooogroup and uses the Hantsmoths and BC branch websites!

--O--

Published 17th April 2010

Contributions and ideas for articles always welcome. I would also like to be made aware of any errors and omissions.

For more information on moth recording in Hampshire, please contact either Tim Norriss (tim@kitsmail.com) or myself, or see www.hantsmoths.org.uk/recording.htm

Mike

Editor: Mike Wall

11 Waterloo Avenue

Basingstoke

Hampshire

RG23 8DL

Mobile: 07981 984761

Email: mike@hantsmoths.org.uk