

NUMBER 21 - November 2011 to January 2012



Wallblings...

Apologies for the delay in producing this somewhat cut-down edition, three months after the last one in November. Many of you will be aware that I had a bit of a car vs bike incident before Christmas and that slightly took my mind away from preparing a newsletter in early January; it then seemed worthwhile waiting until the end of the month to enable reviews of the Hampshire and national moth conferences to be included. I will aim to get back to a two- or even one month cycle in the following months.

Writing of the annual report now begins in earnest and will keep the editorial team out of trouble for the next few weeks. Those who attended the Hampshire Moth Conference in January will know that we have plans for the next moth (and butterfly) atlas for the two counties - this will keep the editorial team out of trouble for substantially longer...

Mike

HAMPSHIRE MOTH CONFERENCE - Littleton, January 14th 2012

The 3rd annual Branch Moth Conference was held at Littleton Memorial Hall on Saturday 14 January.

Dan Hoare welcomed over 70 people to the conference and his introduction gave a perspective on 2011 and on mothing in the Branch area.

Tim Norriss detailed the "The Mothing Year" highlighting early emergence dates, high numbers of moths caught or observed with Glynne Evans' 5,550 moths in one trap being the most remarkable mothing experience. Another awe inspiring sight for several people had been the vast numbers of Adela reaumurella flying around trees in May. Tim also drew attention to the interesting first county records for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and a graph comparing the number of new records in each of the last sixteen years. He concluded with accounts of the migrants that had been found mainly in the splendid autumn weather.

Jon Stokes of The Tree Council spoke about Trees, Hedgerows and Moths. Whilst having great sympathy for anyone affected by a death caused by a falling tree, he registered his concern at what he regarded as the unnecessary felling of trees. To put it into perspective he estimates that there are six billion trees in the country and in an average year six deaths arise from tree related incidents.



However each storm leads to trees being felled as possible hazards. His slide illustrating this was the sad sight of a line of old oaks felled from a roadside hedgerow. also quoted statistics showing that too few new trees are getting planted established in hedgerows. He suggested the that diminishing number of hedgerow trees. well as diminishing the beauty of the landscape, would be a problem for many moths in reducing their habitat and

corridors across otherwise hostile intensive agriculture.

He also reported that very few Horse Chestnut trees were now being planted as a result of the Horse Chestnut leaf miner Cameraria ohridella and that the state of the leaves of affected trees was leading to many being felled as unhealthy. On the positive side he referred to schemes to tag hedgerow trees to avoid them being flailed and he spoke of a relatively new idea of planting fruiting hedges.

Illness prevented Zoë Randle from coming along to speak about Moths and the Media, which was a shame as she and the Moths Team have achieved much positive publicity to advance the interest in moths and promote their conservation.

Lynn Fomison provided a talk on Gardening for Moths instead. At the very start Lynn ascertained by a show of hands that around 75% of the audience were already taking action to make their gardens moth friendly. Lynn promoted the three SSS's approach - shelter, sustenance and sympathy. Provision of shelter is easy with walls or fences clad with climbers - hops, ivy and honeysuckle, and native shrubs such as goat willow, wild privet and hawthorn along with cultivated lilac, buddleia and hebe on other boundaries. All these species also help to provide sustenance by way of nectar or larval food plant or

even both. Sympathetic gardening techniques were to reduce hoeing and to provide log piles. Records both of moths hibernating in gardens and caterpillars found will be welcomed by Tim.

Bats and Moths - An Evolutionary Arms Race was a very interesting talk by Paul Hope and all present will have learnt many new things about bats they did not know previously. Paul described how different species of bats hunted and located their prey. He went on to describe the tactics that moths had evolved to avoid being caught and eaten. Interesting some moths have auditory organs and can hear bats & some species can give out clicks to jam the bats echo-location.

Glynne Evans recommended mothing in under-recorded squares by the approach "Over the Garden Fence - Chatting up the Neighbours". Using the approach of locating good gardens through friends and other contacts, Glynne had run his trap in fifteen different gardens within a few miles of Chilbolton. He described the location and nature of the gardens and the most interesting moths that he had found there. This had been very effective in achieving coverage in squares that would not otherwise have been possible. It was hoped that this idea would be taken up by others - the map showing the squares with few or no records can be found in Newsletter No 17 on the Hantsmoths website.

Mike Wall reported on the success of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Moth weekend which took place on 22-24 July 2011 and made the awards that had been promised. These were given to:

- · Richard Dickson for the Most Significant Record
- Elaine Rice for the most new 10km square records
- A third extra award was given to David Evans in recognition of his considerable effort in targeting a great number of tetrads near Christchurch & submitting over a thousand records.

Mike also referred to the importance of records given that a new moth atlas for the two counties is currently being planned. The likely publication is around 2017 produced using records up to 2015.

Many people expressed their appreciation of the programme and some of the audience are pictured left.

Photo John Nundy.

Lynn Fomison



NATIONAL MOTH CONFERENCE - Birmingham and Midlands Institute, Birmingham - 28th January 2012

This popular event is now well established on the dedicated moth-er's calendar: the place to go to catch up with the latest news and recorders from around the country that otherwise one only communicates with via email.

The day started with an introduction by Dr. Martin Warren, Chief Executive of Butterfly Conservation, who outlined the growing awareness in both public and government of the importance of moths as environmental indicators. Richard Fox, Moths Count project manager, followed and reiterated this with an update on progress with the National Moth Recording Scheme. He also outlined plans for a micro-moth equivalent, which presents even greater challenges in ensuring adequate validation controls are in place.

Don Hodgers, Republic of Ireland Moth Recorder, then presented a talk entitled "A Snapshot of Ireland - recording in the Republic of Ireland". Work has started on an atlas of moths of Ireland but Don presented an outline of some of the challenges: not least the fact that there are only 20 recorders across the whole island, in 20,000 square miles of country! The involvement of Northern Irish recorders is key to getting a full picture of distribution on the island.

This was followed by a humorous presentation on 'What makes Sussex Moth Group tick?' by Graeme Lyons, who is Chairman of the Sussex Moth Group and an ecologist at Sussex Wildlife Trust. Sussex have an active moth group, with close links to the county branch of Butterfly Conservation and Sussex Wildlife Trust, holding three indoor meetings a year, produce an illustrated newsletter and run

outdoor events, although these were apparently not too well attended. Graeme had an impressive set of dreadlocks - I spent most of the time wondering how he avoided scorching them when bending over a moth-trap (if you read this Graeme, I'm just jealous...)

After a break for lunch and a chat with the great and the good, including the eminent doctors Mark Young and Phil Sterling, the afternoon session commenced with a presentation by Dr Jane Hill of York University on "Insect High Flyers: studying long-distance migration of moths" which described various methods used for tracking invertebrate migrants from bumble bees to Painted Lady, concentrating on Vertical Looking Radar (VLR), such as the one based at Chilbolton.

Dave Slade, County Moth Recorder, Glamorgan (despite being English) gave a talk "Warriors of the Deep and other Welsh Wonders" on the specialities to be found in south and central Wales, concentrating on the search for the Silurian moth (only Dr Who afficionados will get the link to warriors of the deep for any Dr Who afficionado) on the Welsh borders. This very rare moth is likely to be far more widespread than currently known, due to the logistical difficulties of hauling equipment up onto the high moors to look for it.

The highlight, for me anyway, was Phil Sterling's unveiling of "A 'big' book of little moths", providing an overview of the project to produce a companion volume to the best-selling "Moths of Great Britain and Ireland" (aka Waring, Townsend and Lewington), this time covering the micro-moths. 'Covering' means those that are most likely to be encountered and identifiable in the field, with accurate text and the choice of species illustrated carefully made with confusion species detailed in the text, written in consultation with a team of experts across the country. From the example plates shown, it looks excellent and I'm sure will be a good seller when it hits the shelves in May.

Mark Parsons then looked at the effect of conservation work over the last decade since UK BAP designations were handed out to our rarest species, highlighting the measures implemented for a number of case studies, for both successes and some failures.

After a break for tea, Professor Gareth Jones of the University of Bristol presented a talk coincidentally very close in subject to Paul Hope's at our recent Hampshire conference, entitled "Sky Wars: Moths v Bats", and covering similar ground.

With funding tight, this year Butterfly Conservation through the Moths Count project charged a £5 entry fee, something no-one begrudged paying and which I'm sure doesn't cover costs. There is unanimous support amongst attendees for its continuance - whether BC will be able to afford running it annually going forward will have to be seen.

Míke



REQUEST FOR 2011 RECORDS

Many thanks to all those that have already sent in their moth records for this year - 115,000 records have been received so far, second only to the bonanza year of 2006 despite what most would agree was an average year. We are now in the process of validating and collating them into the species accounts that will eventually appear in the annual report.

I would like to reiterate the note from the previous newsletter that if you have records outstanding for 2011 or for previous years - and there are a number of key observers who have been unable to get last year's in before the end of the year cut-off - please let us have them too, as soon as they are available: while it is our aim to produce an accurate annual report every year, ultimately it is having an accurate data base that is the overriding objective.

Mapmate CUKs

Tim Norriss 1c5 (primary synch)

Mike Wall 2h3

TJN / MJW



DAVE'S WEATHER SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 2011

November was yet another mild month. Much of the month was dominated by southerly winds with mainly dry conditions although there were some locally heavy and thundery outbreaks at the outset. The main general rainfall came in the last third of the month as moist south-westerly winds took over. It was consistently mild as shown by figures from the Winchester site. Every day reached 10°C with an absolute maximum of 17°C on the 13th. Nights started very mild with a minimum of 14.3°C on the 3rd. Frosts were in short supply although the 28th provided a marked exception when temperatures fell to a very cold -3°C. This was the 2nd warmest November in the last 100 years over England as a whole after 1994 with mean temperatures coming in at between 2 or 3°C above normal. Rainfall was rather variable and Winchester's monthly total was 57.7mm which is a little below par. However, the thundery rainfall early in the month brought a daily total of 56mm at Alice Holt Lodge in the east of the county.

DECEMBER 2011

December proved to be in marked contrast to last year, with yet another mild month recorded. It was very unsettled with winds frequently coming off the Atlantic bringing copious rain to the west and north of the UK. Hampshire fared better but still saw Winchester recording 81.0mm, well up to average. Temperatures were again quite consistently mild with just a brief colder interlude around mid-month when some areas had a little snow. The coldest day still managed 5.6°C on the 17th and it was ironic that the warmest day was also the shortest with 12.6°C on the 21st. Air frosts were again scarce with only two recorded. Nationally temperatures were 1 or 2°C above normal which is a fair reflection of local conditions.

October continued the warm theme with some exceptionally high temperatures at the outset. The overall pattern saw winds from a southerly quarter and high pressure close enough to keep us drier than normal

http://www.winchesterweather.org.uk/

http://www.climate-uk.com/

Dave Owen



NOVEMBER 2011 - JANUARY 2012 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.

Migrants:

DGG had what was only the 2nd ever VC12 record of *Diasemiopsis ramburialis* (shown right) at his cottage garden in Weston Colley on 4th November, the first since 1967.

MLO commented from Funtley that early November brought *Plutella xylostella*, Silver Y, *Udea ferrugalis* and Turnip Moth, which had been much more numerous since the onset of southerly winds, and my latest ever White Point on 14th. For the same period JHa in Bonchurch found a calling female *Palpita vitrealis* and captured this behaviour on video.



Another was caught on the 16th, along with a Redheaded Chestnut (shown below).



On 21st November GCE trapped near Hurstbourne Tarrant, in anticipation of perhaps some new 10km records for winter. Most of the moths were pretty much as expected - December Moth (10), Feathered Thorn (9), Winter Moth (7), Scarce Umber (3). In the heavy fog of the morning when he returned, he was surprised to find huge numbers of *Udea ferrugalis* (67 that he counted) and three *Palpita vitrealis*. Only other migrant was a single Dark Sword-grass. No other single count in the county has even approached this total, and there were no significant counts from other sites at this time, so perhaps these relate to a local

colony. Other examples were reported on 3rd November from Cadnam (MP), 13th Pennington (RFC), 15th and 16th by RAC at Blashford and on 1st December, one in Stubbington was the latest ever for DPH there by about two weeks.

Late Moths and Early Moths

Late Dark Arches were a feature, being reported from Cadnam on 4th November, by RAC in Blashford on 16th November and the latest of all was one in Chilbolton on 21st December (GCE)

Despite the rain, a late Pale Mottled Willow turned up on 3rd November in Alton (DBO). MLO in Funtley had *Dipleurina lacustrata* on 3rd and an Uncertain on 13th, both of which likely originated from unusual second broods. The mild weather at the end of December brought out a trio of early birds for GCE in Chilbolton: Spring Usher, Common Quaker, and Pale Brindled Beauty, spring moths flying while December Moth and Winter Moth were being trapped elsewhere. TJN had a similar experience trapping in a garden at north Harewood on 26th and the seven species were December moth, three Winter moth, three Mottled Umber, two Pale Brindled Beauty, five Spring Usher, an Acleris cristana and remarkably two Small Quaker - over two weeks earlier than the previous earliest record on the database is 12 Jan 2007. A shopping expedition to Southampton on 22nd produced a Lesser Yellow Underwing in a multi storey car park - the latest ever in Hants and only second ever Dec record (DPH).

Hebrew Character in Funtley on 2nd January. A Pale Tussock on 8th (Brockenhurst, RBW) may have been an exceptionally early spring emergence or, as it was indoors, could have been forced. Single Common Quaker, Spring Usher and Pale Brindled Beauty were seen in Grayshott on 9th (RTu). Another extraordinary catch was a Streamer on 9th at Cranmore, IoW (IF), about six weeks earlier than the previous record (by the same observer, coincidentally).

Other news

Two Oak Rustic were new for the garden in IRT's Portsmouth trap on 4th November. On 7th, one was new for DPH's Stubbington garden, as was one for RFC in Pennington on 13th. Continuing the run of firsts, MLO had one on 21st November in Funtley, and another at South Hayling for SJW on 24th. It is unclear whether this widespread random sample of new localities indicates a migratory influx along a broad front or a significant increase in the range of the (assumed) resident population.

Scarce Umber and Sprawler were both reported in good numbers: 25 of the latter were trapped on 7th November by GCE in Chilbolton (along with 44 Feathered Thorn and a late Large Yellow Underwing). In Funtley, MLO commented that the seven caught by mid November equalled his site total over 14 years and one on 3rd November was DBO's second ever in Alton. Scarce Umber were in Cadnam on 12th (MP), Blashford (16th, RAC), while two in Alton on the same night were the first there since 2008 (DBO); Funtley (21st, MLO). Two of both Sprawler and Scarce Umber turned up on Andower Down on 19th November.

Reports of unusual micros were thin on the ground. On a walk through Harewood Forest on 6th TJN saw *Diurnea lipsiella* flying in the sunshine, and another was trapped the next night by GCE in Chilbolton. The only other notable sighting was the county's latest ever *Crocidosema plebejana* reported on 25th December by Dick Jones from Ringwood. In January, DC had a number of early records, *Eudonia angustea* on 8th, *Scrobipalpa costella* on 12th and *Pseudargyrotoza conwagana* on 20th.

MJW



NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2011

Members of our group made four trips in November on its usual Friday nights. We were operating between three and four lamps, with sheet, on each of these nights, for between three and four hours.

The first was a return on 7th to Brownwich Cliffs and for this we have to thank Rhona Smythe for allowing us to park on her driveway. It was fairly blowy with intermittent showers and although we started on or under the cliffs we soon had to move into more sheltered positions. We eventually caught 62 moths of 17 species including a rather late Shuttle-shaped Dart, a Dark Chestnut and *Udea ferrugalis*.

On the 11th we visited the Whitelands Wood site near Petersfield, in the hope of finding the declining Plumed Prominent, as there are many Field Maples of various ages on site. We had no luck! but did have 40 moths of 14 species, which included two very late *Pseudargyrotoza conwagana*.

Our next visit was to West Walk, nr Wickham, on what was a clear cold night with an eventual ground frost. However, under the woodland canopy we managed to catch 58 moths of 16 species. These included 10 November Moths, 3 Pine Carpet, one Grey-shoulder Knot and an early Hebrew Character. Also, a *Scoparia ambigualis* was caught and determined by RJD.

The last visit of the month, on 25th, was a return to Whitelands Wood, forever hopeful. The weather was reasonable, being mild and cloudy and not to much breeze, resulting in a catch of 36 moths of 9 species. Highlights were 23 Winter Moths, *Udea ferrugalis* and one Dark Swordgrass.

The only visit managed in December was on 2nd to Wickham Common where on a cold clear night we managed only 15 moths of 5 species. We were not too disappointed as we were not expecting much at this time of year, but Winter Moth, Chestnut, Brick, Satellite and *Acleris ferrugana* made up the catch.

JANUARY 2012

During the reasonably mild weather of January the group managed to venture out on three Fridays. Each session lasted about two and a half hours, with three - four lamps at each session.

6th January saw three members at Botley Woods catching 8 moths of 6 species. *Ypsolopha ustella*, *Acleris ferrugana*, Red-green Carpet, Winter Moth 2, Mottled Umber 2 and a Satellite.

20th January was also at Botley Woods with three members catching 28 moths of 6 species: Acleris ferrugana, Winter Moth 21, Pale Brindled Beauty 2, Early Moth, Common Quaker 2 and Satellite. Also several *Taleporia tubulosa* cases were found on trunks.

27th January saw 4 members with 4 lamps again at Botley Woods, and the catch consisted of 45 moths of 6 species: Winter Moth 6, Pale Brindled Beauty 5, Spring Usher 25, Dotted Border 3, Mottled Umber 1 and Early Moth 5.

MLO



...or from my diary at least

29th March at the Cross Barn, Odiham on behalf of the Odiham Biodiversity Society on Thursday 29th March I'll be doing a talk which has been entitled "Hidden Jewels - the Moths of Odiham and north Hampshire". Why Odiham is such an important place for the day flying Foresters and also covering "many more of the colourful insects that inhabit our gardens at night" - The Cross Barn, Palace Gate Farm, Odiham RG29 1JX. Start time 19:30

15th July: There is a bat walk at the Vyne NT, north of Basingstoke. I shall be running a moth trap or two that evening in Morgaston Wood to coincide with this, if anyone wants to join me.

A Busy June for Moth-ers!



Hampshire Moth Weekend 2012

Friday 1st to Monday 4th June 2012



Thursday 21st — Saturday 23rd June 2012
The theme will be the moths of brownfield habitats (such as old quarries, disused railway lines, reclaimed coal tips, gravel and clay workings etc.) and will include both daytime searches and the usual night-time recording.



Europäische Nachtfalternächte

Thursday 14th - Monday 18th June 2012

24th August: Public moth trapping event on behalf of the National Trust at the Vyne, Sherborne St John, north of Basingstoke. Details tbc, likely to be 9pm start.

More details on Hampshire Moth Weekend will follow in the next newsletter.

If anyone has anything else to publicise, please let me know

MJW



ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF MOTHING

At the recent Hampshire Moth Conference Glynne Evans put forward the advantages of mothing in other people's gardens - not having to buy and carry about a heavy generator, not having to stay up half the night and drive home afterwards. Whilst it lacks something of the camaraderie and social occasion of sitting around a moth lamp with friends, as I get older the appeal of setting up the lights at dusk in a place that is safe from disturbance and returning first thing the next morning to go through the contents with the house owner (and often their friends and family) has the one huge advantage that I'm not a total zombie the next day through lack of sleep. Well, no more than usual anyway.

Whilst we now have seven garden moth sites at which we trap, Glynne and Sheila put us to shame with having no less than fifteen garden sites. Mothing in this way by sounding out friends and contacts has

the advantage of quickly being able to add records for new local tetrad grid squares, and local is the key. Who wants to travel big distances when fuel is so expensive and non-eco-friendly.

Whilst it is always possible to find some moth species during the day there are others that are more difficult to find without a night-time light source. Graeme Davis at Andover doesn't have a moth trap but has discovered a nifty solution to the problem by checking the several footpath underpasses around the town. These are lit at night and Graeme amassed a remarkable 426 moth records of 136 species between 6th February and 31st December 2011 just by occasionally checking the lights at these underpasses. He has recorded double figures of several species including 19 Winter Moth at the end of the year and 10 Dingy Footman on 30th July.

He records micros as well as macros and has found *Udea lutealis* as well as the scarce elm-feeding pyrale Pempelia formosa. 99 species were recorded at just one underpass adjacent to Rooksbury Mill local nature reserve adjacent to the A303. Keep up the good work Graeme.

TIN



RECENT HUMMINGBIRD HAWK-MOTH SIGHTINGS

On Meridian local news on Wednesday 1st February a picture of a Hummingbird Hawk-moth nectaring on Daphne odora was shown. I believe it was seen that day, or the day before, at Saltdean in Sussex. The Dorset Branch Spring newsletter also carries a report of a Hummingbird Hawk-moth seen at Worth Matravers on Purbeck. It was very active and nectaring on Periwinkle on 11th January. I recall seeing a HBHM nectaring on D. odora in my garden at Ropley in March one year so this is a good plant to choose along with Periwinkle as an early nectar source for these moths.

Has anyone in Hampshire or the Isle of Wight seen a HBHM yet? Do let us know when you do please.

LF



MENUS FOR MOTHS?

At the month conference in January I spoke about how we could help and encourage moths in our gardens. As well as making suggestions on plants to grow for caterpillars I illustrated the talk with lots of flowers that are known nectar sources for moths. It seems they will use a larger range of plants than butterflies do. I posed the guestion "Do moths feed on juices from over ripe fruit in autumn?" I shall be interested to have people's observations on that topic. After that talk Rob Stephens told me of how he had seen Old Lady moths feeding on raisins in a bird feeder. I found this a really interesting observation and I intend to set



up a moth feeding station right outside my kitchen window so I can see what's there from the kitchen light.

the dwarf Kilmarnock Willow

One good plant I mentioned was Salix caprea. Ideal for small gardens, it has leaves useful for the caterpillars of many species and lovely golden catkins in late March - a nectar source that bees enjoy as well as moths and butterflies. I spotted them on sale in Tesco, Winchester for £9.





LF

CONTRIBUTORS AND OBSERVERS

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As ever, this newsletter would not be possible without everyone who sends in material directly, or who posts on the Hantsmoths Yahoogroup and uses the Hantsmoths and BC branch websites!

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

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

Mike

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