

ESSEX MOTH GROUP

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2014

COMPILED BY DOUGAL URQUHART



GROUND LACKEY



WHITE-SPOTTED PINION

Both species photographed at Fingringhoe Wick NR 10TH August by Stuart Read

ESSEX MOTH GROUP
ANNUAL MEETING AND EXHIBITION

The GREEN CENTRE, WAT TYLER COUNTRY PARK
SATURDAY 15TH FEBRUARY

2014 PROGRAMME

10.30.....**RECEPTION / REFRESHMENTS**

DONATION £5 PAY ON ARRIVAL

10.45.....**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

DOUGAL URQUHART , MOTH GROUP MEETING COORDINATOR

11.00.....**ROD COLE** – THE MOTHS OF MARKS HILL WOOD AND THE

LANGDON HILLS RIDGE

11.30.....**LES STEWARD** – MOTHS OF WAT TYLER COUNTRY PARK

12.00.....**BRIAN GOODEY** – COUNTY MOTHS UPDATE

12.15.....**PETER HARVEY** – MOTH RECORDS / ESSEX FIELD CLUB

12.30.....**GRAHAM EKINS** – MOTHS OF THE DORDOGNE REGION

1.00..... **LUNCH**.CHANCE TO CHAT WITH FRIENDS

2.00.....**DOUGAL URQUHART**- CUDMORE GROVE COUNTRY PARK MOTHS IN 2013

2.30.....**CLIVE ATKINS** – WIGBORO WICK, ST OSYTH MOTHS IN 2013

3.00.....**GRAHAM BAILEY** – SOUTH ESSEX MOTHING

3.30.....**DON DOWN** – MOTH HIGHLIGHTS AND MEMORIES

4.00.....**FINAL DISCUSSIONS**, QUESTIONS AND MEMBERS PHOTOS

4.30.....**LAST REFRESHMENTS** AND A CHANCE TO CHAT WITH FRIENDS

5.00.....**CLOSE OF PLAY** AND MOTH LAMPS SWITCHED OFF

**THANKYOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND
GOOD LUCK WITH THE NEW MOTHING SEASON!**



Garden Tiger, Cudmore Grove 31/7/13

MOTH GROUP INTRODUCTION

Dougal Urquhart

Welcome to the annual meeting of the Essex Moth Group now into its 18th year since starting up in 1996. One of the founder members was Joe Firmin who became chairman of the Moth Group for many years. He organised all the previous annual meetings held initially at Horsley Cross and then at Lawford for many years. Meetings were always well supported and there was always a very positive feeling at the end of each meeting. Having volunteered to pick up the reins where Joe left them last year, I wanted the annual meetings to keep going as did many other members. I trust that members and friends will enjoy this annual meeting as much as the previous ones and will go home as enthused as ever. The format is the same although the venue is different. We thank Peter Harvey of the Essex Field Club for arranging for the Group to meet in the smart surroundings of the Green Centre.

Another big thankyou to Peter and the Essex Field Club for enabling this newsletter to be printed off. It has ended up being a much bigger report than first anticipated.

The annual moth group meeting has always provided me with the annual motivation boost for the coming mothing season. It's about the only time in the year when fellow moth trappers can actually chat with each other in the daylight – rather than squinting at faces over a bright MV lamp! A room full of moth enthusiasts is like a Skinner trap on a warm muggy evening in July – full of all sorts of different folk but all with a common interest.

Fortunately for the Group, the recent miserable weather has kept me inside beside the computer for long periods. The email inbox and outbox has never been so busy, making contact with folk across the county and beyond, either inviting them to speak at the meeting or to contribute something for the newsletter. A huge thank-you to all those members who have put a talk together, or scribbled a newsletter article, sent photos in or just attended the meeting at Wat Tyler. The support has been great and much appreciated, sometimes without the arm-twisting!

If you want to share any other ideas about the Moth Group, you can contact me - Dougal Urquhart as the Moth Group coordinator on 01206 383868 or at – dougal.urquhart@essex.gov.uk;

There is an email Yahoo Group on Essex Moths where moth sightings and other topics are posted. To join this you can either email Brian Goodey at - essexmoths@dsl.pipex.com; Reg Fry at reg.a.fry@btinternet.com; or Tony Prichard at tony.prichard@btinternet.com; One of these moderators will then invite you onto the email forum.

Information about the Essex Moth Group can be found on the Essex Moth Group website at www.essexfieldclub.org.uk/portal/p/Essex+Moth+Group . Help is needed with keeping these pages updated.

At present the moth County Recorder for Essex is Peter Harvey and whilst Peter is more than happy to continue to deal with records, we need a moth specialist to come forward to manage identification requests and organise and promote recording in the county. Contact Peter at: grays@peterharvey.freereserve.co.uk;

As many members will be aware, Joe had been the main organiser of the annual Essex Moth Group annual meetings for many years since the Group formed in 1996. Sadly he was too poorly to attend last year's meeting at Lawford having carried out all the arrangements and speaker bookings for it for many weeks and months beforehand. The meeting as always was well attended although sadly the following month, Joe passed away and probably fluttered up to the big moth lamp in the night-sky!

I'd like to think that some of Joe's huge enthusiasm for all things moths rubbed off on me, like the scales off a newly-emerged Broad-bordered bee hawk-moth! My interest in mothing was sparked by Joe many years before I purchased my first moth trap in 2005. We had always been in regular touch about all things wildlife since I first started at Cudmore Grove in 1983. He would keep me posted on moths and very occasionally I would pass on a sighting of an eye-catching moth I'd seen at the park such as the *Convolvulus* hawkmoth, Hornet moth, or the wonderful caterpillars of the Miller or the Emperor seen here.

He liked to be kept in touch and was eager for any bird, butterfly and moth sightings. His prolific letter writing was legendary even with his old typewriter with some of its keys as erratic as a moth trying to evade a hungry bat. His many letters were sometimes fixing dates well in advance, or maybe an invitation to an EMG meeting or maybe just some wildlife news.

Little did I realise that over the years I was gradually behaving like one of those moths that keep circling the bright light, not quite ready to take the plunge to drop in and take part – I finally did and joined the Essex Moth Group. During mothing sessions Joe provided the evening's entertainment regaling anyone who listened with all sorts of tales and anecdotes, as well as being a walking field guide with his wealth of moth knowledge and experiences. He helped provide me with the encouragement to carry out mothing at the country park telling me it was in a really good location for possible rarities and wished me good luck with the Skinner trap soon after I bought it.

Let's hope that what Joe helped to start with the Essex Moth Group, continues to flourish. That the interest and enthusiasm in moths which he passed onto many people, is something we can learn from and convey to the next generation.



JOE FIRMIN at Curry Farm 2009

(D.U)

COLCHESTER AREA MOTH LAMP SESSIONS 2014

David Barnard

Date 2014	Venue	Meet at O.S. Grid ref.	Suggested meeting time	Comments
Fri. 23 May	Buntings Meadows	TL979255	9.00 pm	Site contact – George Davidson
Tues. 27 May*	High Woods C.P.	TL999271	9.00 pm	Site contact – Sonya Lindsell
Tues. 24 June*	Tiptree Heath C.P.	TL884149	9.30 pm	Site contact – Joan Pinch
Fri. 04 July	Chalkney Wood	TL871275	9.00 pm	Site contact – Dougal Urquhart
Tues. 22 July	Cudmore Grove C.P.	TM065145	9.00 pm	Site contact – Dougal Urquhart
Tues. 05 Aug.*	Cudmore Grove C.P.	TM065145	9.00 pm	Site contact – Dougal Urquhart
Fri. 08 Aug.	Fingringhoe Wick	TM049193	8.30 pm	Site contact – TBA
Thurs.14 Aug.	High Woods C.P.	TL999271	8.30 pm	Site contact – Sonya Lindsell
Fri. 29 Aug.	Spring Lane Nursery	TL973256	8.30 pm	Site contact – George Davidson

All subject to cancellation at short notice if adverse weather conditions prevail.

Telephone contact – David Barnard on 01206 825645

Dates with * indicate that the moth lamp session follows on from a CNHS walk earlier in the evening (start 7.00pm.).

NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT - THURS 3RD TO SAT 5TH JULY – WOODLAND THEME

Woodlands are constantly in the news with respect to the recent introduction of fungal diseases like Chalara or ash dieback caused by *Chalara fraxinea* and sudden oak death by *Phytophthora ramorum*. These diseases along with other issues, for example the lack of woodland management, increase the pressure on our already threatened woodland moths. Moth Night 2014 will help to raise awareness of how important our woodlands are for British moths.

Events across the country will last for three consecutive nights (Thursday 3rd – Saturday 5th July)

Friday 4th July at Fingringhoe NR National Moth Night, 9 pm – 10pm. Call Reserve to book.

Saturday 5th July Fingringhoe NR – The Big Reveal at 9.30am - 11am. Call Reserve to book.



Lobster Moth

G. Evans



Small Elephant Hawkmoth

G. Evans

North-East Essex is well served with many moth enthusiasts using lamps and traps to collect and record data on the distribution and frequency of moths in the area. Most of these people have joined the Essex Moth Group and whilst some members operate as individuals, others join up to form small groups to operate with multiple lamps and traps.

One small group that has been operating in the Colchester area for many years endeavours to provide a service to the local council and other organizations for the purpose of introducing the general public to the 'world of moths'. A programme is set up early each year as in most cases some pre-planning is necessary. In addition to providing some educational benefit these events are usually held at sites where records from moth lamps are not usually taken so the sessions are very beneficial for the records obtained.

The following is a summary of the events that were planned by the Colchester group for 2013, a year with the early months being overseen by a very cold and wet period up until the middle of May. The following months provided some good moth evenings with good numbers, although unusual species were generally not forthcoming.

The first meeting planned for 14th May at Tiptree Heath had to be cancelled at short notice due to poor weather conditions.

The next lamp session at Lexden Park, a Colchester B.C. site, on 7th June recorded only 16 species with low numbers, but did show the start of some improvement in the general number of moths flying. Only one lamp was operating on this night and records included **Pebble Hook-tip**, **Yellow-barred Brindle**, **Scalloped Hazel**, **Pale Oak Beauty**, **Lime Hawk** and **Shoulder-striped Wainscot**, but no micros were seen or recorded.

The group was asked by Colchester Zoo to take part in their 'Bioblitz' festival and two lamps were in operation on 14th June close to the Roman River. A total of 43 species was recorded but again with fairly low numbers of each species. This site usually produces 60 – 80 species, so despite a big improvement in the weather, results were not as good as expected. A very fresh **Peach Blossom** was probably the moth of the evening, with the first **Elephant Hawkmoth** of the season not far behind. Micros included **Small Magpie**, **Bee Moth** and *Udea olivalis*.

A lamp session was held at Buntings Meadow, a Colchester B.C. site, on 17th July and 58 species were recorded. Moth numbers were up with several species in double figures, including 10 **Swallow-tailed Moths** and 10 **Buff Arches**. The numbers of moths flying around the lamp reminded those in attendance of nights several years ago. All three colour vars. of the **Peppered Moth** were recorded.

On 23rd July the group took part in the annual 'multi-lamp' (five) evening at Cudmore Grove C.P., organized by Dougal Urquhart, the manager of this site. Full report on page 10 in this newsletter.

A lamp session (2 lamps) at Layer Wood, Tiptree, a Forestry Commission site, on 6th August was very successful, with 46 species recorded, including **Oak Eggar**, **Drinker** and again all three colour vars. of **Peppered Moth**. A **Suspected** was possibly the most unusual record as although this is a local moth it rarely comes to light. The evening was remembered by the huge number of **Water Veneer** that descended onto the white cloths below the lamps and which must have run into thousands – they could be scooped up in handfuls! One notable omission on the night was the lack of **Pine Hawkmoths**, which were plentiful a few years ago, but probably due to the clearance of conifers from the site by the F.C. and replanting with native hardwoods, this moth has become scarce.

High Woods C.P. was the venue on 15th August, photo right, with 3 lamps operating. 54 species were recorded with over 20 **Black Arches** noted. Again **Water Veneer** were very numerous due to the close proximity of the pond at the lamp location, which also drew in several **Wainscot** species, including **Bulrush**, **Webb's** and **Fen. Tree-lichen Beauty** was recorded as well as **Old Lady** and **Red Underwing**.



Over 40 species were recorded from Beth Chatto Gardens on 20th August in a 2 hour session with 2 lamps prior to their Open Day. No **White-spotted Pinion** this year, but several **Tree-lichen beauties** were recorded – this moth now appears on a regular basis from various sites – no longer a ‘rare’ moth. The most frequent moth that evening was *Pyrausta aurata* which probably numbered 30+, no doubt due to the location of the lamps in the ‘Dry Garden’ at this site, which is full of Marjoram and Thyme.

Summary -

In common with the majority of moth enthusiasts, it was felt that the second half of the year was the complete opposite to the earlier half with some very large numbers recorded on good nights. This area however did not seem to benefit from the large numbers of immigrant species that hit the national press in August and September due mainly to the wind direction. A full record list of the above lamp sessions is available on request.

DAWS HALL, LAMARSH. 25TH JULY Stuart Read



Balsam Carpet – listed as rare in Essex



Yarrow Pug - ERDB species

Moth trapping was carried out at the Wick during 2013 on four nights – 14th and 20th of July and the 10th and 20th of August. The third session was part of National Moth Night when 120 species were logged while the fourth session was part of the BBC's Big 24 hour Summer of Wildlife.

Trappers attending on some of the nights involved Lilli Cole, Matt Cole, Rod Cole, Peter Furze, Jack Levene, Stuart Read and Dougal Urquhart.

The main highlight were 3 **White-spotted Pinions** found in Jack's trap located under some elms in the south-east corner of the visitor centre car park on the 10th August. The last official record for the site was 1980.

Other highlights were **Ground Lackey, Saltmarsh Plume, Barred Rivulet, Small Seraphim, Sharp-angled Peacock, August Thorn, September Thorn, Poplar Kitten, Dark Sword-grass, Mathews Wainscot, Reed Dagger, Tree-lichen Beauty, Fen Wainscot, Small Rufous, Sandhill Rustic** (abundant in number), **Cream-bordered Green Pea**.

Micros of note included *Pelochrista caecimaculana*, *Catoptria falsella* and *Teleiopsis diffinis*.



Barred Rivulet



Reed Dagger



Sandhill Rustic

(Pics S.R.)

WHITE-SPOTTED PINION HISTORY AT LANGENHOE

Hugh Owen

I moved to Langenhoe in 1992 and soon after joined the Colchester Natural History Society (CNHS). It was in 1996 that CNHS members formed the Essex Moth Group (EMG) and I started attending their site visits in the area. I commenced light-trapping in my garden from August that year. The more formal part of the garden comprised of two acres with an adjacent three acre meadow. The corner of this meadow contained various English and Wych elm re-growths but none of the original trees had survived. The elm re-growth also extended a short way along a farm field boundary.

It was on the second EMG visit to my site on 19 August 2002 that a **White-spotted Pinion** was found in one of the moth traps. Joe Firmin forwarded details of the find to various people and arranged for Paul Waring to visit the site on 22 May 2003 to search for larvae. Joe Firmin, Philip Smith and I joined him in the search but unfortunately no larvae were found, although one empty leaf shelter with all the characteristics associated with larval workings of this moth were found. Light-trapping produced six more adults during the year, some of these from light-traps set up in the formal part of the garden at some distance from the elms.

Paul Waring was again joined by the searchers from last year plus Ian Rose on 25 May 2004. After searching for larval spinnings for an hour, Paul found a larva 2.5cm in length in its black-headed penultimate instar in 5m high elm regrowth of 25cm diameter. The spinning consisted of three fresh green leaves in the form of a 'tent' and perforated by many holes. The spinning was found 1.5m above ground near the edge of the copse but not on the outermost leaves. The larva produced no parasitoids and was successfully reared to adult. Joe thought that this was the first ever larva found in Essex. This was also the first time that there had been proof that larvae can occur on small and immature elms in the absence of any tall elms.



White-spotted pinion – adult



Larva

Pics – Phil Smith

I continued light-trapping and one to six moths were found in every year up until 2012 when unfortunately from a moth recording point of view I moved from my Langenhoe bungalow. EMG had also continued to pay annual visits to the site and the moth was trapped on six occasions between 2002 and 2011. On a number of walks around farm boundaries I had noticed the presence of elm regrowths and I now wonder whether the moth could also reside in some of these areas and therefore not be so rare.

A fuller account of these findings can be found in 'Entomologists Record' volume 117. Photos were taken by Philip Smith.

CUDMORE GROVE COUNTRY PARK - 2013 MOTHS

Dougal Urquhart

The 2013 mothing season at the country park was like the proverbial “game of two halves”. The first half provided lots of frustratingly cold and clear nights during spring while things perked up in the second half with a heatwave of a summer. Extra time was played out in the autumn with a few rewarding evenings in early October.

Having done some number crunching for macro species trapped in 2013, the final tally was a record haul of 260 species from 75 trapping nights. This was 67 species more than 2012 when only 193 species were recorded from 61 nights. Over the previous seven years since trapping began in 2006, the yearly average has been about 215 macro moth species caught from roughly 63 nights a year.

Thirteen new macro species were added to the park list. The best night of the season was during the visit of the Essex Moth Group’s annual visit on 23rd July when a record site catch of 130 species were noted, this included 30 species of micro.

The main highlights of the mothing season came in the summer and autumn. The only moth of interest in the spring was the regular **Blossom Underwing** recorded on three nights in the second half of April. The only **Cream-spot Tiger** showed late in the spring on 26th June, the same night that six species of **Hawkmoth** were found in the trap. **Small Elephant Hawkmoths** had their best season here noted on six nights from mid-June to mid July. Two different **Garden Tigers** turned up on 17th July and on 31st July.

New species noted during July were **Brown Rustic**, **Beautiful Hook-tip**, **Bordered Beauty**, **Orange Moth**, **Festoon**, **Barred Red** and **Coronet**. Other summer highlights were **Archers Dart**, **Tree-lichen Beauty** and the regular **Red Underwings**.

After a couple of **Large Thorns** in early September, things perked up in early October with a few migrants being noted. The highlight was the first record of a **Four-spotted Footman** along with new records of the **Gem**, **Feathered Brindle** and **Figure of Eight**, all in the first week of the month. Supporting cast during October was provided by **Pine carpet**, **Dark Sword-grass** and **Dusky-lemon Sallow**.

CUDMORE GROVE EMG VISIT 23RD JULY

Warm and muggy conditions were ideal for the annual EMG meeting and the ten members that attended could watch lots of moths coming to five different lights.

By dawn at 4.30am the following day, a record 100 macro species and thirty micro species had been seen.

Highlights included **Festoon, Orange Moth, Oak Eggar, Currant Pug, 12 Elephant Hawkmoths, Rosy Footman, Kent Black Arches, Fen Wainscot, Shark and Scarce Silver-lines.**



Scarce Silver Lines



Four-spotted Footman



Orange Moth



Palpita vitrealis



Evergestis limbata



Gem

(Pics D.U.)

MOTHING AT FRINTON-ON-SEA

Barbara Lock

The moths that I treasured most in 2013 were those which were new to my garden.

The obvious favourite was a **Convulvulus Hawkmoth** on 1st October. Others were

Orange Footman on 8th June, *Tinea semifulvella* on 5th July, **Small Elephant Hawkmoth** on 9th July, **Rosy Footman** on 12th July and **Four-spotted Footman** on 5th October.

I've been trapping in my garden since 1993, firstly with a 6W actinic heath trap, and progressed to a 15W actinic heath. I do have an MV lamp and Skinner trap for use in the field, but only use these in my garden on National Moth Nights, and then only until midnight.

Over the past 20 years moths have come and gone. A number of those which I used to get in the 90s have disappeared, but most years new ones appear. Some pay just a one off visit but others come to stay. Two examples of these are **Marbled Brown** and *Evergestis limbata* both of which appeared for the first time in 2011, and revisited in 2012 and 2013.

Prays ruficeps -Friars Grove, Colchester (TM0026) adult 2 August 1990, B. Goodey, new to the county. Formerly identified as *Prays fraxinella* f. *rustica*.

The small, dark form of '*fraxinella*' (= '*rustica*') is now recognised as being a different species. Care should be exercised in the field because *P. fraxinella* occasionally produces dark forms, and where any doubts exist examination of the genitalia might be needed.

Phalonidia manniana -Daws Hall N.R., Lamarsh (TL8836) adult 11 August 1990 B. Goodey, first proven county record.

Phalonidia manniana has recently been split into two species, *manniana* and *udana*. Examination of the genitalia is needed to prove identity since both species are likely to occur in Essex. The only example of this pair to be examined is the above, and all other records for *P. manniana* should be regarded as being unproven.

MOTH-ERLY LOVE IN WIVENHOE.....!

Glyn Evans

I expect all of us remember what this felt like: Going to bed on Christmas Eve, gripped with anticipation and excitement, waiting restlessly for the miracle to happen, knowing that is just a few hours away...

Waking up at a totally unreasonable hour as you simply can't wait until a "more civilised" hour...

I have been a birder since I was a small kid who found a rather exotic bird eating berries in a hedge on my way to school one winter. Once I had a bird book which enabled me to identify it as a Waxwing, it was like a catalogue of would-be presents in the future, as long as I could persuade my Dad to take me out...

Insects went largely unnoticed until, as a more experienced birder, I realised that the midsummer months were less exciting from a birding point of view and noticed that a lot of birders were posting reports of insects on the bird forums. To me it was all a foreign language. And it happened every summer...



So inevitably I decided that there must be something in it. A posting on the birders forum that a home-made moth trap was up for grabs had me scrambling for the phone and 24 hours later we were the proud owners of a Skinner-style trap, complete with recycled brass carrying handles, egg boxes and plastic inspection jars. We borrowed a field guide (again from my Dad) and switched it on that very night...

Around about that time, Chris Gibson moved to Wivenhoe. As we both posted bird sightings on the bird forum I knew he had moved into my patch, so when we met and he recounted his sightings I quickly recognised him from his bird list! I was also friendly with Greg Smith, a colleague of Chris's at Natural England and an equally enthusiastic naturalist, so the introduction was consolidated through the mutual friendship and it wasn't long before we sat down and enjoyed an evening of naturalistic indulgences over a beer or two...

As luck would have it, our significant others were happy to go along with – if not indulge – our enthusiasm but were nevertheless roped into the newly-formed WWW team – Wivenhoe Watching Wildlife! Before long we roped in Richard Allen to add further talent and credibility to our group and we set about using the local Wivenhoe Forum to try to enthuse others about the wonders of our local wildlife.

At this time, Chris lived in an upstairs flat and so was on an indefinite sabbatical from mothing, but was an ideal resource for me to help identify the more obscure (or badly photographed) moth species from the trap. The ideal way to showcase his talent was to post the photos on the forum and get Chris to ID them online, allowing others to enjoy the same benefits of viewing the moths and having them identified, often with a few factoids thrown in for good measure.

In time, Greg simply couldn't resist it any longer and he made himself a trap after he borrowed mine for just one night! Ditto Richard! With three traps at our disposal Chris got in on the action by organising some live moth trapping events for the increasing number of "punters" who by now were logging in by the dozen (in fact, the Birds of Wivenhoe thread alone logged 16,420 page views in November) to keep tabs on what was being exhibited.

Events have been held in the park, the graveyard, the woods and exhibited on the morning after and reported via the local media.

We expect more of our fellow residents to take an interest in mothing and amongst those, we hope, will be some future conservationists (we even took the local cub scout pack out one evening!).

Of late, Greg has trapped a **White-spotted Pinion** (September, 2012) and last year, we put out news that we had found a **Toadflax Brocade** caterpillar which was quickly followed with 6 more reports of local finds.

Mothing and child-like enthusiasm are clearly a deadly combination. Wivenhoe is now buzzing with both. Happy mothing All!

Glyn Evans and the WWW team.



Canary-shouldered Thorn



Mullein



Streamer

All pics G. Evans

WIGBORO WICK FARM, ST. OSYTH - SUMMARY OF 2013 MOTHS Clive and Quinn Atkins

As in previous years at least one 125 v MV Robinson was run, with an additional trap from May to the end of November. Four weeks of recording were lost to trips abroad. Yet again the weather played a crucial part in the numbers recorded, with the spring being particularly cold, whereas a fine summer boosted figures only to drop again in autumn due to frequent high winds.

Sloe Carpet numbers picked up (13), compared to the previous year's disappointing (2). **Dotted Chestnut** appeared for the third consecutive year and **Eucosma metzneriana** appears to be established with (1) last year and (18) this. **Dewick's Plusia** occurred on (3) occasions, with one individual observed nectaring on 4 nights, though it never entered a trap. This species has been recorded here for the last 6 years, so it wasn't a complete surprise when larvae were discovered in July.

Some other notable species:

Agonopterix curvipunctosa (3), **Agonopterix purpurea** (2), **Mompha jurrasicella** (6), **Commophila aeneana** (2), **Cypress Carpet** (1), **Sharp-angled Carpet** (1), **Kent Black Arches** (2), **Lunar Yellow Underwing** (5), **Feathered Brindle** (1), **Pale Pinion** (1) and **Coronet** (2).

New species include:

Luffia ferchautella - larval case on 11th June.

Palpita vitrealis - 1 on 1st October.

Bucculatrix albedinella - 1 on 9th June.

Oncocera semirubella - 1 on 4th October.

Yponomeuta plumbella - 1 on 11th August.

Phycitodes saxicola - 1 on 5th September.

Epermenia chaerophyllella - 2 on 16th July.

Oblique Carpet - 1 on 30th August.

Eulamprotes wilkella - 1 on 29th August.

Flame Carpet - 1 on 3rd September.

Monochroa lucidella - 1 on 23rd July.

Streak - 1 on 22nd October.

Bryotropha affinis - 1 on 1st July.

Tawny-barred Angle - 1 on 28th August.

Eucosma lacteana - singles on 3rd and 4th July.

Lilac Beauty - 1 on 11th July.

Small Elephant Hawkmoth - singles on 19th June & 7th July.

Toadflax Brocade - single larva on 18th and 19th Sept.

Monthly totals for migrant species

	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
Willow Ermine			5	2					7
Diamond-back Moth		14	205	6	3	1			229
European Corn-borer		5	52						57
Rusty-dot Pearl					1	1	1		3
Rush Veneer				1	2	14			17
Palpita vitrealis						1			1
Vestal					2	3			5
Hummingbird Hawk-moth			1		1				2
Dark Sword-grass	2	1	1	16	14	16	6		56
Pearly Underwing						2			2
Tree-lichen Beauty			1	5	1				7
White-point	1	36	34	18	272	18			379
Delicate						3			3
Silver Y	1	108	18	112	26	31			296

A MEMORABLE 24 HOURS IN OCTOBER

Steve Rolls

With perfect conditions promised I chose the night of the 4th of October to try and trap some migrant moths in my mother in law's garden at Point Clear near Clacton.

The hours up until midnight were disappointing with very little turning up but after checking the trap at 6.00 am my luck was to change, There were around 6 **Rush Veneer** on the outside of the trap along with 2 **Vestals** and a **Gem**, good start I thought, inside the trap was a **Clancy's Rustic** which is a moth I have been after for years, then followed a **Bordered Straw**, another moth I have not seen before, but the best of the night had to be the **Pale-lemon Sallow** which was perched on a shrub next to the trap.

After such a good night I decided to see if my luck would continue with a search for a *Coleophora salicorniae* in its larval stage on the salt marsh in Point Clear, I found these very easily which is encouraging as it's by no means a common species, My final target for the day was a **Toadflax Brocade** caterpillar, I chose the Boatyard in Brightlingsea as I knew Toadflax was growing in a few areas around the site, my luck continued with 7 caterpillars found.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2013

Steve Rolls

There were a number of highlights for me in 2013, the first was in April when I found a newly emerged *Pammene giganteana* in the hedgerow at work in Braintree, they must have had a good year as I went on to find 6 during April and into early May.

I found 2 *Perittia obscurepunctella* during a dusking session in May in Layer wood, there are very few Essex records of this tiny Micro but it's probably just under-recorded, also in May I collected a cocoon of a *Bucculatrix maritima* from saltmarsh in Point Clear, the adult emerged in early June, these moths are particularly striking and probably quite common on saltmarsh around Essex.

A walk with my sweep net on Tiptree Heath proved very productive at the end of July, I spotted an *Aristotelia ericinella* resting on heather, its 25 years since the last Essex record which was also from Tiptree.

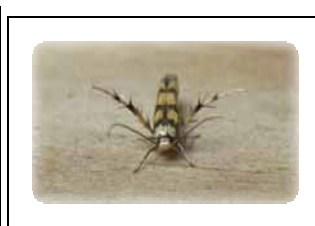
Perhaps my favourite Micro Moth of 2013 was *Adela fibulella*, I discovered around half a dozen of these on a tiny patch of Germander Speedwell at work in Braintree, these are not particularly rare but it's a moth I had been hoping to see for a number of years.

Light trapping in Layer Wood during July, August and September was quite productive for my life list, *Monochroa cytisella* being the pick along with **Suspected**,

Scallop Shell and the yellow form of **Rosy Footman**, a **Red-necked Footman** caterpillar was also a nice find.



Aristotelia ericinella



Stathmopoda pedella



Coleophora salicorniae



Toadflax Brocade

LEAFMINERS IN ESSEX

Steve Rolls

Searching for leaf mining Lepidoptera can be very a rewarding way of extending the moth season into December, adding to your life list, and can lead to some interesting discoveries.

One of my aims for 2013 was to find the 3 *Phyllocnistis* species that are resident in Essex, these are *xenia*, *unipunctella* and *saligna* – *P. saligna* proved to be an easy one to find as it seems to have done very well in recent years in Essex, I found it very easily at work in Braintree, *P. unipunctella* was a little more difficult to track down but I did eventually find a large population in Coggeshall Hamlet on Poplar.

Phyllocnistis xenia is a relatively new British species and despite very few Essex records can be found very easily in North Essex, I found it in Layer Wood and in Tollesbury.

Something I was not expecting was to find was a *Phyllocnistis* mine on *Salix pentandra*, I am not aware of any British records of this food plant being used so it's either a known species trying a new food plant or possibly an undescribed species, I will attempt to rear one in 2014 to confirm which species it is.

I have been looking out for *Phyllocnistis citrella* for a couple of years, this species has been found in Britain on a couple of occasions but is usually stopped on infected citrus plants and fruit before entering Britain, I found a number of leaf mines from this species on ornamental Citrus plants for sale in a large superstore and in a local garden centre so it's clearly getting through into the country



P.xenia



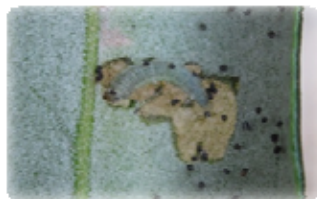
P. ?.



P. citrella.

Prays oleae.

Another recent arrival is *Prays oleae*, this moth mines Olive, they can be found in garden centres and probably in gardens in and around Essex, They are very easy to rear as I found in 2012 with 5 Adults emerging from leaves I collected from a garden centre in Rayne.



All pics S.Rolls

CURRY FARM (BRADWELL BROOK) RESERVE

Stephen Dewick

Much of 2013 was incessantly wet, yet how strange that in the middle of all this gloom we had a warm dry summer. January started well enough with single **Peacock** *N.io* flying on the 3rd, 4th and 8th and the first **Small Tortoiseshell** *A.urticae* seen on the 9th. The prolonged very cold and wet spell that followed put an abrupt end to further butterfly activity but remarkably on the morning of 3rd February a Bittern *B.stellaris* was about. Clearly some plants were adversely affected by the inclement conditions, with Sallow, Blackthorn and Hawthorn all having very little blossom.



Agrotera nemoralis



Crimson Speckled

Pics – S. Dewick

Inevitably, after such an awful spring most of our resident butterflies and moths only appeared in low numbers, yet as always a few species did not seem to notice the weather. Just six years after our very first record of **Festoon** *A.limacodes* no less than 89 appeared in the trap. Similarly **Tree-lichen Beauty** *C.algae* and **Buff Footman** *E.deplana* go from strength to strength. An exceptionally late emergence of **Meadow Brown** *M.jurtina* in late September and October was of particular interest; the last was seen on the 23rd of the month. However 2013 will best be remembered for its immigrants. The variety of species and abundance of some has seldom been bettered.

Painted Lady *V.cardui* and **Clouded Yellow** *C.croceus* were both first seen on the 19th June and that night a new species, the rare pyralid *Agrotera nemoralis* came to the trap. Both **Silver Y** *A.gamma* and **Vestal** *R.sacraria* arrived here in unusually high numbers and the beautiful pyralid *Palpita vitrealis* had its best year ever. The first days of August were truly spectacular with at least two continental **Swallowtail** *P.machaon* between the 5th and 8th and an almost certain **Dark Green Fritillary** *A.aglaja* viewed near the moth trap on the 7th of the month. On the 4th September a **Willow Emerald Damselfly** *L.viridis* was noted and at night a **Western Conifer Seed Bug** *L.occidentalis* was caught in the trap. On the 30th an immaculate daytime **Crimson Speckled** *U.pulchella* was photographed on the main field. October also proved to be a remarkably good month and highlights then included **Four-spotted Footman** *L.quadra*, Clifden **Nonpareil** *C.fraxini*, **Plumed Fanfoot** *P.plumigeralis* and the pyralid *Diasemiopsis ramburialis*.

Sadly, the violent gales on the morning of 28th October destroyed many trees on the reserve and a vast amount of path clearing and general restoration work has had to be done.

Finally, **Red Admiral** *V.atalanta*, **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Peacock** were all observed on the 29th December. If climate change gathers pace even stranger years may still be to come.



Swallowtail



Pics – Stephen Dewick

MOTH GROUP FIELD TRIP TO CURRY FARM - SUN 6TH JULY 2014



A chance to see the powerful 400W bulb on the Curry Farm moth trap. Join a daytime field visit led by Stephen Dewick, check moths caught the previous night and walk round the reserve. Meet at 10.30am on Sunday 6th July at Curry Farm, Bradwell. TL057997
Part of National Moth Night Weekend

Roof of moth trap, showing the bulb and entry point for moths, pictured left by Dougal in 2009.

At Blue House Farm EWT Reserve, North Farnbridge we have been moth trapping once a week for six years. This usually takes place in the garden of the farmhouse using a 125MV lamp but in midsummer Tim Lawrence, the assistant warden, sets a 15VUV light at various points around the reserve. The reserve consists of 600 acres of grazing marsh. Linear reed-beds flank the three fleets that run from east to west across the farm while the narrower ditches are dominated by Sea Club-rush, Typha and Juncus. Initially, the object of the exercise was to simply discover which species were using the reserve, particularly the grassland and reed-bed specialists, but this year Cindy Lawes is running a project to try and define, among other things, where habitat improvement could best be focused.



View over Blue House Farm



Six-spot Burnets

As you would expect, specialists such as **Reed Dagger**, **Double Lobed**, **Small Rufous**, **Crescent**, *Calamotropha paludella*, *Schoenobius giganteus*, *Chilo phragmitella*, and a variety of **wainscots** - **Obscure**, **Bulrush**, **Brown-veined**, **Twin-spotted**, **Webb's**, **Large**, **Fen** and **Silky** among them – are to be found in the main reed-beds and ditches while **Drinker**, **Antler**, **Feathered Gothic**, **Hedge Rustic** and **Shoulder-striped Wainscot** are the dominant grassland species, with smaller numbers of **Round-winged Muslin**, **Small Dotted Buff**, **Dotted Fanfoot**, **Dog's Tooth**, and **Satin Wave** along with day flyers such as **Cream-spot Tiger**, **Mother Shipton**, **Latticed Heath**, **Burnet Companion**, **Six-spot** and **Narrow-bordered Five Spot Burnets**, and *Sitochroa palealis*. Since recording began both **White-point** and **L-album Wainscot** have showed signs of colonising the reserve but there is, as yet, no definite proof of breeding.



L-album Wainscot



Water Ermine



Schoenobius gigantea – (Pics G.S.)

As trapping is limited to once a week we do not catch many migrants other than **Silver Y** and **Dark Sword-grass** but **Ni Moth** and **Vestal** are the among the more unusual species. The rarest moth was probably the **Festoon** caught in July 2008 – a species well out of its comfort zone! It may have hopped across the river from Hockley Woods or there may be a population in nearby Farnbridge Hall Wood. We are hoping to find out.

It was a good year in my garden at Woodford Green, SW Essex with a record number of species taken at light with 102 species on 1st August. Overall several new moths for the site including a male **Gypsy Moth** on 20th August which I reported to DEFRA, **Crescent Plume** *Marasmarcha lunaedactyla* -miles away from any salt marshes, the small black tortrix *Strophedra weirana* (**Little Beech Piercer**) -quite scarce and some more attractive common moths to make their first appearances were the **Vestal**, and **Rosy Footman**.

The **Box Tree Moth**, *Diaphania (Cydalima) perspectalis* was first seen here in 2011 when 18 were trapped, then increased to 22 in 2012 and up to 80 last year. Larvae were also found on Box in the garden.

The **Hoary Footman** first seen here with 4 in 2011 was up to 22 in 2011 and then 60 in 2013

Large numbers of another lichen feeder **Tree-lichen Beauty** has increased from 1 in 2005 to 148 for 2012 and 146 in 2013. **Jersey Tigers** have remained the same but **Toadflax Brocades** were half last year's catch.



Gypsy Moth



Hoary Footman

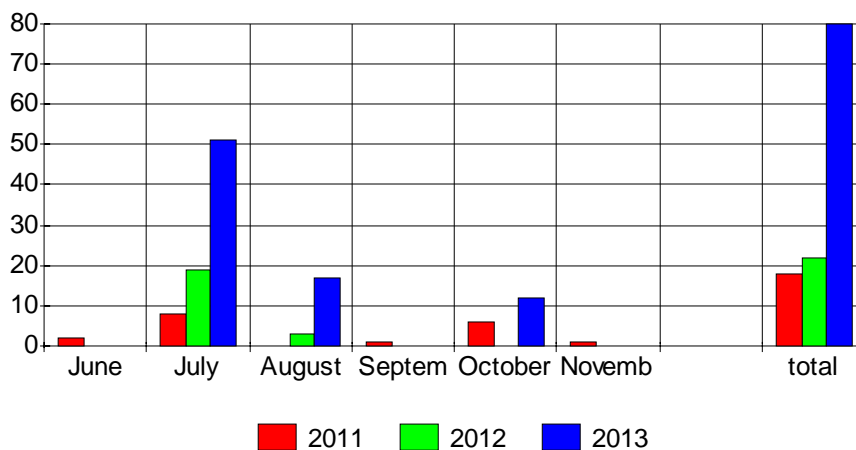


Strophedra weirana

(R.B.)

D. perspectalis 2011 - 2013

at light Woodford Green Essex



Diaphania perspectalis



Larva



Larva spinning



Box damage

(R.B.)

MET. ESSEX - WANSTEAD MOTHS

Summary by D. Urquhart

Tim Harris and Paul Ferris ran traps in two gardens close to Wanstead Flats during 2013. Their findings were written up in a detailed report currently held by the Essex Field Club.

In brief, it was a poor spring but the summer was warmer than in 2012, with some very good catches especially during July and August.

In total 221 species were recorded between 5th March and 25th October comprising 150 macros and 71 micros. The highlights were **Broom Tip** (second record for Metropolitan Essex), **Gypsy Moth**, **Garden Tiger**, **Jersey Tiger** – 18 noted, **Tawny Shears**, **Tree-lichen Beauty** – 63 noted, and the ERDB species **Neglected Rustic**, **Toadflax Brocade**, **Beautiful Hook-tip** and **Buttoned Snout**.

Scarce micros of interest were *Optostega salaciella*, *Phyllonorycter platanoidella*, *Coleophora trifolii*, *Biselachista scirpii*, *Acleris cristana*, *Rhyacionia pinivorana*, *Pammene fasciana*, *Catoptria falsella*, *Pyrausta despicata* and the **False Cacao** *Ephestia unicolorella* ssp *woodiella*.

MARKS HILL WOOD AND THE LANGDON RIDGE

Rod Cole

The total number of species on the Basildon Natural History Society record of moths on and around the Langdon ridge stands at 621 (with 5 new macros and 32 new micros added up to mid August 2013). Some of these records are the result of moth-trapping at Sporhams, and some at Bells Hill.

Peter Furze exercises considerable care in determining the identities of the micro species, dissecting when necessary. As a result we are very fortunate in having an increasingly impressive and accurate record of the moth fauna of Marks Hill Wood.

349 moth species are now recorded for the wood (15 new macros and 20 new micros were added up to mid August – so we are still discovering more).

There is an obvious case for widening the number of locations around the ridge where trapping could be undertaken – perhaps a project for 2014. Quite a lot of moth species exist close to specific habitats and could easily be missed – and if they are rare or localised, destruction of sites could so easily result, where with a bit of knowledge destruction might be prevented. I am mindful of the colony of **Small Elephant Hawkmoths** which presumably exists in the bedstraw-rich grasslands and verges close to Bells Hill.

On a different note, it has been delightful to encounter **Silver-washed Fritillaries** in Marks Hill Wood this year. Hopefully this represents an extension of the breeding population already established in the woods on the south side of the Langdon ridge.

MARKS HILL MOTHING – 13TH AUG SESSION

Sixty species recorded with 25 micros and 35 macros. Three **Mochas** flying around midnight were the main highlight and as one had also been recorded on 6th August, maybe indicates an ongoing colony. A **Suspected** was a new reserve and Langdon record. Also of interest were **Slender Pug**, **Maple Pug**, **Phoenix** and a **Tree-lichen Beauty**. New micro records for the site were **Ash Bud Moth** (*Prays fraxinella*), *Cnephasia genitalana*, *Epinotia immundana* and *Gypsonoma oppressana*.

8TH OCT SESSION

Things were perhaps surprisingly slow, especially given the very mild, calm conditions beneath a cloud cover, moreover coming towards the end of a sustained period of good weather. Fifteen macros and 6 micros were recorded.

Three species **Autumnal Rustic**, **Deep-brown Dart** and **Rush Veneer** were new for the Wood.

The contrast with 11th October 2011 was striking when numbers of the regulars was so much stronger. **Green-brindled Crescent** 30 in 2012, down to 10 in 2013, **Barred Sallow** from 27 down to 4 and **Figure of Eight** from 23 down to 5. This is perhaps a reflection of the impact of grim summer weather in 2012 and then a touch winter as well. It could be taking some of these species some time to recover.

It was yet again a convivial occasion in the wood. Many thanks to everyone involved.

Day-flying moths get something of a raw deal, often failing to appear on the radar of both moth-trappers and butterfly enthusiasts alike. To make matters worse, some of these moths are easily confused with our two less common **skippers**, the **Grizzled** and **Dingy**, so it is important for us to be able to distinguish these similar-looking spring species. The visual chart shows all 6 butterflies and moths together as a field guide.

Some members do send in their day-flying moth records to the butterfly sightings page and these are all transcribed and sent to the respective recorders. If you would like to expand your sightings to include these when submitting, then simply add the word "moths:" in the 'description' field on the website submission form; this makes searching and transcribing a lot easier.

Dingy Skipper

Always rare, this species has not been seen in Essex since 1990 where it used to inhabit unimproved grassland with plenty of bare patches and Birds Foot Trefoil, its usual food-plant. In Cambridgeshire, it is found on the Devil's Dyke, where unusually it feeds on Horseshoe Vetch. It has also recently expanded its range from Beds/Northants over into W Cambs. In sunshine, it is usually very active, the females flying low to the ground almost bee-like, searching for egg-laying sites. It has subtle dark brown markings on a brown or greyish-brown background. When fresh, it has a distinct whitish hue across the middle of the forewing and white dots along the outer margin. However, faded specimens can be confused with the **Common Heath** or **Burnet Companion** moths. Look for the 'club-like' ends of the antennae. When roosting in poor weather, it has the unique habit of wrapping its wings forward around the dead seed heads of Knapweed stems, which undoubtedly gives it its camouflage.

Burnet Companion

So if we hear of a 'Dingy Skipper' in Essex, it's usually a worn specimen of this moth! When fresh, the dark brown bands form distinct chevrons when wings are closed. The background colour is a light grey/brown and so when the markings fade and merge, this moth can appear 'Dingy-like'. Look for the fine wire antennae and also the golden patches on the hind wing. The wing undersides are also distinctly yellow, with a few brown spots, and so this moth can be confused with a **Small Copper** when first disturbed, but it soon comes down to rest.

This species feeds on clovers and trefoils and can be seen in many meadow and pasture habitats. It is very abundant at Langdon Hills in Spring.

Mother Shipton

Quite a distinctive moth, with the face of the old hag from which its name is derived. But this can be mistaken for a **Burnet Companion** from a distance. Look for the characteristic cream-lined black/brown 'face' markings and distinctive dots. When disturbed, this moth can fly some distance, so can take 2 or 3 attempts to identify it.

Grizzled Skipper

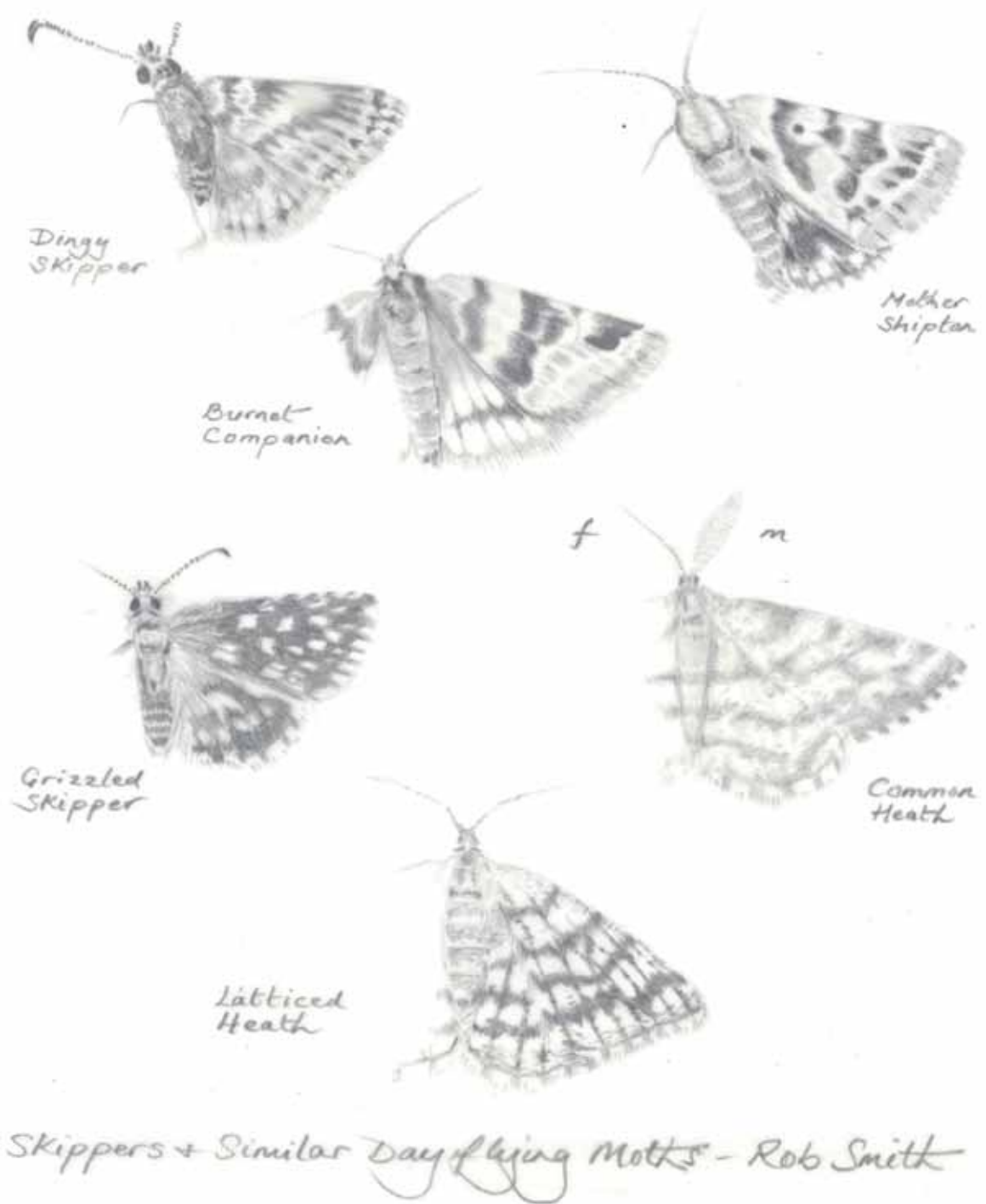
A butterfly whose fundamental colouration is white spots on black/dark brown background. However, variants do occur with a greater amount of white (e.g. form taras), particularly in the Langdon Complex, Essex's only population. In Cambridgeshire, key sites are well documented, but others probably exist particularly in proximity to railway lines. The main foodplant in our area is Creeping Cinquefoil, but others are used. The **Grizzled Skipper** is very difficult to follow in flight, so it's always worth getting a distant camera shot first, if you find a singleton. As with other skippers, the smooth antennae with 'club-like' ends are telling.

Latticed Heath

This moth can be found almost anywhere and is probably the species most easily confused with the **Grizzled Skipper** due to the white marks on black background colouration. However, the latticed markings are much clearer on this species, consisting of wider cross bands and thinner veins. Colours vary from black lattice on cream background to brown markings on beige, hence the confusion with the **Common Heath**. This species can unusually hold its wing upright, more like a butterfly and, being a migrant, can be extremely abundant in some years.

Common Heath

Prone to great variation, including between the sexes. This moth can be confused with the **Latticed Heath** and the **Dingy Skipper**, particular as it can inhabit similar habitats and is uncommon. In Cambridgeshire, this moth is local, inhabiting post-industrial sites and chalk grassland where vetches and clovers grow. At Devil's Dyke, its larvae probably feed on Horseshoe Vetch, as with the **Dingy Skipper**, and both species can be seen in May. In Essex, this species could now be absent from similar 'vetchling' sites. As its name suggests however, it is also a heathland moth, feeding on heather. It is currently only known from Sunshine Plain, a heathland area within Epping Forest. In warm sunshine, the **Common Heath** prefers to bask and when disturbed, can be more easily followed than the **Dingy Skipper**, soon coming down to rest. Although some specimens can be almost completely brown, there are usually some bands present that tend to merge with each other. The brown and cream/gold markings and feathered antennae are characteristic of the males. Females have very thin 'wired' antennae and much lighter and creamier wings, so that the brown banding is always distinctive, and lack the cross veins of the **Latticed Heath**.



Skippers + Similar Day-flying Moths - Rob Smith



My first ever 200+ species in one night

Canvey Wick has always had a special place in my mothing heart, and having made at least two trips a year since 2007, the night of the 15th of July 2013 was about to break all expectations and move the goalpost even further! It was an absolutely astonishing evening that I had with good friends Graham Bailey and Don Down. An evening totally eclipsing my previous highest count of 197 species, from this very site a few years back now. The weather was perfect, a little breezy at first but plenty of thin cloud cover and very mild at 20 degrees at dusk.

Don set his tripod up first and within seconds things were flying around it, the usual stuff first and then a few specialities. It was a slow start and as the cloud seemed to get thinner we were doubting how good this night really was going to be. All hell started to break loose about an hour into the session and we were all struggling to keep up, scribbling away on bits of paper.

The traps on inspection at 2am as we slowly packed up, were brimming with moths and there were so many that it was difficult to breathe in whilst looking through the catch with fear of inhaling one of the moths.

Highlights for me were not one but two **Marbled Green**, we did see this moth here a few years ago, but both Graham and I attracted one each, a very special moth indeed. We also managed other resident specialities such as **Garden Tiger**, **White-line Dart**, **Reed Dagger**, **Lappet** and **Silky Wainscot**.

All in all it was a night that I won't forget in a hurry and thoroughly worth the 2 hours of sleep I got before going to work in the morning!

Other macros of interest included **Brown Scallop**, **Beautiful Hook-tip**, **Blackneck**, **Kent Black Arches**, **Lesser Cream Wave**, **Obscure Wainscot**, **Shark**, **Starwort**, **Sharp-angled Peacock**, **Slender Pug** and **Starwort**.

Micros of note were *Thiodia citrana*, *Cnaemidophorus rhododactyla*, *Apotomis lineana*, *Altenia scriptella*, *Phycitodes maritima*, *Argyresthia curvella*, *Anacamptis blattariella*, *Adiana microdactyla*, *Phtheochroa inopiana*, *Ephestia parasitella*, *Apotomis capreana*, *Platytes alpinella*, *Onocera semirubella*, *Calamitropha paludella*, *Catoptria falsella*, *Schoenobius gigantella*, *Evergestis extimalis*, *Pyrausta despecta*, *Perinephela lancealis*, *Phlyctaenia perlucidalis* and *Ebulea crocealis*.

240 - total species (159 Macros and 81 Micros). Numbers and species all correct.

15/07/13 – Canvey Wick - 1x 125 MV on tripod, 1x Home-made Skinner-type trap and Gardner light bar 2x40w actinic + 150W Halogen bulb, 1x 125 MV Robinson and a 40w Actinic + 26w CFL Bulb, run from 10pm till 2.00am.

CANVEY WICK MOTHS

Pics by Ben Sale



Marbled Green



Suspected



Dark Spinach



Cnaem. rhododactyla



Platytes alpinella



Thiodia citrana



Trachycera marmorea

MOTHING IN THE MEDIA

Dougal Urquhart

Moth trapping and moths of Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve featured on regional BBC TV on 20th August and then again on BBC Essex radio the following morning. This was part of the BBC's special 24 hour Wildlife Watch where all sorts of species were being looked for and explained on the reserve. Rod Cole helped organise a mothing session with various lamps and helpers in the two car parks. Rod explained the delights and the importance of moths live on the Dave Monk show on BBC Essex. I helped explain some of the moths we'd caught during the night to Richard Daniels of BBC's Look East the following morning.



BBC Look East presenter Shaun Peel beside the Gardner trap at Fingringhoe, just after doing a piece live on evening TV.