

History

At a meeting held at the Mistley home of Ian Rose on 20 January attended by 14 operators of light traps or MV lamps it was agreed to set up an Essex Moth Group in line with other counties and to assist the national recording and mapping atlas projects being run by Dr. Paul Waring for Butterfly Conservation (BBCS). The meeting was also attended by Arthur Watchman, leader of the Suffolk Moth Group, which is run by Suffolk Naturalist's Society.

The inaugural meeting was arranged by Joe Firmin, chairman of the Essex Lepidoptera Panel which is the senior organisation in Essex recording butterflies and moths and monitoring invertebrate habitats; Brian Goodey, secretary of the Panel, is also Essex county recorder for butterflies and larger moths. Both Joe and Brian will organise the activities of the new group and Brian will, as recorder, be pleased to receive regular records from members. Guidance on compilation of records, and the system recommended to achieve uniformity of practice, are given later in this newsletter.

Present at the launch meeting was Bob Dewick of Bradwell-on-Sea, the doyen of UK lepidopterists running light traps, whose giant trap at Curry Farm has yielded so many rare or unusual migrant and resident moth species over more than half a century and whose name is perpetuated in the UK reference books by Dewick's plusia. Bob and his son Stephen will be host to the group in the summer at a meeting at Curry Farm.

JF

Purpose

The group is conscious of the need to bring the county's recorders closer together. As well as the mapping schemes for butterflies and moths it will hopefully act as a vehicle for informing members of significant events, exchanges of opinions, observations, ideas, survey results, suggestions for future site surveys - anything you want, really. We are particularly interested in promoting the microlepidoptera, of which Maitland Emmet is, of course, County Recorder. A newsletter will be produced as and when enough information is available, which will require you to put pen to paper. Don't worry too much about style or presentation - let's be informal. Producing a newsletter will cost, alas, so a stamp or two - a couple of SAEs even better - will be needed to obtain future issues.

BG

A plea for records

Jerry Bowdrey of the Colchester Museums, a member of the group, is anxious that everyone participating should record insects of other orders which turn up in traps or to light. He writes:

"Both actinic and mercury vapour moth traps are attractive to a wide range of insects in addition to the Lepidoptera, which are usually the target species. Normally they get tipped out onto the grass.

"The range of possibilities is endless: bush crickets, caddis flies, water boatmen, midges, lacewings (a group studied by Colin Plant), craneflies, hornets, and a variety of beetles including cockchafers, ground beetles and dung beetles to mention but a few. So why not box a few examples of these 'other order' insects and send them to your local museum entomologist if you cannot positively identify the species or group yourself? They will not be able to identify everything you catch but they probably know a man or woman who can. In addition, your records will be passed on to national recording schemes. Please include the usual data - date, grid reference, site name and collector's name should be the minimum - plus any relevant information on weather conditions. Remember that this information may ultimately help us conserve species whose distribution and conservation requirements are at present poorly known."

These other order specimens and/or records should be sent to Jerry Bowdrey, Colchester Museums, 14 Ryegate Road, Colchester CO1 1YG (Tel. 01206 282936) for Vice County 19 North Essex; or to Roger Payne, Central Museum, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea SS2 6EW (Tel. 01702 330214) for VC 18 South Essex. If sending large amounts of material for identification a phone call in advance would be appreciated. If return of specimens is required please indicate and enclose postage.

JF

Another plea for records

Denis F. Owen, of Abingdon, Oxfordshire, is making a study this year of the frequency of the melanic form of the peppered moth, *Biston betularia* (*Entomologist's Record* volume 108, page 23). Please make a special effort to record this moth, stating how many are typical, intermediate or melanic and the locality/date. We will send them off in bulk at the end of the season. BG

Instructions for Recorders

The old 10km square recording system will continue for national mapping schemes so please continue to alert me of anything new/updated, using as references *The Smaller Moths of Essex* (1981), *The Larger Moths and Butterflies of Essex* (1985), or *Lepidoptera of North East Essex* (1992). You can send micro records direct to Maitland Emmet or to me for sorting/collation and I will then pass them onto Maitland.

Please include date, site name, *at least* a four-figure grid reference (or a sketch map if you're not sure on this), numbers of specimens seen (see below), method of capture such as MV, sugar, netted at dusk etc, name of recorder, and any relevant weather conditions. The same goes for uncommon/rare species or migrants which may not necessarily constitute a new 10km² record.

Butterflies are now being recorded at tetrad level (as are plants and many other orders) and I plan to start a similar scheme for moths in Essex. For butterflies (and moths), this will mean that many previous county records based on the 10km² system are practically useless and we need to start again, even for abundant species. A tetrad is a square composed of a block of four of the blue squares on an OS map, so there are 5X5 = 25 tetrads per 10km². This will be a slow, lengthy process - much work for us all!

The above schemes are being augmented by site lists. If you record a local wood, nature reserve, or run a trap in your back garden for example, I will create an ongoing file for that locality. Established ones exist for several sites already, such as Daws Hall NR, Friday Wood and Fingringhoe Wick NR, with embryonic files being opened for Stour Wood NR and gardens in Theydon Bois and Mistley. Important sites may already have a file created by other bodies, such as English Nature for determining the value of SSSI's.

The following guide lines will help to ensure some kind of standardisation when sending records. HOWEVER, if your observations are the kind that take the form of a hand-written notebook, then this too would be of use. Clearly the more information you can let me have the better - we have no way of knowing what future data will be required.

For new sites make out a total species list you've recorded at the site and pass a copy to me so that we have a common starting point. I'll put this on computer so that any future additions can easily be inserted. I'll copy the amended list and send it back to you.

For established sites phone me, I may already have something on disk which you can add to. The site list should carry its name, nearest town/village and a four- or (better) six-figure grid reference.

If you are doing a one off session, include the date, duration (ie dusk to 1.00am), method of capture(s) (sugar, MV, actinic, dusking), and weather conditions. Ideally the list should be in the correct order with log numbers included, but this is not essential. If you prefer, we could do things in alphabetical order.

Also useful would be an estimation of each species abundance. We can use the same system as used by BBCS:

1 only	A	2 - 9	B	10 - 29	C
30 - 99	D	100+	E		

If the site is one you visit regularly, make out a species list as above for each visit. Alternatively, if this is too much work, simply make out a list of the species you have recorded over the years. Additional information if known could be dates for when you first recorded and last recorded a species, their relative abundance, dates of your surveys etc. I can provide common species site tick lists if needed.

Some of you may feel that sending such data interferes with the enjoyment of your hobby, but any information you do care to send would be appreciated. You may feel that, in the case of rare breeding species, the less people know the better! You can mark such data 'confidential' and I will *only* inform English Nature, or you could pass such a record directly to English Nature yourself. This would be necessary in the case of Red Data Book species to highlight the need of conserving a particular site. BG

Moth Group Programme for 1996

I have only had a couple of weeks in which to create a programme, which is very north east Essex and night time biased! If you are running an event and wish to advertise it here let me know. Please phone the contact prior to each meeting in case of any change or inclement weather. If you come, your knowledge and any extra equipment will help to increase the session's tally. Also, start thinking about 1997 - many localities have a fair macro haul but are short on micros, especially those not easily recorded in their immature stages. Owner's rules on collecting, which will be for identification purposes only, apply. BG

20 April 1996

Friday Wood SSSI

MV. Meet at Bounstead Road car park TL985209 at 7.30pm. *Brian Goodey (01206 841224)*

4 May 1996

Abberton Reservoir EWT Nature Reserve

MV. Meet at the visitors' centre at dusk. EWT meeting. *Brian Goodey*

15 June 1996

Fingringhoe Wick NR

MV. Meet at the centre at dusk. *Brian Goodey*

6 July 1996

High Woods Country Park

MV. Meet at Chanterelle car park TM009269 at dusk. *Dick Mash/Brian Goodey*

13 July 1996

County moth night

Run a trap in your garden or nearby locality and send me the results. The combined data may yield some interesting facts. Include species, quantity, duration and light source.

20 July 1996

Daws Hall Nature Reserve

MV. Meet at Daws Hall at dusk. *Iain Grahame/Brian Goodey*

3 August 1996

Bradwell Moth Trap

Meet at Curry Farm TL995056 at 2.30pm. *Bob Dewick (01621 776241)*

17 August 1996

Abberton Reservoir Nature Reserve

MV. Meet at the visitors' centre at dusk. EWT meeting. *Brian Goodey*

Newsletter contacts:

Jerry Bowdrey: 12 Sparrows Corner, Harwich Road, Great Oakley CO12 5AA (01255 880023)
Joe Firmin: 55 Chapel Road, West Bergholt CO6 3HZ (01206 241389)
Brian Goodey: 298 Ipswich Road, Colchester, CO4 4ET (01206 841224)
Ian Rose: 'Yaffles', School Lane, Mistley, CO11 1HN (01206 392870)

Newsletter distribution list - provisional

(L = macrolepidoptera; ML = microlepidoptera; OO = other orders)

Martin Anthony	L	Iain Grahame (<i>Daws Hall NR</i>)	L
Reg Arthur (<i>Lep.Panel</i>)	L, ML	Jean Green	L
Graham Bailey (<i>Lep.Panel</i>)	L	Basil Harley	L
Ted Benton	L	Barbara Lock	L
Paul Bergdahl	L	Ray Marsh	L
Jerry Bowdrey (<i>Col. Museum</i>)	OO	Peter Merrett (<i>Rothamsted trap</i>)	L
David Corke (<i>Lep.Panel</i>)	L	Iris Newbery (<i>BBCS</i>)	L
Nigel Cuming	L, OO	Colin Plant (<i>Neuroptera recorder</i>)	L, ML, OO
Bob Dewick (<i>Lep.Panel</i>)	L, ML	Geoff Pyman (<i>Lep.Panel</i>)	L, ML
Stephen Dewick	L, ML	Ian Rose (<i>Group Co-ord.</i>)	L
Don Down (<i>Lep.Panel</i>)	L	Gordon Sadler	L
Maitland Emmet (<i>micro recorder</i>)	L, ML	Graham Smith	L, ML
Joe Firmin (<i>Lep.Panel Chair.</i>)	L	Peter Smith	L
Ben Fisher	L	Paul Waring (<i>Nat.Mapping Co-ord.</i>)	L, ML
Chris Gibson (<i>English Nature</i>)	L, OO	David Warner	L
Brian Goodey (<i>macro recorder</i>)	L, ML	Arthur Watchman (<i>Suff.Moth Group</i>)	L, ML
Bob Gooding	L	Jon Young	L, ML

Please inform me of any recorder not on the above list or alterations of interest. B Goodey
Next Newsletter expected during July