

Essex Moth Group

Newsletter 2:- Summer 1996

The year so far...

Thanks to publicity in the local naturalists' journals and a Radio Essex interview fifty recorders (at the time of writing) are now on the mailing list, proving there is a healthy interest in the subject in Essex. The weather so far has been far from ideal at times, but here and there conditions have improved enough to give the following records:

***Cossus cossus* L. Goat moth.** A perfect male specimen was seen by Jon Young on the side of his house in Jaywick on 26 June. All *Cossus* records are most welcome, especially those of larvae.

***Esperia oliviella* Fabr.** Seen on at least one occasion this year at Thrift Wood, Danbury, on 25 June (G A Pyman). There have been other records during previous years from this area by Geoff.

***Nomophila noctuella* D&S.** During the painted lady invasion Jon Young recorded twenty per night in his Jaywick trap.

***Celastrina argiolus* L. Holly blue.** A good holly blue year, if April and May are anything to go by.

***Ladoga camilla* L. White Admiral.** Has reappeared at Friday Wood on Saturday 13 July. Several of us saw seven adults in the same place as last year. There is scope here for the species to extend its range throughout the Roman River Valley.

***Cynthia cardui* L. Painted lady.** Possibly the best year ever recorded with a huge influx during June. "Hundreds" of adults were seen ovipositing on a "room-sized" patch of thistles at Curry Farm, Bradwell, on 8 - 9 June by Bob Dewick, who also noted a couple of *Colias croceus*, clouded yellows; whilst at Mistley Ian Rose, recuperating from a trip to the dentist, counted sixty to a hundred passing through his garden on 7 June between 11.00 am and 3.00pm. Jon Young reported a large number at Jaywick and Clacton and estimates the passage involved fifty to sixty per hour.

***Phibalapteryx virgata* Hufn. Oblique striped.** An example turned up at Mistley on 4 June (Ian Rose). This is the first for nearly a decade and only the fifth Essex record.

***Hemaris fuciformis* L. Broad-bordered bee-hawk.** Honeysuckle seems to be doing well this year but it was still surprising that C. Allerton saw two of the above at Stour Wood on 18 June. Joe Firmin, during a visit to the Brecks, saw over twenty at Mayday Farm a few days before this. An earlier Essex record, from Peter Smith, was at nearby Dovercourt during 1990.

***Cerastis leucographa* D.& S. White-marked.** 28 April, Frinton. Caught by B. Lock, confirmed and photographed by Ian Rose. First Essex record since 1906. Probably a vagrant.

***Heliothis peltigera* D&S. Bordered straw.** Eight have been reported by Jon Young, at Jaywick and Saffron Walden during the third week of June.

***Earias clorana* L. Cream-bordered green pea.** A single specimen was reported at a nearby trap at Jaywick on 26 June by Jon Young.

Artwork Supplied

Dave Warner has supplied a most excellent drawing of *Gortyna borelii*, Fisher's estuarine moth, for use as the Newsletter icon. Unfortunately, I do not possess a scanner - can anyone help?

The Meetings

Most of the arranged events have so far been affected by weather, surprise surprise.

Friday Wood. 20 April. A fine, warm night yielded thirty-two species which included several local moths such as *Semioscopis steinkellneriana* (five), *Agonopterix ocellana* (one), *Aleucis distinctata*, sloe carpet (three), and a single *Orthosia miniosa*, blossom underwing.

Abberton Reservoir N.R. 4 May. The summer really got under way with one of the coldest May nights on record. *Diaphora mendica*, muslin moth was the only capture.

Fingringhoe Wick N.R. 11 May. *Orthosia opima*, northern drab is a species thought to be declining in Britain, but three specimens were seen on this rather cold and otherwise unproductive night.

Fingringhoe Wick N.R. 15 June. Forty-eight species appeared on this cool night. Not much of rarity value but three species of hawk-moth, a stunning example of *Tethea ocularis*, figure of eighty, and some well marked *Lomaspilis marginata*, clouded border were of interest.

High Woods Country Park. 6 July. Another cold, dank night. A measly forty-four species braved the chill amongst which were the season's first *Biston betularia*, peppered moth. Remember there is a survey going on this year to evaluate the percentage of light to dark specimens.

County Moth Night 13 July. Results are still coming in. Thanks to those who made the effort. Will report in next issue.

Daws Hall 20 July. One hundred and sixteen species recorded on this pleasantly warm night, of which nine were new 10km square records. *Cnephasia pasiuana*, *Coleophora trifolii*, *Calamotropha paludella*, *Dioryctria abietella*, *Tethea or*, poplar lutestring, and *Perizoma didymata*, twin-spot carpet, were the highlights.

Events still to come (remember to confirm details well before hand)

Bradwell-on-Sea 3 August. Meet at Curry Farm, TL995056 at 2.30pm. Leader: B. Dewick (01621 776241).

Abberton Reservoir N.R. 17 August. Meet at Visitor's Centre at dusk. Leader: B. Goodey (01206841224).

High Woods C.P. 5 October. Meet at Visitor's Centre, Turner Road at dusk. Leader: B. Goodey

Marks Hall Estate, Coggeshall. Sometime in October. Leader: J. Firmin (01206 241389).

Recording Progress (very boring but necessary bit. Sorry)

Site Lists Completed, at least to a provisional state, are nine site lists and more are in production. These are based on data sent by you and range from gardens to large woods and nature reserves. Some of you will receive copies along with this newsletter. If you are one of these, or would like to supply information for your own site, the following explanation may be useful (see the dummy copy below):

Log. This is the number attached to each species by Bradley & Fletcher in *A Recorder's Log Book and Label List of British Butterflies and Moths* (Harley, 1979). This system is often reproduced, and I still find it useful, but it is ageing and there have been recent changes in the systematic order. There is no need to include this number if you do not have the relevant information - I can do this later.

Latin/English Name. Use whichever you are familiar with; I will do the rest.

First Seen/Last Seen You should supply at least the year when you first record a species at your site. Thereafter I will add 'Last Seen' to any annual updates you send.

Recorder 1/2 The first is the person making the initial record; the second is anyone who can confirm the identity or who has made subsequent records from the same site.

Notable I will use this column to mark any notable species.

Total. Several of you send very detailed accounts. This column will keep a running tally of specimens observed.

Grid Ref. A six-figure map reference. If you are unsure of this give me as much detail of the site locality as you can (perhaps with a simple sketch) and I'll do the rest.

The database I am using is *Lotus Approach '96*. Lists can be made from a single visit or from a site you monitor frequently. *Don't worry* if you can't supply such detailed information - any data you can supply is better than nothing ... Example: **Hurst Green, Wivenhoe**

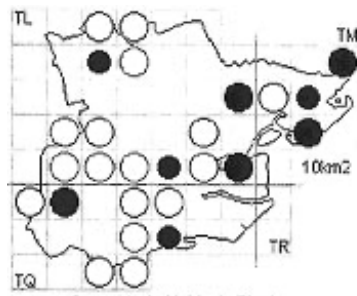
Log Latin Name English Name First Seen Recorder 1 Last Seen Recorder 2 Notable Total Grid Ref.

658	<i>C. quercana</i>		13/6/91	J. Smith	18/7/96	T. Blair		36	TM316312
1076	<i>O. lacunana</i>		July 90	J. Smith	14/7/96	T. Blair		102	TM318311
1526	<i>T. sylvestris</i>	Small Skipper	31/4/96	T. Blair				26	TM316312
2329	<i>A. furva</i>	Confused	3/9/94	J. Major		S. Claus	Nb	1	TM316312

10km Square Database I am about halfway through this. The mapping software is DMapW, by Dr A Morton. Maps will run on a decade basis - all records prior to 1990 will be 'old' records (an open circle).

Tetrad Database No progress made, apart from setting up DMapW. A winter job.

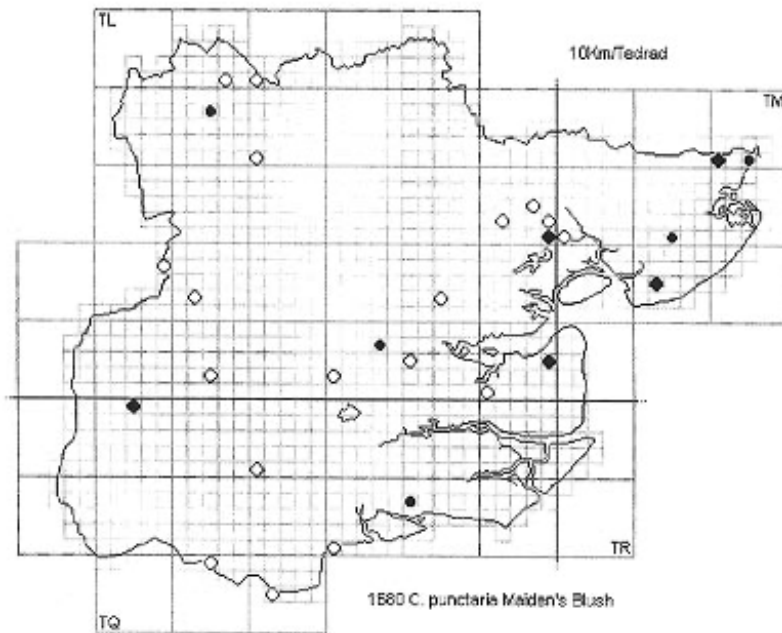
Both the above, once running, should have several advantages over the card index system I've been using but they will take time to complete - I hate computers! Maps will run on a decade basis - all records prior to 1990 will be 'old' records (an open circle). Special emphasis will be given to reports of larvae (or evidence of breeding) and a distinction made between single adult sightings and those where more than one adult are seen.



C. punctaria Maiden's Blush

Examples of 10km & Tetrads based Maps

Multi-adult records = large, black circles. Single adult records = small black circle.
Old records = open circle. Larvae records = black square. Doubtful records = ?



1880 C. punctaria Maiden's Blush

Magazine launched

Some of you will have heard of a new publication called '*Atropos*'. Biannual, each issue provides a fairly meaty read on a variety of Lepidoptera topics. Should appeal to most recorders, especially those who find the current crop of entomological journals rather dry. Write to: *Atropos*, 3 6 Tinker Lane, Meltham, Huddersfield, West Yorks HD7 3EX. £10.

Pluming wonderful

It is always a good day when a new book on microlepidoptera lands on your doorstep. For those of us still struggling with Beirne's *British Pyralids & Plume Moths*, Warne, 1952 (nice book, shame about the plates) this new volume, which is the first in a proposed series on European microlepidoptera, was looking most welcome. Unfortunately, this expensive little book fails to cover the family to any great depth and concentrates rather heavily on the adult stages. Information is brief and the sixteen plates (photographs of set specimens) range from poor to good. It has a similar feel to the *Fauna Entomologica Scandinavica* series. Included are genitalia diagrams, which may help identify some new British species, possibly *Emmelina argoteles*, hiding amongst the legions of *E. monodactyla*. £47.50, from E. W. Classey Ltd.

Butterfly book on its way

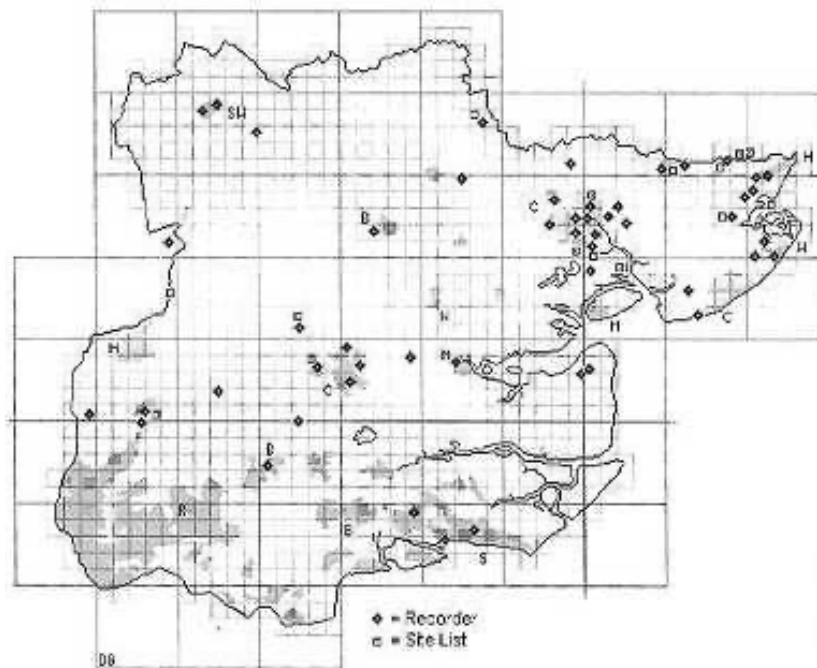
Butterflies of Essex, by Dr David Corke, is on the drawing boards and aiming for publication sometime next year. In the past there has been some criticism levelled at this type of book, sometimes fairly, but

recently some good and useful works have been produced, such as Colin Plant's Butterflies of the London Area. The book will also contain some information on day-flying moths as well as the complete Essex Lepidoptera list.

Borelii protection

Plans to give legal protection to *Gortyna borelii*, Fisher's estuarine moth, are being considered and look like succeeding. Searches for larvae have recently been undertaken by members of the BENHS and seemed to indicate a healthy population. This will fuel the cause of the opponents, who feel that legal protection should only apply to species on the verge of extinction.

Map showing the distribution of Essex recorders together with completed Site Lists.



Contacts

A M Emmet, Labrey Cottage, 14 Victoria Gardens, Saffron Walden, Essex. CBI 1 3AF. *Microlep. records.*
B Goodey, 298 Ipswich Road, Colchester, Essex. C04 4ET. (0 1 206 841224). *Macrolepidoptera records.*

Newsletter (in addition to above)

J Firmin, 55 Chapel Road, West Bergholt, Essex. C06 3HZ (01206 241389).

I Rose, 'Yaffles', School Lane, Mistley, Essex. CO11 1HN.

J P Bowdrey, 12 Sparrows Corner, Harwich Road, Great Oakley, Essex. CO 12 5AA. *Other Order records.*

C W Plant, 14 West Road, Bishop's Stortford, Herts. CM23 3 QP. *National Neuroptera Recorder.*

Next Newsletter - sometime in NOVEMBER/DECEMBER. Send me your records, notes of successful nights, comments and anything else of interest!!! (BG). Or this may be the last issue!