



Essex Field Club

Colchester Natural History Society

Colin Hart at next Indoor meeting

Preparations are well underway for our second winter meeting, which we hope will be as successful and as well attended as last year. The date will be 13 February, from 11.00 to 4.00pm, once again at Tendring Hundred Water Services' excellent Horsley Cross facility. Guest speakers will include Colin Hart who will give a lecture on British plumes ahead of his forthcoming book and Jon Clifton of *Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies*. Jon hopes to bring a variety of stock so if there is anything you want to see let me know and I'll pass on the request. Ian Rose will present a slide show and you are welcome to bring your own photos. Further details will appear in the next newsletter. *Brian Goodey*

News from around the County

Layer Breton Heath. Maitland has been recording smaller moths here and on two visits during October added 51 species to the site's list of which no less than twelve were new 10km² records, mostly nepticulids, gracillarids and coleophorids. Pride of place went to *Coleophora alnifoliae*, an old case found snagged in a tortricid spinning! This alder-feeder is new to Essex, though Maitland tells me it is currently extending its range in Britain.

Goldhanger. Joe Firmin saw a Least Carpet, three Wall Browns, Painted Lady and good numbers of Brown Argus on the sea wall on 5 August.

Stapleford Abbotts. John Dawson, Jean Green and Iris Newbery recorded 16 species on 26 September including Black Rustic, Merveille du Jour and Chestnut, a usually common moth which appears to be much scarcer this year.

Dovercourt area. Chris Gibson had Dusky-lemon Sallow and Fisher's Estuarine at Bramble Island on 18 September. On the moth night his garden trap yielded Pearly Underwing, Sandhill Rustic and Buttoned Snout (fourth of the year), a night later it produced two Feathered Brindle and a Black Rustic. Other moths of interest: a total of 34 Leek Moth *Acrolepiopsis assectella* this year, a Delicate on 28 September, *Coleophora binderella* on 19 July, a total of 73 Rush Veneer *Nomophila noctuella* this year, two Small Tabby *Aglossa caprealis* on 12 and 13 August (this is now nationally scarce), *Melissoblyptus zelleri* on 18 July and 10 August, *Pediasia contaminella* on 6 August, 69 European corn-borers *Ostrinia nubilalis*, 29 *Pempelia formosa*, *Pempelia genistella* on 9 August, and a beautiful Gold Triangle *Hypsopygia costalis* on 9 July where the yellow patches were replaced with rose-pink. Two moths identified from specimens submitted last year were *Caryocolum viscariaella* and *Prochoreutis myllerana*, only the second recent Essex record though it was found to be fairly common at Sawbridgeworth N.R. in 1987 by Maitland and Katie Emmet.

Chris has continued his good run of hawks with, in addition to the last newsletter, 57 more Privet, a Humming-bird on 4 July, a Death's-head on 8 July and a Pine on 19 July.

Great Bentley. Convolvulus Hawk-moth, 4 October. Bill Kempster *per* J. Firmin.

Copperas Wood. Peter Smith is continuing to record at this important site. *Palpita unionalis* was seen on 25 September. 31 July yielded four species of footman, including ten Rosy Footman, a moth which appears to have been rather sparse in recent years.

Maldon. Simon Wood reports 350 Latticed Heath on 4 September, remarkable in a year when numbers have been average. Jon Young has been keeping a detailed log for me.

Little Baddow. Oak Lutestring on 19 September, Geoff Pyman.

Thundersley. Don Down records a Yellow-legged Clearwing on 4 July; two Brown-dotted Clothes Moth *Niditinea fuscella* and *Epiphyas postvittana* on 19 September, and a Gem on 20 September. More common than usual with Don this year were Maiden's Blush, Willow Beauty, Marbled Beauty and Brimstone Moth.

Steeple. White-point, 30 July, Don Down.

Bradwell-on-Sea. Shingle spit, 20 larvae of Bordered Straw on 26 July, Don Down.

Hadleigh Country Park. Red-belted Clearwing, 5 July, Don Down.

Watt Tyler C.P. Six-belted Clearwing, 12 August R. Payne *per* Don Down.

Little Oakley. White Colon, 2 June; Currant Clearwing, 29 June; White-point, 24 September, G. Slater.

Old Hall Marsh. Clouded Yellow, four on 16 August, Paul Chalton.

Kirby-le-Soken. *Ethmia bipunctella* - taken by Paul Bergdahl in August. This is the second specimen in two years from the general area, the first was caught in Stour Wood by Mathew Shardlow on 1 August 1997. The species feeds on Viper's Bugloss which is extinct in the area though I understand it grows nearby in the Felixstowe area. Convolvulus Hawk-moth 18 September, Ann Bergdahl. Scarce Bordered Straw, 1 October Paul Bergdahl.

Chelmsford. White Admiral 6 August, Greg Bonds *per* A. Goodey. A stray?

Frinton-on-Sea. Humming-bird Hawk-moth 22 September, Peter Robinson.

Jaywick. *Epiphyas postvittana* 3 August, a female which laid eggs; Gem 24 September and Convolvulus Hawk-moth 2 October, Jon Young.

North Chingford Fifteen Oak Nycteoline were recorded by Bryon Pateman during July.

Meetings

Fingringhoe Ranges 1 August. A cold night yielded just 27 species. Local species included *Synaphe punctalis*, Ground Lackey, Southern and Webb's Wainscots, Reed Dagger and Saltern Ear. We were treated to a distant view of fireworks from the Brightlingsea Regatta.

Hill house Wood, West Bergholt 7 August. 53 species which included Clouded Magpie and Buff Footman, both local species.

Markshall Estate, Coggeshall 8 August. 75 species. Moths included the beautiful *Caloptilia robustella*, Wax Moth *Galleria mellonella*, the diminutive plume *Adaina microdactyla*, Round-winged Muslin and Dotted Fan-foot.

Beth Chatto Nursery, Elmstead Market 22 August. Despite 'restricted numbers' this event attracted most people! On a cold night just 62 species were seen at three lamps and included *Catoptria falsella*, Ringed China-mark *Parapoynx stratiotata*, Webb's Wainscot, and Dingy Shell. Moth of the night was *Nephoterix angustella*, not recorded from north-east Essex since Mathew's days, around 1912. *Yponomeuta sedella* persists.

Cudmore Grove C.P., East Mersea 29 August. 33 species. *Calamotropha paludella*, *Numonia advenella*, Plain Pug, Yellow Belle, Mathew's Wainscot, Sandhill Rustic and an obliging Red Underwing, which posed for photos perched on Nigel Cuming's glasses. A couple of youngsters discovered some bioluminescent substance in the sand. Whether this was animal or mineral was unclear, though it certainly looked like the former.

Old Hall Marsh RSPB N.R. 5 September. Foul weather done its best to ruin this event but Maitland Emmet, recovering from a recent hip replacement, was quite unperturbed. He recorded 35 species of which 26 were new to the reserve and five were new 10km² records. *Monochroa moyses*, a single mine of which was located, was the highlight. Great care was needed removing the great man's boots, lest his hip suffered.

Rodbridge C.P. near Sudbury, Suffolk 11 September. 34 species were recorded on a cold, clear night at this joint meeting with the *Suffolk Moth Group*. A *Convolvulus* hawk-moth, which had clearly been happily flying in Essex, was tempted across the border by the lamps, much to its annoyance it seemed to me.

Other observations

Vestals appeared in September at North Chingford on 1st and 2nd (Bryon Pateman), Theydon Bois on 3rd and 6th (Jean Green), Dovercourt on 9th (Chris Gibson), Maldon on 18th (Simon Wood), Kirby-le-Soken on 19th (Paul Bergdahl), and Thundersley on 20th (Don Down). These follow one taken at Marks Hall Estate, Coggeshall on 23 May.

Wasps in traps On the County Moth Night Dr Jes Dagley had at least 50 in his trap at North Chingford and Jean Green also reports problems at Theydon Bois. The problem is so severe at Maitland Emmet's Saffron Walden trap that sadly he has been forced to abandon operations. 370 wasps ruined his County Moth Night, leaving behind just a few poor moth remains in the bottom of the trap. My own garden in Colchester has a 30 metre wall covered with ivy that attracts many wasps during the night, but I've never had a single wasp in the trap situated 2 metres away. Why is this? (See also 'A sting in the tail'.)

County Moth Night I'm still collating the data at present but thanks to all who send results. John Dawson kindly sent information from Cambridge and next year this event might become National. It seems coastal sites suffered from mist but we were still very lucky!

Red Underwings and Old Ladies - are they coming to light more often?



Photo courtesy of Mr & Mrs Doughty

Mystery caddis fly identified. A glossy black caddis fly had been noted at our lamps at several locations and had attracted close scrutiny because of the curious way it held its forelegs, reminiscent of a praying mantis. A specimen was sent by Joe Firmin to New Zealand for Dr. John Ward to identify and the pronunciation was *Mystacides nigra*, which fisherman call the 'black silverhorn'. John has identified a further three species from Old Hall Marsh. It may seem strange to send specimens half way round the planet but the turn around is just four days and we *always* make use of kind offers!

Depressaria daucella David Warner

I was very pleased to receive on 13 June a generous number of *D. daucella* larvae (see Reg Arthur's exiting rediscovery mentioned in the last newsletter). The objective was to produce an adult insect for determination purposes - it seemed so incredible that it should reappear after 156 years that its identity was in doubt.

The larvae were, it seemed, in their last instar and by 18 June the first pupae were forming within slight silken tubes in between folds of the tissue paper lining their container. When the perfect insects began to emerge, I set the first and passed it on to Brian Goodey for identification. The rest is history.

As we are not in a position to reproduce colour photographs here is a brief description of the larva for any that may feel inclined to search for further colonies:

Last instar measurement: Length 16mm. *Head:* glossy black. *Prothoracic plate:* black with a thin white collar and divided by a thin yellow line. *Dorsal line:* black with many small white pinnacular. *Spiracular line:* golden yellow. *Setae:* short, black, widely but evenly spaced throughout length.

The larvae spin up and feed within the flower-heads and seeds of *Oenanthe pimpinelloides* which is, I am told, mainly found along the coastal belt. In my experience they were social feeders with no tendencies towards cannibalism. Any colonies should be reported.

Hawk-moth numbers in 1998 *David Warner*

The following moth trap records at Earls Colne support Chris Gibson's statement in the last newsletter that, "hawk-moths have done well" this year. This was very much the case with the Privet Hawk-moth *S. ligustri*.

22 June	<i>S. ligustri</i>	18 (moths)	28 June	<i>S. ligustri</i>	9
	<i>M. tiliae</i>	51		<i>M. tiliae</i>	5
	<i>L. populi</i>	2		<i>D. elpenor</i>	5
10 July	<i>S. ligustri</i>	3	18 July	<i>S. ligustri</i>	1
	<i>D. elpenor</i>	2		<i>D. elpenor</i>	3

At the time of writing (8 August) the occasional rather worn elephant hawk-moth and some surprisingly fresh-looking poplar hawk-moths are still putting in an appearance.

Perhaps even more interestingly to me were five Shark appearing between 23 June and 18 July. I have encountered its close relatives the Mullein and Star-wort often enough both as larvae and imagines, and although *umbratica* is not considered a rare species these were the first specimens that I have encountered in approximately 30 years trapping and recording.

Gypsy Moths in Epping Forest - an update for 1998. *Dr Jes Dagley, Forest Ecologist*

Gypsy Moth *Lymantria dispar*, a serious pest species found in Europe and N. America, were discovered in Epping Forest in 1995. This was the result of some misguided individual releasing them into a garden in Woodford Green, probably in 1994. Since then, MAFF, the Forestry Commission and the Conservators of Epping Forest have been trying to locate and catch as many individuals as possible within Walthamstow Forest (TQ392908) and its surroundings. This has been done in a number of ways. Most important has been the annual trappings of males using pheromone traps in August, but there has also been caterpillar searches and egg mass searches.

Egg masses have been found in the gardens at the centre of the outbreak in each year except 1998. Amazingly, given the needle-in-a-haystack nature of the search, we found an egg mass under split bark in an oak tree in the centre of Walthamstow Forest in 1997. This was bad news as it proved that the moths were no longer only emanating from the gardens where the outbreak first occurred. The gypsy moth was now breeding 'in the wild' in Britain for the first time ever.

Although many caterpillars have been found in the gardens and much defoliation has been recorded there, there has been no evidence of their activity within the Forest. Adult male numbers have also been declining, probably as a result of the cold wet springs in the last two years.

Year	Caught in Forest	Garden Catches	Totals
1995	4	32	36
1996	18	12	30
1997	2	6	8
1998	3	7	10

Although the decline might seem promising the numbers hide the fact that the moth seems to have spread further south. A male was caught 1km away from the outbreak epicentre this year, 1/2km further than any previous catch. Furthermore, if the moth can 'tick away' at such low numbers indefinitely it will be almost impossible to eradicate. We await an uncertain future in the Forest as a result of a single reckless introduction.

A sting in the tail *Joe Firmin*

EMG members are encouraged to record all other orders which turn up at lamp and sheet or trap sessions but sometimes the visitors are far from welcome. This season several surveys have been 'targeted' by hornets and wasps, and we've sustained sting casualties! At the lamp and sheet session at Hill House Wood, West Bergholt on 7 August Ian Rose Nigel Cuming, Dave Warner and myself often looked like dancing dervishes as we ducked and weaved to avoid a steady stream of hornets. Dave was the first victim when a hornet flew up his T-shirt and delivered a sting to his stomach. Next Nigel, who is allergic to stings was stung on an ear but both gamely stuck to their recording task and, luckily, were none the worse after a few hours.

Hornets homed in on the lamp session at Marks Hall, Coggeshall on 8 August but this time I was the only casualty, stung on the upper arm - by normal wasp!

At the lamp session at Beth Chatto Gardens, Elmstead Market on 22 August, the lamp run by Moira Jackson in the famous gravel garden attracted many hornets but on this occasion, stings were avoided. (*This was probably due to the younger age of those present - able to rapidly get out of the way. Hush my mouth!* Ed.)

Members are again urged to let Jerry Bowdrey know of all other order records from lamp sessions. Colin Plant welcomes reports/specimens of lacewings etc and Nigel Cuming is happy to receive beetle records or specimens for identification. (*This includes those carrion feeders such as Sexton Beetles which stink your pots out - Nigel likes lots of these -* Ed.) Addresses towards rear of newsletter.

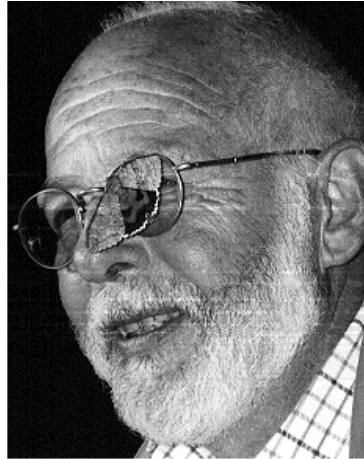
Just Published *Brian Goodey*

A checklist of Lepidoptera recorded from the British Isles by J.D. Bradley.

This is set to become a close personal friend to most of us. Scientific and English names together with *Log Book* numbers set out in a revised order with a useful set of annotations and indexes. An in-depth review by Colin Plant appears the latest *Entomologist's Record* (vol. 110 p.256-258). This really is a must buy. Available from D.J. & M.J. Bradley, The Glen, Frogham, Fordingbridge, Hants SP6 2HS. £10.50 plus £2.00 delivery.

Colour Identification Guide to Moths of the British Isles, (second edition) by Bernard Skinner. *Viking*. £48.50 incl. P&P.

If your copy of 'Skinner' is anything like mine, a mouldering insect collection full of squashed bugs and flies, warped and broken by damp, frost and abuse, then now is a good time to get a clean and updated version. There is an extra plate, and the text has been tweaked to include 'new' species and new knowledge. Of most interest locally is the Essex race of the Sandhill Rustic *demuthi*, and the saltern form of the Northern Drab. There are a few more tricky species for people to confuse and enhanced clarification for those previously confused. A few of the plates are looking (in my copy at least) a little washed out but this is of course a wonderful book *if used carefully* and, where comparison of critical characters is needed to separate species, valuable when used in conjunction with the descriptions given in the MBGBI series.



A Red Underwing with no taste!

*Maitland Emmet at Old Hall
Marsh, 5 September*

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C. W. Plant, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts. CM23 3QP. *Herts & London Lepidoptera records & National Neuroptera Recorder.*

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Next Newsletter - Before the winter meeting. Brian.