



The cool and difficult conditions have persisted, and reports of low numbers have been widespread, especially in August. Graham Smith reported the poorest spell in ten years of trapping. But the season has produced a few good things here and there and September was not only the warmest for many decades but also produced some fine catches – including a few migrants, which have been generally scarce this year.

I have been busy working on *National Moth Night* results and have not been as active in the field as usual. You have sent in loads of records whilst this has been going on, and as one big cardboard box emptied another marked ‘Essex correspondence’, has rapidly filled and been largely ignored. However, I’m working through this now so if you’ve suffered poor service from me of late then things should soon be back to normal. If I’ve missed anything of interest below, don’t worry – I’ve yet to go through your letters and specimens with a fine comb.

**From around the county**

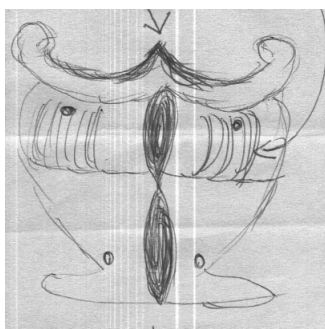
**Beaumont-cum-Moze** Clouded Magpie and Black Arches on 24 July; *Metzneria lappella* 26 July (confirmed NHM), there are other possible specimens from Dovercourt and Colchester awaiting confirmation; White-point 3 September and two on 5 September; *Orthotaelia sparganella* sometime in August (Ben Fisher).

**Bradwell-on-Sea** A possible Lunar Yellow Underwing on 9 August, but no photograph or specimen was secured and the record cannot be accepted; Black Arches 16 August; White-point 22 August; Humming-bird Hawk-moth 5 September; L-album Wainscot and Feathered Brindle, 19 September (Graham Smith).

**Brentwood, Thorndon Country Park North** White Admiral 5 August (J. Patterson and M. Mitchell). Hopefully the start of another colony.

**Brightlingsea, Ford Farm, Large Tortoiseshell**, 28 August (David Scott). Eighth record since 1990.

*Photo courtesy David Scott*



Mystery Object –see *Harwich*

**Coggeshall, Markshall Wood** c.1000 Ringlets on 4 July (Nigel Cumings).

**Colchester, Ipswich Road** Rose Plume *Cnaemidophus rhododactyla* and *Rhyacionia buoliana* 7 July, Humming-bird Hawk-moth 5 September (Brian Goodey).

**Colchester, Friday Wood** White admirals, ten on 10 July. Also on this visit the following Odonata: White-legged Damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes*, five Beautiful Demoiselle *Calopteryx virgo* and c1000 Banded Agrion *Calopteryx splendens* – quite simply one of the most memorable sights I have seen (B. Goodey).

**Copperas Wood** In July Peter Smith added six new species to this site on two visits, on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. These were Cloaked Carpet, two Beautiful Carpet, Triangle, eleven Rosy Footman, two Maple Prominent, Poplar Lutestrang and Phoenix.

**Corringham** Humming-bird Hawk-moth, 15 June (per Mark Parsons).

**Dovercourt** (Chris Gibson) *Gypsonoma minutana* 9 June; *Teleiopsis diffinis* 14 June; Striped Wainscot 22 June; *Cryptoblates bistriga* 1 July and 5 July; Bordered Sallow 6 July; *Evergestis extimalis* 8 July; True Lover’s Knot 9 July; and *Melissoblabtes zelleri* 10 July. On 10 September, Chris had his best night ever in terms of specimens (apart from the night of the Latticed Heath invasion in 1996). 1609 moths (of 51 species) were recorded which included 606 Setaceous Hebrew Characters, 338 Common Wainscot, 226 Large Yellow Underwing, 81 Lesser Yellow Underwing, 59 Square-spot Rustics and c50 Cabbage Moth. Convolvulus Hawk-moth, two on 17 and 18 September. Data supplied by Chris for the month of June:

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Average catch (specimens)</u>	<u>Average number of species per night</u>
<b>June</b>	1997	425	65
	1998	215	56
	1999	183	50

**Dovercourt** (Peter Smith) Tawney Wave, Oakley Road 31 July (only the 5<sup>th</sup> record on database); Death’s-head Hawk-moth, Ashley Road 6 September; Humming-bird Hawk-moth, Oakley Road 12 September; Butterbur 13 September (per Mrs Anthony).

**Grays Chalk Pit** Paul Harris has continued his forays around the county and has included this important site on his list. Although well visited by others in the past, I have only 89 records, all from 1990. Paul is also monitoring a gravel pit near Southminster, another potentially interesting site.

**Harwich** A resident phoned to say she had seen a strange object at rest in the top of her garden tree on 24 July, and sent in the above sketch. "It had wings and you could see daylight through these near the body. Its size was too large for anything British and it was brown in colour, with the texture of an onion skin." My only thought was a mating pair of Oak Eggars – can anyone else offer an opinion?

**Hitchcock Meadows NR** Geoff Pyman's 9 July event was attended by 40 people but conditions were not good, though *Synaphe punctalis*, usually coastal in Essex, was plentiful.

**Jaywick.** *Platyhedra subcinerea* adults February 1999 and 3 May. Although Jon Young and I suspected this species was present here we had to wait until 4 July when larvae were found by Jon to be common on *Malva sylvestris* that Maitland was able to confirm the identity. A nice piece of detective work by Jon. New to VC19. Humming-bird Hawk-moth 15 July and 17 July in trap; *Phyllonorycter platanoidella* mines on Norway Maple, 14 July. *Phyllocnistis unipunctella* – mines discovered on white poplar on 3 August, a new foodplant in Britain for this species.

**Kirby-le-Soken** Kent Black Arches 6 July; Cypress pug 27 August (Paul Bergdahl). This is the third specimen Paul has had since 1995. Barbara Lock recorded it from Frinton in 1995 and 1998, so it appears to be resident in the area. All we need to do to prove this is to go around thrashing people's hedges this winter for larvae.

**Landermere** Pine Hawk-moth 25 July (Dr Dansie per Ben Fisher).

**Mistley** Olive Crescent 30 June (Ian Rose). Seventh post-1990 record and close enough to the Wrabness area to be of great interest. We hope to carry out a few surveys next year for this species.

**North Chingford** Blotched Emerald - 280 in June alone (Bryon has recorded 1016 specimens since 1991); Flame Carpet - two on 3 June; Golden Plusia 6 June; Great Oak Beauty 11 June; Lilac Beauty 22 June; Maple Prominent 29 June (the first for the site); Oak Nycteoline - four in June.

**Old Hall Marsh** Small Elephant Hawk 29 May; Water Ermine 15 June; Bordered Sallow 3 July (Chris Tyas). Also a rumour of a Swallow-tail Butterfly.... (See also *Yponomeuta rorella*.)

**St Osyth** L-album Wainscot 7 September, specimen was photographed by Peter Smith (Reg Arthur).

**Southend** Bedstraw Hawk-moth larvae 2 October (per Don Down).

**Theydon Bois, Coppice Row** Black Arches 27 July (Tim Green). A good year for this species from many locations. **Woodland Way** Vestals on 3, 5 and 8 September; *Convolvulus* Hawk-moth 22 September (Jean Green).

**Thrift Wood** – A substantial second brood of Heath Fritillary was reported by Geoff Pyman and Graham Bailey. The first *first brood* adult was seen on 20 May, increasing to 210 adults by 18 June. The final butterfly was noted in the first week of July. Twenty *second brood* adults were on the wing by 28 August and this had risen to 30 by 1 September, and 82 by 5 September. No evidence of second generation adults was noted at other localities.

**Walton on Naze** *Sitochroa palealis*, ten from 31 July to 1 August; Brown-veined Wainscot 31 July (Peter Smith).

**Willingale, Birds Green** Death's-head Hawk-moth 5 September, being eaten by a dog (R. Jones).

**Writtle** Mike Green has added 10 species to his garden list, which have included Clouded Brindle 11 June; Brindled White-spot 13 June; and Humming-bird Hawk-moth 20 June.

## Other topics

**Riband Wave Survey.** Thanks to everyone who took part in this. **I now need your results please as soon as possible** to send to Roy Leverton who is collating the national data.

**Latticed Heath.** I have heard of some reasonable numbers around – anyone got estimates and dates? I am continuing to log yearly numbers to see if a pattern emerges with the periodic population explosions.

**Clouded Yellows.** Graham Bailey reports sightings in May and mid-July to early August. I understand from Joe that Reg Arthur noted five clouded yellows at St Osyth in late July. A few Painted Ladies have been here and there and Walls have done okay - I heard of one, possibly a third generation, on 1 October.

## News

### \*Essex Invertebrate Forum\*

This potentially important event, which may serve to launch an Essex invertebrate group, is to be held at the Tendring Hundred Water Services premises at Horsley Cross, just off the A120 between Colchester and Harwich (TM124274). Set to run from 10.30am to 5.00pm, admission will cost £2.00. If you are interested in attending please contact Jerry Bowdrey or Nigel Cuming (see below, under Contacts), or Jez Dagley on 01815 294815.

### Donations requested

We made a profit of £25 at the last indoor meeting on 13 February at Horsley Cross. Notwithstanding this, we are asking for a donation of £2.00 for the 26 February 2000 event which should be our largest yet. A reminder will be sent in the next newsletter.

### New Essex Guide proposed

Stocks of *Lepidoptera of north east Essex* ran out long ago but there has been a steady demand from book sellers. Funding has been tentatively agreed with Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Natural History Society to bring out a second, but updated and modernised, version.

### Small *Ranunculus* larvae in Essex

Four larvae were found by Don Down on 9 July on Wall Lettuce *Mycelis muralis* at East Tilbury. This is the first Essex record since it became extinct in the county in 1918. We expect a rapid expansion now that it's here.

### Hunt for Olive Crescent

We have been asked to set up a monitoring program next year for this species, both at its usual locations and to search for new sites. We'll discuss this fully at the 26 February meeting, but if you've any ideas of possible locations please let me know.

### *Yponomeuta rorella* on Hawthorn

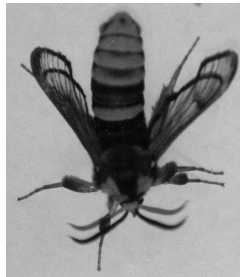
During the summer David Warner collected sprigs of hawthorn from Old Hall Marsh RSPB reserve, near Tollesbury, and reared the Willow Ermine *Yponomeuta rorella*. This is an important observation and a hitherto unknown foodplant for the species. In Essex *Y. rorella* was regarded as being an occasional vagrant or migrant. I took the first county specimens, five, during a night at Fingringhoe Wick N.R. on 3 August 1988. Maitland searched the area but found no signs of feeding on willows and so it was presumed the adults had wandered from other parts of Britain or Europe. It appeared again in 1989 at Saffron Walden, Fingringhoe, Alresford, Donyland and Grays, and in 1990 at Daws Hall, Lamarsh and Saffron Walden again. This is the first breeding record for the county, but it is difficult to know whether *Y. rorella* could maintain itself on *Crataegus* long-term, or whether the Old Hall Marsh occurrence was merely the result of a confused female attracted by the abundance of sallow.

### Pine Tree Lappet at Benfleet

On 20 July Don Down successfully reared *Dendrolimus pini* from a larva given to him on 10 June from a resident in Benfleet. The resident had noticed a large caterpillar eating the foliage of her new, and rather special, pine tree which she had bought from a nearby nursery. Don contacted them and learned that the tree had been imported from Italy, where *D. pini* is resident.

Geoffrey Wilkinson has been surveying poplars in the Chelmsford area and has found evidence of Hornet Moth breeding at 31 sites, a total of over 500 holes in all.

**Hornet Moth**, Chelmsford gas works 22 June  
1999 Photo courtesy of G. Wilkinson



### New look newsletter for EFC

Continuing its drive for membership by improving its publications, the Essex Field Club has introduced a new look newsletter complete with snazzy colourful covers and more meaty contents. We all need this society to succeed and the editorial staff deserve a big pat on the back for their efforts. To join, send £10.00 to John Bath, Membership Secretary, 34 Chestnut Avenue, Billericay, Essex CM12 9JF.

### Woolly caterpillars David Corke

The decline of the garden tiger is obvious but is there any evidence to support my feeling that other moths with very furry caterpillars are more likely to have declined than those with non-hairy or lightly hairy larvae? I would be interested in the views of Essex Moth Group Newsletter readers.

*Editors note: Apart from Jaywick, where Jon Young reports good numbers, this moth appears to have been scarce in Essex of late. In the west of the country, however, the opposite is true with some people reporting the species reappearance after an absence of many years. Has the range of the garden tiger shifted to a more western aspect?*

### Advertisement

#### Cottage in Pyrenean foothills for moth and butterfly enthusiasts.

My cottage (4 bedrooms, sleeps 8) is available for rental by lepidopterists. All the normal features of a 'gite' in a remote hamlet plus a Robinson MV, Heath trap, battery charger, good natural history library of maps and field guides. (See Paul Waring's report in AES bulletin vol.54.) Contact David Corke, Tye Green House, Wimbish, Essex, CB10 2XE (DavidCorke@aol.com)

### Essex site in Sanctuary...

An article written by Chris Gibson praising the Friday Wood SSSI area a few miles north of Colchester has appeared in the M.o.D magazine *Sanctuary* (number 28, 1999). "[It] is believed to have", writes Chris, "...one of the longest Lepidoptera lists of any semi-natural site in the country, when its size and relatively low levels of trapping are taken into account." Poorly visited since the mid-eighties, it is hoped to begin survey work in the near future.

### Results of Group survey

In the last issue I invited you to have your say on the newsletter and the running of our group. "Less use of common names", "a subscription fee of at least £5.00", "far less humour, please", and "a democratically-elected Council of which I'd like to be Treasurer" were just a few comments not to be heard. In general you seemed to like the way things are at present. To quote Graham Smith: "...whatever you do don't make it too serious – the world is overflowing with journals dedicated to taking the fun out of natural history". Currently the group has 68 members.

### Collection of Clement James Rawlings

It is the fate of many old collections to be discarded in the fullness of time, but thanks to the efforts of daughters Ann Mee and Janet Prince one assemblage at least has survived and can be studied for important records. The collection consists of two cabinets. The first has four drawers and contained a selection of butterflies and moths. Sadly this has not stood the test of time, and the specimens had largely been reduced to dust thanks to the various pests associated with material like this, such as museum beetle. A few data labels persisted, however, and the earliest date is May 1928, so it is clear that Clement started his interest in Lepidoptera in mid-teens. The latest label bears 1984, a span of at least 50-60 years.

The second cabinet contains the bulk of the collection (made essentially in the 1950's from various localities but including Hornchurch, where Mr Rawlings lived), and is currently lodged with Jon Young for preservation work. Once this is done, it will form an integral part of the *Essex Collection* and will bear a brass plaque bearing the originator's name. The *Essex Collection* is destined for the Colchester Natural History Museum Resource Centre but can be viewed by anyone engaged interested.

In the meantime work needs to be done to research Mr. Rawlings, who I understand may have been a member of the Essex Field Club. He operated traps in Berkshire and Essex but evidently visited many sites in England and a few in Europe. He was especially keen on photography. If any of our long-standing entomologists can shed any light on Mr. Rawlings, who liked to be known as 'Jas', please get in touch.

My thanks go to the family of Clement James Rawlings for their generosity and help.

### Meetings

#### 4 July *Dovercourt Dunes and Irlam's Beach* (or *Bombysiniya fragmitella* and naked men).

A small party of us met to try and find the Bright Wave, which failed dismally, but there was much of interest at this excellent site. First, we stumbled across a group of three clandestine (and illegal) elderly male naturists in the dunes. "What on earth are you sick weirdos doing here!" "We're searching for moths", we replied and beat a hasty retreat. Second, our return along the beach was held up by the bomb disposal squad who had travelled hot-foot from Portsmouth to detonate a Mills grenade uncovered by the tide. Moths included *Phalonia vectisana*, *Platytes cerussella*, *Sitochroa palealis*, Rosy Wave and Lyme Grass. We also found a small stand of sea hog's fennel, *Peucedanum officinale*, and larval activity of both Fisher's Estuarine Moth and *Agonopterix putridella*, which makes this the northernmost breeding site for both species in Britain.



The handsome beast in the front is me. Joe stands behind about to throw his net over a marine. Photo courtesy of C. Gibson

**10 July West Bergholt, Hillhouse Wood.** 82 species on a cool night. By far the best was *Olindia schumacherana* - previous records for Essex are Mucking and, most recently, Hadleigh Slopes in 1955. New to VC19. Black Arches, lots of Twin-spot Carpet, Orange Moth, Large Emerald, Peach Blossom and five Maple Prominents were others of note.

**August 21 Hanningfield Reservoir** A very poor night weather-wise with just 22 species recorded. In all there were 23 people at the meeting which will encourage a return visit next year.

**August 28 Dovercourt Dunes** Sandhill Rustic Survey. An indifferent night but we were successful in securing a few examples which will be exhibited at the 26 February meeting at Horsley Cross. Apart from an observation of moths being strongly attracted to the stems of *Spartina anglica* Common Cord-grass, feeding on an undetermined substance, Peter Smith's humour was the only other highlight.

**September 3 Knettishall Heath** Suffolk Moth Group meeting. Unfortunately none of our members attended this meeting. Too far north, probably.

**September 18 Walton-on-Naze** Joint meeting with British Entomological Society.

A disappointing night with poor weather conditions and problems with access, Joe reports. Peter Smith described it as 'A complete disaster'. Nine species only, of 17 moths, and only Square-spot Rustic (eight) and Shuttle-shaped Dart (two) scored more than one. Moth of night? Brick.

### National Moth Night – 17 July 1999

This important event was jointly organised by the magazine *Atropos, Insect Line* and myself. Although I am still working on this I am happy to report that Essex performed wonderfully, both in numbers of sites sampled and the weather, which was still, mild and dry. Thirty-nine people took part and generated 2037 records, our highest ever for a concerted event, and 383 species recorded.

#### Moths of interest included:

**Triangle** at Beaumont-cum-Moze, (Ben Fisher);

**Niditinea fuscella** at Thundersley (Don Down);

**Phyllocnistis xenia** new to Essex\*, and **Esperia oliiviella** – first VC19 record for 130 years from Colchester (Brian Goodey);

**Coleophora trochilella** and **White Colon** at Dovercourt (Chris Gibson);

**Thiodonia citrana** from Jaywick (Jon Young);

**Wood Carpet** from Little Baddow (Geoff Pyman);

**Brown-veined Wainscot** at Maldon (Simon Wood);

**Waved Black** from Theydon Bois (Tim and Jean Green).

\* *potentially* new to Essex, it needs to be confirmed by another recorder before acceptance.

#### The most productive sites were:

**Jaywick**, 144 species (Jon Young);

**Dovercourt**, 134 species (Chris Gibson);

**Colchester**, 134 species (Brian and Marion Goodey);

**Dunmow**, old railway line, 100 species (Colin Plant);

**Saffron Walden**, 95 species (Maitland Emmet);

**Mistley**, 91 species (Ian Rose);

**St Osyth**, 86 species (Reg Arthur);

**Thundersley**, 75 species (Don Down);

**Beaumont-cum-Moze**, 74 species (Ben Fisher);

**Wrabness**, Copperas Wood, 69 species (Peter Smith).

Only the Dunmow and Copperas Wood sites were not gardens. Some basic data:

	ESSEX	South Essex (VC18)	North Essex (VC19)
<b>Records</b>	<b>2037</b>	570	1467
<b>Species</b>	<b>383</b>	187	340
<b>Micros</b>	<b>171</b>	50	137
<b>Macros</b>	<b>212</b>	151	189
<b>Total Moths</b>	<b>6193</b>	1593	4600
<b>Sites</b>	<b>37</b>	13	24
<b>Recorders</b>	<b>39</b>	14	25
<b>Traps/lamps</b>	<b>44</b>	13	31

My own efforts had to be based in my garden because of possible work commitments. I was determined to do as well as possible and, with the aid of plenty of mercury vapour and a wife, managed to do very well. Our garden has an ivy-clad wall running the length of it, and at dusk this seemed to act as a woodland edge with numerous micros flying along. Marion and I spent the first three hours chasing everything that flew and, despite getting completely cream-crackered, caught some lovely things. Relying solely on moth traps is an easy and lazy thing to do (which I would recommend totally after all this exercise), but by being active we were able to at least double our score. Of the 134 species we identified no less than 60 were micros.

Nationally results were received from over 300 sites and around 770 species were recorded on the night. No less than 458 traps were put into action, generating 13100 records. Next year's event will take place on 23 September. Profits made from *Insect Line* will go towards the Marshmallow Moth Project. A full report will appear in the next issue of *Atropos*.

#### **Renewal Notice**

For the newsletter you have left: £ \_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_ SAEs  
I prefer SAEs for speed but if you wish to pay by cheque please make  
it payable to B. Goodey.

#### **Contacts:**

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*Macrolepidoptera records for Essex; Newsletter editor.* B. Goodey, 298 Ipswich Road, Colchester, Essex. CO4 4ET. (01206 841224, or Mobile 0973810097). E-mail: brian.goodey@dial.pipex.com.

*Suffolk Records and Suffolk Moth Group.* Tony Prichard, 3 Powlin Road, Ipswich IP3 9JR, or Jon Nichols, 18 Berners Road, Felixstowe IP11 7LF.

*EMG Chairman. General Moth Group enquiries.* J. Firmin, 55 Chapel Road, West Bergholt, Essex. CO6 3HZ (01206 241389).

*Photos. General Moth Group enquiries* I. C. Rose, Yaffles, School Lane, Mistley, Essex. CO11 1HN.

*BC butterfly records.* V. Perrin, 13 Pettitts Lane, Dry Drayton, Cambs. CB3 8BT

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

*Other Order records.* J. P. Bowdrey, Fair View, Colchester Road Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex. CO16 0LB (01255 862507).

*Coleoptera records* N. Cuming, 33 Holly Road, Colchester CO3 5QL (01206 330019).

#### **Finally....**

#### **2000 – and 1**

There appears to be some confusion over when the new millennium will actually start. However, the changing of '1' to '2' is still pretty momentous – the last time something similar happened was about...well, a thousand years ago. Then, healthcare and hygiene were poor and free education did not exist. Purple emperors and beavers roamed Essex, and the public transport system was more reliable. \*Sigh\* Those were the days. Anyway, keen on promoting purely scientific recording, let's see who can notch up the first moth which is eligible for the big '2'. To make it much more trickier... only fully-fledged adults can be counted and these must be 'active' (ie not in hibernation) at the time, alive (obviously), and be outside, so no house moths please. British species only, please, no craftily rushing off abroad just to get your name in lights. I won't be offering any prizes because, frankly, I'm not really that bothered. I just thought I'd like to do my bit for the millennium.

**Next newsletter:** 15 January, or thereabouts.