

Thankfully the season has at last bucked up and there has been lots of nice things about. So, without more ado, here are some of the highlights. Any errors/omissions please let me know.

- 171 **Narrow-bordered five-spot Burnet** New colony at Alresford 8 July (R. Cottrill).
374 **Yellow-legged Clearwing** Phyllis Currie Reserve, 23 June and Langdon N.R., Willow Park, 8 July (A.C. Maisey).
382 **Six-belted Clearwing** Canvey Island, six between 12 July and 20 July (D.G. Down).
424 ***Yponomeuta evonymella*** A few of you reported small ermine moths in your traps during the summer thought to be bird-cherry ermine. There are a number of *Yponomeuta* species that visit gardens, including *Y. evonymella*. This is usually quite a scarce visitor to Essex but occasionally we get large influxes, the last being in 1989 when veritable blizzards were seen. This year, Paul Harris estimated 2000 adults at Watt Tyler C.P., Pitsea on 16 July, which matches well with the dates of the garden captures.
520 ***Coleophora fuscicornis*** Zell. High Woods C.P., 4 August, larvae common, including one feeding on meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, an unrecorded foodplant (B. Goodey).
724 ***Metzneria lappella*** Jaywick, Midway, 6 July (J. Young, B. Goodey).
873 ***Blastobasis lignea*** Dovercourt, 150 per night in late July-early August (C. Gibson). This confirms an upward trend in numbers for this species in recent years, whereas *B. decolorella* has become less numerous over the same time.
903 ***Chrysoclista linneella*** Dovercourt, Oakley Road 29 July (C. Gibson, B. Goodey).
949 ***Aethes dilucidana*** Dovercourt, Oakley Road 31 July and 15 August (C. Gibson).
950 ***Aethes francillana*** Frinton-on-Sea, 4 July (B. Lock).
1171 ***Gypsonoma minutana*** Jaywick, 4 July, larvae on white poplar (J. Young).
1408 ***Palpita unionalis*** Lawford, Grange Road 5 September (A. Lansdown).
1429 ***Melissopteryx zelleri*** Canvey Island, 23 July (D.G. Down).
1441 ***Oncocera semirubella*** Canvey Island, 23 July (D.G. Down); Beaumont-cum-Moze, July (J.B. Fisher).
1681 **Clay Triple-lines** Stanway, Colchester, 27 June (S.J. Grimwade).
1688 **Tawny Wave** Landermere, 3 August (J.B. Fisher).
1716 **Vestal** Lawford, Grange Road, 14 August (A. Lansdown).
1718 **Oblique Striped** Dovercourt, Oakley Road 5 August (C. Gibson).
1722 **Flame Carpet** Lawford, Aldercar, 16 July (I.C. Rose).
1754 **Phoenix** Jaywick, 28 June (J.P. Young).
1788 **Scarce Tissue** appeared at Colchester, Langenhoe, and Abberton.
1793 **Cloaked Carpet** Langdon Hills, 13 July (P. Harris) and Stour Wood 21 July (P. Smith).
1815 **Cloaked Pug** Frinton-on-Sea, 26 June and 5 July (B. Lock and R.W. Arthur). It also turned up in Herts on 7 July (per C.W. Plant), and these are thought to be migrants.
1851 **Golden-rod Pug** Great Bentley, 10 August (J. Clifton). Confirmed by dissection.
1885 **Clouded Magpie** Beaumont-cum-Moze, 3 July (J.B. Fisher); Colchester, Greenstead, 23 July and 1 August (J.R. Aird).
1890 **Sharp-angled Peacock** Landermere, 24 August (J.B. Fisher).
1897 **V-Moth** Abberton, garden, 22 July (A. Kettle).
1978 **Pine Hawk-moth** Occurred at nine sites, the most productive being Theydon Bois with a total of four during July (J.G. Green).
1987 **Bedstraw Hawk-moth**, Mashbury, 27 July (M. Tarrant).
1992 **Small Elephant Hawk-moth** Clacton, Gorse Lane, 27 June (P.J. Smith); Beaumont-cum-Moze, 9 July (J.B. Fisher).
1999 **Lobster Moth** Appeared at four sites this year: Epping Forest, Oak Hill Farm; Colchester,

Oliver's Orchard; Pods Wood, Tiptree; and Layer-de-la-Haye.

2039 **Red-necked Footman** St Osyth, Daltes Lane, two, 27 June (R.W. Arthur); Lawford, 27 June, (I.C. Rose); Beaumont-cum-Moze, 3 July (J.B. Fisher). Two were also seen at Ipswich, Suffolk on 26 June (per A. Prichard). When you think of the number of traps operating (and their rather limited pulling power), these few must have represented a much larger number, possibly running into the thousands. At this time, late June, we had a number of silver barred which presumably came from the same point of origin.

2043 **Orange Footman** Reported from nine sites this year. A few years ago this was considered a scarce insect, but since last year Tim Green has had 82 at Oak Hill Farm near Epping Forest!

2058 **Cream-spot Tiger** West Bergholt, well inland, 18 June (P.J. Smith).

2062 **Water Ermine** Had a very good year, appearing at Pods Wood, Tiptree; Layer-de-la-Haye; Little Oakley, Rectory Road; and an Abberton, garden. At Maldon, Memory Close, Simon Wood recorded eighteen between 20th June to 29 June in his garden trap, and twelve were attracted to Chris Gibson's Dovercourt lamp.

2076 **Kent Black Arches** St Osyth, 30 June (R.W. Arthur); Langdon Hills C.P., 13 July (P. Harris); Walton-on-Naze, 25 July (P. Smith).

2108 **Lunar Yellow Underwing** Beaumont-cum-Moze, 14 August (J.B. Fisher).

2194 **White-point** Dovercourt, Oakley Road 14 August (C. Gibson); Boreham, 19 August (G. Ekins, S.D. Wood); Abberton, garden 23 August (A. Kettle); Landermere, two 24 August (J.B. Fisher).

2295 **Marbled Green** Kirby-le-Soken, 22 July (P. Bergdahl); Dovercourt, Oakley Road, 1 August (C. Gibson).

2371 **Brown-veined Wainscot** Abberton, 16 August (A. Kettle).

2399 **Bordered Sallow** Langdon Hills C.P., 13 July (P. Harris).

2413 **Silver Barred** Tolleshunt Darcy, 26 June (A. Cook); St Osyth, 27 June (R.W. Arthur); Jaywick, 30 June (J. Young); Maldon, 7 July (S.D. Wood). A nice little influx.

2463 **Burnet Companion** Langdon N.R., 30 June (A.C. Maisey).

2465 **Four-spotted** West Bergholt, Chapel Road, 29 July (J. Firmin); Felsted, Bannister Green, 30 July (G.R. Geen). These were probably vagrants.

2475 **Waved Black** Layer-de-la-Haye, 18 July (D. Allen per J. Firmin); Theydon Bois 22 July (J.G. Green).

2480 **Buttoned Snout** Larvae thought to be this species were found on hop in a Dovercourt garden on 7 July. These successfully pupated and emerged on 31 July (C. Gibson, B. Goodey).

2491 **Shaded Fan-foot** Beaumont-cum-Moze, 3 July (J.B. Fisher).

2495 **Olive Crescent** Frinton-on-Sea, 5 July (B. Lock), possibly a wanderer; Mistley, 6 July (P. Pyke) - a new site, though it is only a few miles from its stronghold and the two locations are more or less connected by oaks, thanks to a railway line.

National Moth Night brought wind, rain, and frayed nerves but did at least yield a few interesting moths. The Stour Wood gaggle did particularly well and Jon Clifton was able to confirm *Coleophora salicorniae*, *Gynnidomorpha vectisana*, *Cnephasia conspersana* and *Eucosma tripoliana*. Basil Harley, treating himself to a rare night's mothing, recorded *Acleris aspersana* at his Great Horkesley home, and Chris Gibson did well to spot an adult *Stigmella aurella* (wingspan of only 6mm) among the 82 species in his trap, one of the highest counts of the night. *Phycitodes maritima* fell to Barbara Lock at Frinton-on-Sea. 258 species have so far been recorded from 30 Essex sites, compared to 358 species from 86 sites nationally (at the time of writing!).

New Essex butterfly?

Adrian Kettle has reported the possibility of a colony of the European Map butterfly (*Araschnia levana*) at Hainault Forest, an example being seen on 6 August last year. On 23 July of this year another specimen was seen nectaring on buddleia on the Isle of Dogs, by Howard Vaughan. A suspected migrant but also a species sometimes *put down* by rearers; it's difficult to know what to make of these records.

Speaking of butterflies, what a dreadful year it's been for some of our species. In particular the Small Tortoiseshell has been very hard hit, perhaps because of last year's floods. Don Down, who has checked hibernation sites, and Hugh Owen, who reported only four adults between March and May, have been keeping numbers. On a less drastic front most nymphalids seemed down and even whites and skippers were low in numbers. Holly Blues have done well, but the Common Blue has not. Wouldn't it feel strange if we were to lose something so familiar as the Small Tortoiseshell? Brian

Barred Hook-tip rarer?

This beech-feeding species has always been regarded as scarce in Essex and in the years since 1990 has appeared at only 11 sites. It seems to have disappeared from many former haunts and the only place it could be described as being common now is around the Theydon Bois area.

New macro for Essex

Chris Balchin and Jan Rowland have taken the county's first Hoary Footman, at their Wix garden on 28 July. Although at first I questioned the record, Chris was adamant and agreed to show me the specimen. It matches the description given in *The moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* volume 9 precisely and looks exactly like the one figured in Skinner and Wilson (plate 22, number 11 'Hoary Footman'). This specimen, later released, is most likely a vagrant from abroad or possibly Kent, where it has occurred sparingly. Over this period a few signs hinting of immigration had been noticed, such as red admirals and huge numbers of hoverflies around the coast. My apologies for the poor photo Brian



New Essex micro?

Two specimens of what may be *Conobathra tumidana* have been taken at Jaywick on 29 and 30 July (J.P. Young). The genitalia slides unfortunately are not conclusive. Past Essex records, made in the 1800s, were rejected by Maitland as probably being *C. repandana*.

Other bits and pieces

White Admirals were flying at Friday Woods, Colchester, on 28 July. Five were seen flying in the main wood and along the river, where they were sparring with banded demoiselles. Banded demoiselles were abundant this year, have spread far and wide, and I have noticed them even in town centres, not to mention one at my tiny garden pond!

Meetings

Coggeshall, 21 July. Fifty-eight species were noted at a garden and nearby area of rough grassland. *Cydia fagiglandana* was the best, being only the third recent Essex record.

Pods Wood, Tiptree 15 June. Lobsters were on the menu at Pods Wood, which has always been a happy venue for surveys and this night was no exception. Luckily there was a welcome break in the spate of heavy showers allowing two lamps to be operated and a total of 53 species recorded. Highlight was a run of lobster moths *Stauropus fagi* with at least seven males, most

of which arrived at the sheet after midnight. An unusual arrival was a water ermine, usually associated with coastal marshes and marshy meadows and not often recorded inland but the proximity of some large ponds with marshy vegetational surrounds may account for the record. Among the ten pale tussocks recorded at the two lamps were three melanic males, and two speckled yellows made a welcome appearance.

On the 26 June a return visit yielded twelve festoon, a pine hawk-moth, twelve more lobster moths and a pretty chalk carpet. *Joe Firmin*

Epping Forest, 22 June The first Oak Hill Farm moth evening attracted 5 recorders and 58 species of moth at the edge of Epping Forest. On a cool and partly clouded night, no great rarities were recorded but several species of interest, including great oak beauty, clay triple-lines, and lobster moth were taken. We also recorded a single dark marbled carpet, which is the first site record, and several thousand green oak tortrix, which was not surprising due to the large numbers of oak trees in close proximity. Several types of lamp were compared, with the best results (41 species) obtained using two 48", 40W tubes (Repti-Sun 5.0) mounted vertically over a sheet. A new 275W self-ballasted mercury vapour lamp (Rainbow UVB-Heat Lamp) was disappointing, and only attracted 11 species. There are plans to hold similar events in the late summer and autumn. *Tim Green*

'Allo, 'allo, 'allo. A visit from *The law*

When Ian Rose and myself set up our lamps in Lexden Park, Colchester on 18 June moths weren't the only visitors to the lamp! At 11.00pm two uniformed officers arrived to investigate the mysterious goings on but were quickly reassured that the little group gathered around the blue lights were harmless nutters. They explained that recently there had been some vandalism in the area, calling for foot patrols. After an exchange of pleasantries and expressing good wishes for a successful mothing, the Boys in Blue made their exit. One comment that maybe it was time for a copper underwing to appear was definitely lost on the departing constables. The cold, clear conditions weren't good for moth species but two lime hawks and brindled white spots impressed some local residents who came along to watch. The commonest species of the night was common white wave. *Joe Firmin*

Glow-worm Survey

Would any members of the Essex Moth Group be interested in taking part in the Essex Glow-worm Survey? Also, would anyone who has seen either glowing females or who have caught males in their traps please contact me via Brian? Any help would be much appreciated.

Tim Gardiner, Research Assistant at Writtle College

Pitfalls of traps

This subject brought forth a deal of interest from our members....

Joe Firmin Brian, in the last issue of the newsletter, asked us to let him know of our experiences of predators affecting light trap catches. In my West Bergholt actinic trap I have for several seasons had trouble with wasps and hornets which have, on occasions, wreaked havoc inside the catch box. On the night of 21 June this year I ran the trap and on examining the modest catch the following morning was greeted with a trail of severed wings in the packing. When I got down to the drainage funnel at the bottom I discovered the cause. Resting there was a huge queen hornet. Evidently she had enjoyed the common marbled carpets, shuttle-shaped darts, marbled minors and heart-and-darts which had joined her in the trap.

We have a small garden pond which hosts toads and frogs and one summer night in 1999 I had a look at the trap just before midnight and saw a large (female?) toad in the act of devouring a large yellow underwing on the lawn.

Andy Cook One night I released a peppered moth, only to watch it fly across the lawn and end up in the jaws of a robin, who caught it on the wing after impersonating a pied flycatcher doing a double somersault. It then took the moth to the nearest paving slab, bashed it a couple of times to kill it, song thrush-style, then went back into the undergrowth to devour it. I was amazed the robin was still feeding at that time of night, and also surprised as the peppered moth

is of considerable size when compared to the bird.

During the limited use of my Heath trap in 1998/9 in my garden at Tolleshunt D'Arcy, I occasionally found large numbers of various wings dotted around the base of the trap. I sat up one night to catch the culprit, which turned out to be a hedgehog, stretching itself up the side of the trap and picking off anything inside it could reach. The problem was cured by providing the hedgehog a tin of dog food (opened and on a dish), and raising the Heath trap on a garden table.

During the construction of my current mercury vapour trap, I took the hedgehog problem into account and I have made a Robinson-style trap from a standard-sized wheelie bin (you may find this rubbish, but its true!). This principle works well, as the lamp sits approximately one and a half metres off the ground, and has various other practical advantages:

1/ you can simply close the lid at first light and wheel it into the shade, then identify the contents at a more sociable hour

2/ easily mobile, you can move the trap around various parts of the garden, not allowing birds to get used to it in one fixed spot

3/ I have placed a false bottom half way down inside the trap; the option is to remove this and hang wine ropes inside for better catch retention (I haven't tried that yet, but it sounds reasonable)

4/ it can pull in a poplar kitten and turn your County Recorder green with envy!* On the other hand, there are a few of disadvantages:

1/ it is not mobile enough to fit into a standard saloon car

2/ you are forever pulling various items of garbage out (I keep telling 'er indoors to use the dustbin)

3/ if you gloat too much, your County Recorder may come round in the hours of darkness and smash the thing up, or at worse inform the local authorities from whom the bin was borrowed from, explaining its current misuse.**

*we all need something to aim for...(ed.)

** I can feel one of heads coming on...(ed.)

Graham Smith Wasps can be a nuisance later in the season, but by then they have usually developed a sweet tooth and seldom predate on moths. The spider *Pisaura mirabilis* females sometimes enter a trap and prey on geometers and noctuids up to the size of heart and darts. Last year I lost around a dozen moths in this way.

Graham Ekins A rather eventful week during the summer culminating in a great tit in my Skinner trap one morning. It had succeeded in eating at least one heart and dart and an elephant hawk-moth. I have taken steps to ensure this does not happen again. Luckily the presence of large quantities of egg boxes prevented too much mayhem.

Reg Arthur, Ian Rose and Jon Young also report robins, wrens, great tits and blackbirds as culprits.

Twine, plastic baffles or loose wigs of wire placed in the cone may deter some birds. I use my trap five or six times a year and never suffer 'feathered thorns', but that's scarcely an answer! Wasps and hornets are more of a problem.

New technology

On 21 June I took a phone call regarding a greenish moth sitting on an office block wall in London. Did I know what it was? Luckily, the gentleman had a digital camera handy and within minutes I had received a photo and had replied 'lime hawk-moth'. The image could just have quickly been sent to Moscow or Sydney, of course, and I wonder how long it will be before photos are taken at a trap, perhaps in the middle of the woods, and sent back via a mobile telephone. What a scary thought. Now, if they could just get a printer and a computer to work together.....

The Gossamer Tree

On Saturday evening 2 June 2001, after a phone call from Lawrence Watts, I paid a visit to a cluster of *Pyracantha* shrubs to the north-east of Priory Park where a mystery bush was shrouded in silken webs. There was not a single leaf on the shrub infected by most of the webs, but I managed to identify the bush as a large specimen of spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. The cause of the silken shroud were many thousands of larvae of a *Yponomeuta* micro-moth. Many larvae were already dead or dying as they had run out of their main food plant. It is most likely that 90% will perish with only a very small percentage surviving to decorate the shrub with their silken webs when the eggs hatch next spring to feed upon the fresh growth.

I have never seen such a sight in Essex before as on that Saturday evening when a large spindle bush sparkled in the late afternoon sunshine. It took me back nine years when I saw a similar sight near Strallock in Scotland, when all the bird cherry *Prunus padus* were stripped bare by *Yponomeuta evonymella*, another member of the same group. The hillside where the trees grew looked from a distance as if they were covered in a mid-summer frost.

Two species of this group feed on *Euonymus* in Essex, *Y. plumbella* and *Y. cagnagella*. The former appears to be scarce, with just three recent records, but *Y. cagnagella* is more widespread with fifteen known sites. *D.G. Down*

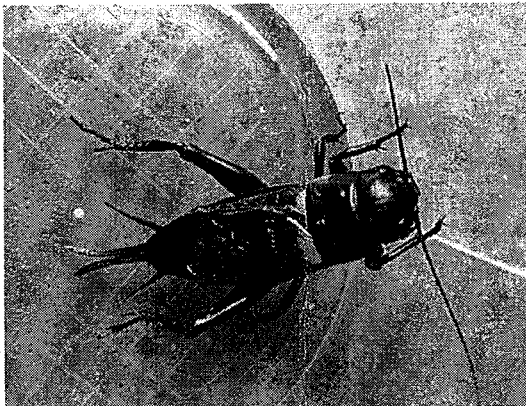
It's not cricket

During August this year we had been kept awake by an extremely loud cicada-type call emanating from foliage in the garden. It was so loud it could be heard over the television and involved a slow chirp every second or so. The call was new to me.

On two nights I tried unsuccessfully to catch whatever it was without success, despite being what seemed to be right next to the noise. One night, however, it started singing right below my son's window, causing him to become restless, so my wife Mel and I went out and finally succeeded in trapping it.

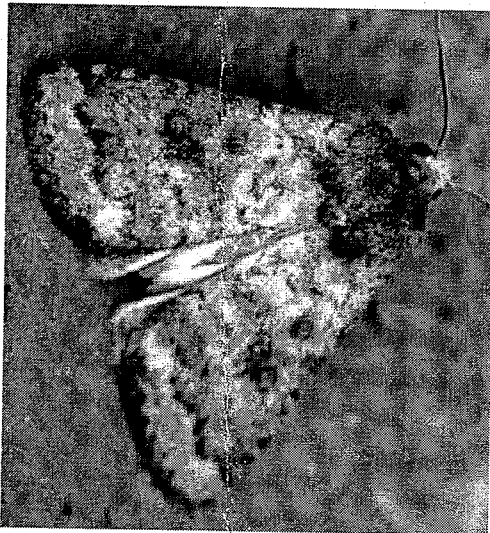
My first impression was a field cricket, an exceptionally rare species limited to two sites in West Sussex. However, with the help of Adrian Kettle and Graham Ekins we eventually concluded that it was not a field cricket and apparently not a British species at all!

As you can see from the photo this specimen has fully developed wings and can fly (many crickets cannot). That it turned up in a garden where a moth trap runs and after a period of south, south-easterly winds is perhaps suggestive of a true migrant, but an escape from captivity cannot be ruled out. It is about 24mm from head to tail with the wing points adding a further 8mm. Martin Honey (Natural History Museum) and Jes Dagley (Epping Forest) have suggested the crickets *Gryllus bimaculatus* or *G. campestris caudata* as being possibilities. I will keep you informed of developments. *Simon Wood*



Welcome to our new members

This summer has brought an influx of new members, bringing the EMG total to 94 members. They certainly haven't been idle and have helped to make 2001 our busiest year so far as records are concerned. Not only that, but the weird stuff I've had sent to me! Below is what we eventually thought was probably a mottled rustic, but what a strange variety, being very light in colour with contrasting blackish markings.



New members without suitable literature have added to the pressure of trying to identify sometimes common moths, which is tending to frustrate them and hold them back. The three most frequently asked for book are a local (Essex) guide to check distribution and abundance, and something covering pugs and - especially - tortricids. The new pug book is still months away at least, and the MBOGBI volume devoted to tortricids will not be published for some time yet. If you have copies of the two Ray Society books you can expect to sell them for £100 - £150 If you want to buy them -good luck!

E-mailed news a success

Thirty-one people have chosen to receive the newsletter by e-mail, greatly reducing my workload and saving my printer much abuse. The regular news bulletins have also proved popular and I'll try and expand their content next year.

Programme for 2001

These are events we are aware of but may not necessarily have arranged. Please treat as provisional and contact the leader before attending. Thanks to Joe for organising the surveys. If you know of any other events please let me know and I'll include them.

Please note that you attend these meetings at your own risk. We cannot be held responsible for any accidents, injuries or loss of property.

7 September Marks Hall, Coggeshall. Meet at car park: at 7.30pm.. (Joe Firmin)

7 September Langdon Visitors' Centre with Don Down (EWT). Meet at 7.30pm.. Contact Melanie Lenden (01268 419103) to reserve space. Donation of £2.00 requested.

Contacts:

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

Lepidoptera records for Essex; Newsletter editor. B. Goodey, 298 Ipswich Road, Colchester, Essex. CO4 4ET. (01206 841224, or Mobile 07941133944). -email: brian.goodey@dial.pipex.com

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

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

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

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

Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies (ALS) PO box 232, Northwich Delivery Office, CW8 3FG (01263 862068
www.angleps.btinternet.co.uk

Web Site www.aave45.dial.pipex.com/

Renewal Notice

For the newsletter you have left:

£ ___ or 4 SAEs

I prefer SAEs for speed but if you wish to pay by
cheque please make it payable to B. Goodey