

\*\*\*\*\*Date for Annual Meeting\*\*\*\*\*

The date has been set for our annual bun fight! It is 9 February 2002, starting at 11.00. The venue is once again the Tendring Hundred Water Services complex at Horsley Cross, near Manningtree on the A120 to Harwich - just look out for the water tower. We have a fair number of new members, who will be especially welcome, making a total membership of 98, so we'll need to get an idea of how many are coming for catering purposes. Fine food should still be there, though we've had to cut back a little on previous years. To quote from EWT's Autumn journal: "The dynamic Moth Group...annual meeting attracts big speakers\* and has become renowned for its sheer entertainment value." We'll ask for a £2.00 donation to help towards the catering costs. Hope to see you all there.

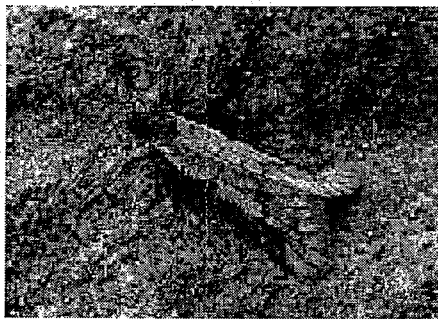
\*(have tried dieting, Jez!)

Things are well and truly winding down for the year but a few of our more hardy members continue to run their traps during milder spells. There are just a few highlights and earlier records to deal with:

0327 *Phyllonorycter cydoniella* Tolleshunt D'Arcy, 29 July (A. Cook, B. Goodey)

0368 *Phyllocnistis unipunctella* Tolleshunt D'Arcy, 23 August (A. Cook, B. Goodey)

1026 *Exapate congelatella* North Chingford, 31 October 2001 (imaged with a scanner by B. Pateman). First Essex record since 1977.



1368 *Loxostege sticticalis* Copperas Wood, 20 September (P. Smith, G. Slater); Langenhoe, Tawnies Meadow, 21 September (H. Owen); Dovercourt, West End, 24 September (C. Gibson); Epping Forest, Oak Hill Farm 25 September (T. Green)

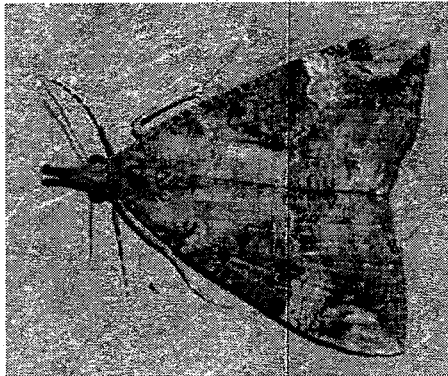
1370 *Sitochroa palealis* Layer-de-la-Haye, 16 August (P. Pyke)

1613 *Heath Fritillary* Don Down counted 246 at Hockley Woods on 23 June. A partial second brood appeared on 29 August and Don noted four to five adults per visit until 7 September. The first brood did quite well at Belfairs N.R. and especially at Dodds Grove, where Don and members of the South Essex NHS are carrying out judicial gardening to encourage the butterflies.

1678 *Blair's Mocha* Thundersley, Woodend Close, 18 October (D.G. Down) First county record since 1984

1716 *Vestal* Theydon Bois, Woodland Way (J.G. Green); Magdalen Laver (T. Green); Felsted,

Bannister Green, (G.R. Geen). All three on 13 October.  
 1720 **Gem** Thundersley, Woodend Close, 14 October (D.G. Down)  
 1760 **Red-green Carpet** Thundersley, Woodend Close, nine in October (D.G. Down)  
 1771 **Juniper Carpet** Thundersley, Woodend Close, nine in October (D.G. Down)  
 1864 **Streak** Stanway, Dale Close 21 October (D. Owen)  
 1972 **Convolvulus Hawk-moth** Feering, Inworth Road, 20 September (T. Barritt, C. Gibson)  
 1984 **Humming-bird Hawk-moth** Thundersley, Woodend Close, 8 September (D.G. Down)  
 2119 **Pearly Underwing** Lawford, Aldercar, (I.C. Rose); Little Oakley, Rectory Road (G. Slater). Both on 11 October  
 2187 **Common Quaker** Theydon Bois, 24 October (J.G. & T. Green) and 2190 **Hebrew Character** Lawford, 23 October (A. Lansdown). (See *Two out of season Quakers*)  
 2194 **White-point** Layer-de-la-Haye, 16 and 24 August (P. Pyke); Little Oakley, 2 and 6 September (G. Slater)  
 2195 **Delicate Steeple**, 20 October (D.G. Down)  
 2231 **Deep-brown Dart** Stanway, Dale Close early October (D. Owen)  
 2271 **Orange Sallow** Copperas Wood, 20 September (P. Smith, G. Slater)  
 2478 **Bloxworth Snout** Little Oakley, Rectory Road, 5 October (G. Slater, I.C. Rose and P. Smith). Photographed. *New to Essex*. From the photograph this appears to be a cracking specimen. Probably a migrant/vagrant.



2480 **Buttoned Snout** South Woodford, Gordon Road 22 August (G. Law); Copperas Wood, 20 September (P. Smith, G. Slater)

### **Skippers Island**

Ray Marsh has continued to record at this important EWT nature reserve and this year has added thirty-six new species to the site, bringing the total to 253. Highlights include Chamomile Shark, Early Tooth-striped on 22 May (fourth post-1990 record), Lunar Thorn, Common Heath (fourth post-1990 record), Purple Clay, Lappet and V-moth. Northern Drab and Blue-bordered Carpet are on the increase, but on the debit side Ray reports Fisher's Estuarine, Drinker and Yellow Belle decreasing. The latter has frequently appeared well inland this year. Ray has had serious problems with bats at his Walton-on-Naze home, affecting his moth trap count and on occasions had to stop using it.

### **Two out of season Quakers**

A specimen of the Common Quaker dated 16 October 2001 was recently passed to me from a trap run by Jean Green and her son Tim at Theydon Bois near Epping. Following this, and after she had carefully checked the specimen, Anne Lansdown reported a Hebrew Character on 23 October at Lawford, in north Essex.

Because of mild weather it seems unlikely the pair could have been fooled into thinking a winter had passed, so it is possible that either some other environmental stress condition affected their emergence, or that isolated specimens occasionally simply 'screw up', perhaps because of a genetic fault.

Interestingly, numbers of *Hypsopygia costalis* and *Orthopygia glaucinalis* were seen at this time, though this is not so unusual and suggests this pair of pyralids has an occasional second brood.

Other early dates for Common Quaker are 13 December 1998, Isle of Wight (B. Warne); 5 December 2000, Devon (R. Bogue); 3 December 2000, West Yorkshire (P. Talbot) and 25 November 1999, Suffolk (N. Sherman). On 17 October 1988, Steve Nash at Fernham, Berkshire recorded a Small Quaker. Further information can be found in *Entomologists' Record* volume 113.

### **By Jiminy!** *Jerry Bowdrey - curator of Natural History, Colchester Museums*

I was interested to read Simon Wood's account of an unusual cricket (*It's not cricket* Essex Moth Group Newsletter 20, 2001.) and was reminded that this is not the first time that field crickets have been the cause of excitement amongst entomologists in the county.

In 1985 a sighting of *Gryllus campestris* was made at Shoeburyness, I believe on or close to a military railway line. Subsequent searches failed to turn up any additional individuals and it was suspected that the cricket had been accidentally introduced, perhaps on military equipment (Wake, 1996 *Grasshoppers and Crickets of Essex*). A further unconfirmed record at Tilbury dates from 1961.

Nowadays, field crickets *Gryllus* spp. are widely available through the pet trade as live food for pet reptiles and amphibians and can be purchased as nymphs or adults in special packs costing a couple of £s. Escapees could undoubtedly survive outdoors in Britain during the summer and may perhaps be able to over-winter in warmer habitats such as refuse tips or glasshouses. *Gryllus bimaculatus* the Southern Field Cricket is also used as a laboratory insect (Marshall & Hayes, 1988 *Grasshoppers and allied insects of Great Britain and Ireland*).

*Gryllus campestris* form *caudata* is fully winged and has not previously been recorded in Britain, (at least it hadn't been up to the time of publication of Marshall and Haes).

A longer established alien is the House Cricket *Acheta domestica*, also dependant on artificial heat and being found in boiler rooms and on refuse tips. It too is sold as live food. House Crickets are less common than they were in the 19th century, although one turned up in a flat in Lexden this summer (2001).

Don't forget all records of grasshoppers and crickets, both native and alien, and are welcomed at Colchester Museums Biological Records Centre, 14 Ryegate Road, Colchester CO1 1YG (Tel. 01206 282936).

### **Buy Jiminy**

#### **Special Offer: *Grasshoppers and Crickets of Essex* at one third off!**

A limited number of copies of Alan Wakes excellent book are available to Moth Group members at a special price of £4 including p&p from the address above.

#### ***Simon Wood adds:***

The cricket was a Southern Bush Cricket. Being an assumed escape I did not want to release it into the wild, so he joined the family, living in the garage and singing his little heart out every night, and some warm days, until he passed away peacefully on 30th September. He was thus at least two months old, which is a long while I thought. I found out there is a chap about half a mile away who keeps lizards, so that may be where Jiminy (as he became known) came from.

#### **Moth trapping and the rain** *Jon Clifton, Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies (01263 862068)*

With so many newcomers to moth trapping over the last year or so I thought it would help if I make a few comments on trapping in the rain as we are often asked these questions over and over again. Light rain can increase the catch considerably, especially in summer, ideal

conditions can be warm and muggy with light rain.

We are also asked about protection of the bulb in rain and of course this is vital at times. My advice is that in times of 'cold' rain ie in spring and autumn the bulb should be protected if rain is forecast. MV bulbs will withstand quite a lot of rain, but at these times of year damage could easily occur. I never protect mine in summer unless thunder is forecast.

There are quite a few ways in which you can protect the bulb, Pyrex dishes can be upturned over the bulb as can coffee pots (cafeterias) but remember that glass will filter out your ultraviolet light that is so important for attracting the moths and the efficiency of the bulb will be lessened if glass is used. I am aware of quite a few moth trappers leaving glass pots over the bulb even in summer when no rain is forecast.

The best way I find of protecting the bulb is by suspending a piece of perspex (about 10" x 10") over the bulb, several inches above it so it will not melt, either on thick pieces of wire or wood pushed into the light board. This will then stop the majority of rain falling onto the bulb and still let it perform to its maximum output.

It is also worth mentioning that blended bulbs and black MV bulbs (not actinic light as they run cool and need no protection from rain) run at a far higher temperature than standard 125/80w bulbs and therefore are very prone to damage.

### **Sabah -tical**

I have always been somewhat disappointed by moths in the tropics. You expect to see them dripping of trees in huge numbers, but without local knowledge and often constrained by a tour itinerary, the opportunities to visit the best sites are somewhat limited, not to mention the lack of equipment!

The Sabah area of Borneo would have been no exception were it not for a fortuitous piece of luck. Having nearly killed ourselves climbing and descending the 13,000 feet bulk of Mount Kinabalu, and then doing an arduous jungle survival course, we rebelled and insisted our guide find us a proper bed for the night in which we could lick our wounds. He chose a small and basic Chinese-run hotel. Basic! It had hot water, pillows, and a proper western-style flushable loo, not one of the more usual squat-and-hope jobs or just a hole in the dirt with which we had become accustomed. Luxury! A small balcony with our room afforded magnificent views of the mountain and the cool night air was a relief after the heat of the lowlands.

As night fell the hotel lights came on, small fluorescent energy-efficient bulb, and all hell broke loose! Moths of all shapes and sizes began to arrive, along with giant stag and burying beetles, mantids, cicadas and bugs. After a couple of hours we estimated 250 species of moths already, and by morning there were many more. Many had clear British counterparts, swallow-tailed moths, diamond-backed moths and common emerald types looked virtually the same, others were more exotic. There were two heralds, one dark green and red. Footman, one metallic blue with five large yellow spots, another related to the rosy was yellow with fine black squiggles. Tiger moths, large, orange and red, with ruler-straight dark bands over straw-coloured front wings. Four species of hawk, one enormous. A malachite-green geometer with gold-leaf patterns. A tiny plume smaller than *microdactyla*. A huge brassy-green prominent the size of *atropos*. Giant hook-tips and eggars and a miniature, minor-sized, lackey. An obvious snout moth, tiny emeralds the size of pugs, and pyralids with clear wings, or with lemon and salmon colouring, or a swarm of green ones related to *Palpita unionalis*. Curiously no tortrix moths. Finally a pair of huge (6" wingspan) silk moths, like dinner plates, spiralled around an outside lamp. We managed to capture one and photograph it, though I wished I'd brought a better camera with me. It's so nice to simply admire moths without having to record them! If you ever go to Sabah, Borneo, stay at the Kinabalu China Rose Garden!

We ended our trip on a remote island, Pulau Lanġayan, 80 km from the port of Sandakan, deep in the Sulu Sea. This is a minute coral island, just 950m long and 350m wide (at low tide). Eleven comfy cabins are clustered at one end, next to a rather posh restaurant. With a population of around 30n people, including guests, this is the World's most perfect place to chill out: peace, reefs, turtles and baby sharks! Affordable, and the closest I'll ever get to a millionaire's secret retreat!

What fascinated me, however, was the ecosystem on such a speck of land which you could walk around in 20 minutes. Pandanus palms growing on the beach form a tough outer barrier, giving protection to the 'rain forest' of the interior (a collection of stunted trees and shrubs covering an area of 35m by 10m). Hundreds of small lizards scurrying in the under storey are the main land animal, hunted by two egrets, totally unafraid of humans, who have assumed the role of predator. The only butterfly that appeared resident was a ringlet-sized, tan-coloured species, the closest match I've found is *Cupha erymanthis* (Nymphalidae) or *Xanthotaenia busiris* (Amathusiidae). Weak flying, they have nevertheless colonised this scrap of land. Moths were difficult to find, though strangely there was a thriving colony of a psychid, the 10 - 15mm cases festooning trunks and posts. *The Lepidoptera of Lankayan Island* would take little time to write, and the research and field work needed an absolute pleasure!

#### **Rare moth found in my Thundersley garden on 18 October 2001 Don Down**

On 18 October I captured a Blair's Mocha *Cyclophora puppillaria* in my garden trap. It was rather a faded specimen and unfortunately a male. Had it been a female I most certainly would have tried to breed from her. This specimen is only the second that I have seen of this scarce migrant species. I managed to breed from my first specimen - taken at Tilbury in October 1982. On the continent it is continually brooded and the larva feed on *Cistus*, *Myrtus* and *Arbutus*. If one is successful in breeding this species some lovely forms can be had, ranging from slate brown to rich red brown adorned with cross-bands and dark brown dots and could easily be confused with its near cousin, the Maidens Blush *C. punctaria*.

#### **New book series on geometers Joe Firmin**

For those like myself with a special fondness for Geometridae the arrival of volume one of the eagerly-awaited six-volume series on *The geometrid moths of Europe*, edited by Axel Hausmann and published by Apollo Books, has brought a wealth of fresh information on life histories, distribution and identification techniques unavailable elsewhere. It is particularly welcome in view of the increasing number of immigrant species of the group being recorded. The first volume (282 pages) covers the subfamilies Achiearinae, Orthostixinae, Desmobathrinae, Alsophilinae, and Geometrinae. There are seven excellently reproduced colour plates, all natural size, and an eighth showing some of the more spectacular or rare members of the emerald group, including our own much-lamented Essex Emerald, extinct in Britain and increasingly rare in mainland Europe. Also useful are eighteen pages of genitalia drawings. The price of £47 is not excessive for this quality. Available post-free from Atropos Bookshop, 1 Myrtle Villas, Sussex Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8DY (01797 367866).

#### **Request for information/assistance Martin R. Honey**

During a research visit to the NHM in June/July 2001, Erik J. van Nieukerken (Amsterdam) identified the nepticulids that I had taken at light in the Wildlife Garden of The Natural History Museum. Among that material was a short series of specimens dating back to 1996 that I had identified from genital characters as an *Ectoedemia* species, but could not match it with anything in Johansson et al. (1990).

From external characters and genitalia E.J.N. has tentatively identified the material as *Ectoedemia heringella* (Mariani, 1939), a species not previously recorded from Britain or northern Europe. (The distribution given by E.J.N. is Corsica, Sicily, Italy and Yugoslavia. It is also recorded from Cyprus.)

As a larva it mines the leaves of Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*), or *Q. alnifolia* (in Cyprus). The egg is laid on the upper side of a leaf, often near a vein, and the larva produces a much-contorted gallery, almost filled with black frass. Larvae have been taken from November to April but mainly during the months of January/February. Adults occur from late April to the end of June (Nieukerken, 1985). However, recent trapping in the Wildlife Garden and at Buckingham Palace has produced additional specimens (exhibited here), on dates between 4 July and 1 August.

## References

- Johansson, R., Nielsen, E.S., Nieukerken, E.J. van & Gustafsson, B. 1990. The Nepticulidae and Opotegeidae (Lepidoptera) of North West Europe. *Fauna Entomologica Scandinavica* 23.
- Nieukerken, E.J. 1985. A taxonomic revision of the western Palaearctic species of the subgenera *Zimmermannia* Hering and *Ectoedemia* Busck s. str. (Lepidoptera, Nepticulidae), with notes on their phylogeny. *Tijdschrift voor Entomologie* 128: 1-164, figs 1-549.

## Can you help gather information about this species in Britain?

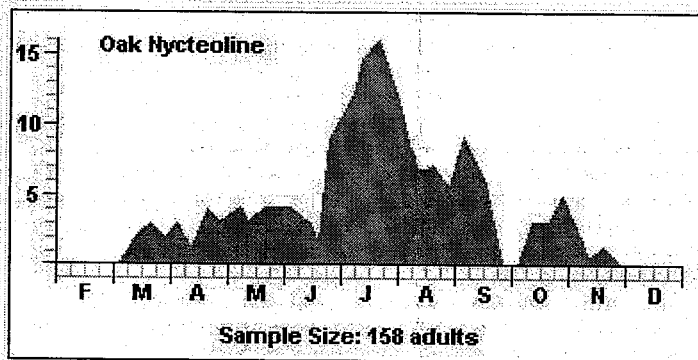
Holm Oak was introduced to Britain some 400 years ago and it is planted extensively on or near the south coast and the Isle of Wight. There are examples at Lyminster, near Littlehampton, which are believed to be over 300 years old and the best known avenue of Holm Oaks in Britain was planted by David Lyon in 1834 near St. Mary's Church in Goring, Sussex. At present the species is only known from two localities in London. In order to discover the distribution of this species in Britain so need to search Holm Oak for larval mines in as many locations as possible. If you know of stands of Holm Oak in your neighbourhood can you help by reporting any such mines or by rearing them through to the adult stage. Mines on Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) would also be appreciated.

## To send mines or adults, or to request additional information, please contact:

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## Moths of Essex update

David Corke has been endeavouring to secure funds for the book, Chris Gibson is working on statistical analysis of population trends from his Dovercourt trap, and myself and a few others have been steadily amassing data for the flight charts. Below is a crude example for the noctuid oak nycteoline, which in the first edition of Skinner in 1984 was regarded as being an autumn to spring species, appearing from September to November and after hibernation from March to May. By 1998, the second edition of Skinner states the number of generations is unclear and still under discussion, and the moth appears in every month from March until October. The below chart, based on 158 adult sightings from several sites, shows a pronounced peak from July to September with more even numbers for the rest of the year from March to November. Quite why this species has changed its recent habits is unclear.



## **Die Tortriciden (Lepidoptera, Tortricidae) Mitteleuropas** by Józef Razowski

*Tony Prichard - SMG*

Published by Slamka, 2001. ISBN - 80-967540-7-6 319 pages with 24 colour plates and 150 pages of black and white drawings. Text in German. Price between £45 - £50.

The tortrix moths are one of the families of the microlepidoptera which attract more general interest as they are reasonably large as far as microlepidoptera go and can be quite attractive in appearance. The problem for people wishing to study this group is that the standard reference for this family, the two volumes of British Tortricoid Moths by Bradley, Tremewan and Smith, is now out of print and can be expensive or hard to obtain second-hand.

*Die Tortriciden Mitteleuropas* is the third and latest book in a series about middle European Lepidoptera which have all been produced with German text. As I don't speak German I cannot really comment on the textual content of this book too much.

The first section of the book is a checklist of the species covered along with synonyms. This will be of use as some of the terminology in the book is different to that used in the latest Bradley checklists and with which most UK lepidopterists will be familiar with. Thanks are due to Ian Dawson who has produced a spreadsheet of the terminology differences between the Bradley and Razowski. Ian can be contacted via email at [ian.dawson@lineone.net](mailto:ian.dawson@lineone.net) for a copy of the spreadsheet. After working through the checklist it appears that the book provides very good coverage for the UK fauna with 94% of the 384 species from Bradley's checklist included. Of the missing species most are casuals in the UK but there are some common tortrix moths missing from the book including; *Ditula angustiorana*, *Epiphyas postvittana* and *Lozotaeniodes formosanus*.

The species accounts are rather brief and take up only 72 of the 319 pages in total. Even though the text is in German there appear to be three pieces of information that non-German speakers will be able to easily use; lifecycle information for each stage is given as numerals, scientific names are used for foodplants and the wingspan is specified in millimetres.

The main reason I bought this book was for the 150 pages of genitalia drawings (of tortrix moths) which form the major part of the book. These are clear and well drawn, covering both male and female genitalia. The British Tortricoid Moth volumes includes very few genitalia drawings, so this book may make a useful addition if you're interested in this subject.

The section of the book containing the plates will probably be the main interest for most people. All twenty four plates are of photographed set specimens. The pictures of the moths are reasonably clear and of good quality and will enable most species to be identified from the plates. One annoying feature of the plates is that they have shrunk or expanded the pictures of the moths so that the individual moths all appear to be roughly the same size, so that they line up neatly in columns and rows on the plate. Hence it was quite important that they specified the wingspan size in the species accounts.

The main drawback of this book is the lack of textual information, at least to the non-German reader, covering areas such as habitat, distribution, confusion species and key identification features. This forces the recorder to rely solely on visual matching with the plates. As a consequence I would use this book with caution as a primary identification guide to this family of moths, especially where there are several similar species from which to choose.

### **Essex Field Club**

The 2000/2001 *Essex Naturalist* is out now, £10 to non-members. As usual it is packed with over 35 high quality articles, reviews and reports from the county's recorders and others. The Club's membership now exceeds 250, a welcome rise from 215 since last year. Unfortunately the Moth Group missed the opportunity to attend the Club's exhibition this year but hopefully, work permitting, can do so in 2002.

Among the articles covered in this year's journal were *The retreat of the Late Pliocene and Lower Pleistocene Crag sea and the development of the early Pleistocene Thames* by Peter Allen, and *An introduction to some aquatic protozoa in Essex and their study using a microscope* by Steve Durr. If you'd like to obtain a copy let me know.

**\*\*\*Indoor Meeting\*\*\***

***A final reminder to please let Joe Firmin know if you intend to come to our meeting at Horsley Cross on 9 February 2001 by 15 January.***

***This will allow us time to sort the catering out.*** His address is 55 Chapel Road, West Bergholt, Essex CO6 3HZ (telephone 01206 241389).

We hope to welcome **David Agassiz**, one of the country's leading experts on micros, at the meeting.

**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/

Dear Don, I'm afraid I can't accept your record of small tortoiseshell on 1 September 2001 without photographs, specimen, signed witness accounts by at least five people and a large sum of cash. This is an extinct species, so if you are telling the truth please keep quiet about it or we'll have the twitching brigade descending on Thundersley. I remember when I was a boy seeing four or five at once on a single bush! Ahhh those were the days.....

**Renewal Notice**

For the newsletter you have left:

£ 2.75 or \_\_\_ SAEs

I prefer SAEs for speed but if you wish to pay by

cheque please make it payable to B. Goodey