

My computer recently went belly (or abdomen) up at a very inconvenient time but luckily I had backed up everything important, except whilst returning from Holland, and in the short space between Amsterdam and Stansted, the airline lost the bag containing all my discs. Bag and discs are once more in my possession and everything's back to normal.

First, a few things from previous years which have recently come to light:

379 **Red-belted Clearwing** A small number of adults from 22 June to 25 July 2001 at a Hainault garden (Clive Griffin) using pheromone traps, and the only success by using this method in the county I'm aware of

714 **Agonopterix yeatiana** 29 April 2000 Dovercourt (Chris Gibson, BG). Second post-1990 record and sixth Essex site. Identification possible because of MBGBI vol. 4

825 **Phthorimaea operculella** (Zell.) Great Bentley, 10 August 2001 (Jon Clifton). Another identification thanks MBGBI vol. 4. **New to Essex**

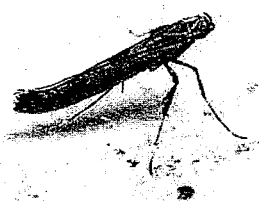
2131 **Square-spotted Clay** Abram's Lane, Chrishall, ten adults between 2000 and 2001 (Phil Jenner). Presumably resident in the near neighbourhood. This is a BAP species currently being studied by BC, so is of particular interest.

2463 **Burnet Companion** A colony at Roding Valley, around ten on 29 May 2001 (Clive Griffin). Eleven recent records

And now the year so far. It's been a busy and surprising spring if you're interested in micros, which a rising number of people are, otherwise it's been a bit quiet on the macro front. I've not managed to process all records sent as yet but hopefully all the major highlights are included below. A feature of the spring was the early dates of some species. From Jaywick, Jon Young recorded **Tawny Shears** on 17 April; **Pale Prominent** on 14 and 20 April; and **Muslin Moth** on 18 April. Other very early dates were of **Monopis obviella** at Epping Forest, Oak Hill Farm, four between 2 February and 22 March (Tim Green); **Phyllonorycter messaniella** at Friar's Grove, Colchester, on 25 March (BG); and **Flame Shoulder** at Layer-de-la-Haye, 12 March (Peter Pyke).

2002 highlights so far:

281 **Caloptilia populetorum** Boreham, 12 March (Graham Ekins) **New to VC19 North Essex**; second county record. The larva is a birch-feeder.



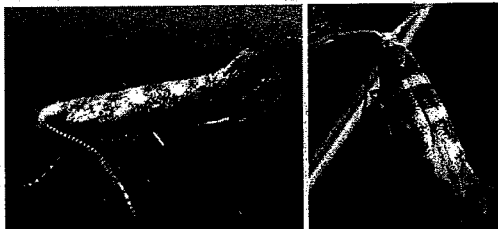
Caloptilia populetorum Boreham

294 *Aspilapteryx tringipennella* Boreham, May (Graham Ekins, John Langmaid). Third post-1990 record

379 **Red-belted Clearwing** Jaywick, Midway, 19 May (Jon Young). A new site (there being only seven post-1990 sites)

409a *Argyresthia trifasciata* Dove House Cottage, 18 May (Chris Gibson); Boreham, 30 May (Graham Ekins, BG). New sites, third and fourth records

409b *Argyresthia cupressella* Boreham, 30 May (Graham Ekins, BG). Fifth county site. Both this and the last are recent colonists and already appear to be widely distributed.



Argyresthias cupressella and *trifasciata*, Boreham

435 *Zelleria hepariella* Epping Forest, Oak Hill Farm, 19 March and 4 April (Tim Green). **New to VC18 South Essex.** A member of the Yponomeutidae, and a very odd looking thing it is. Maitland recorded seven at Saffron Walden from 1984 to 1997. It is said to prefer chalky soils and feeds on ash.



Zelleria hepariella, Epping Forest

451 *Ypsolopha mucronella* Great Dunmow, 27 March (Dave Perry). Fourth post-1990 record

510 *Coleophora juncicolella* Epping Forest, Long Running, 17 April (Tim Green, Jon Clifton). Other localities from which there have been recent records are Saffron Walden and Hainault Forest

568 *Coleophora versurella* Tollesbury, Shinglehead Point, larval cases, 6 May (Andy Cook, BG). First post-1990 record. These were found on an old concrete defensive building.

607 *Elachista canapennella* Boreham, 24 April (Graham Ekins, John Langmaid); Tolleshunt Darcy, 9 May (Andy Cook, BG) Third and fourth recent sites

631 *Cosmiotes freyerella* Dunmow, 4 April (Dave Perry, BG). Second post-1990 record

632 *Cosmiotes consortella* Dove House Cottage, Dovercourt, May (Chris Gibson). Second post-1990 record

797 *Neofaculta ericetella* Epping Forest, Long Running, 17 and 21 April (Tim Green, Jon Clifton). First county records since 1980.

808 *Platyedra subcinerea* Layer-de-la-Haye, 15 May (Peter Pyke, BG). Fourth post-1990 site.

1007 *Capua vulgana* Iron Latch Meadow, Colchester, 17 May (Dave Owen, Joe Firmin et al); Pods Wood, Tiptree, 20 May (Dave Allen, Joe Firmin et al). Seventh and eighth post-1990 records.

1118 *Ancylis uncella* Epping Forest, Long Running, 17 April (Tim Green, Jon Clifton). First county records since 1979.

1198 *Eucosma pauperana* Maldon; Memory Close, 21 and 22 April (Simon Wood, BG). **New to VC18**. The only other recent site is Saffron Walden, in 1997 (AME). Feeds on *Rosa* spp. and possibly associated with chalky soils, so its presence in Maldon was a little surprising, but there is no doubt with the identification.

1479 **Indian Meal Moth** *Plodia interpunctella* Reported in the last newsletter from a batch of dried chillies at Magdalen Laver on 8 February (Tim Green), and has now turned up at North Chingford during May (Bryon Pateman) and at Danbury during March (Simon Wood), possibly with a consignment of bird or rabbit food.



Plodia interpunctella, North Chingford

1661 **Orange Underwing** One hundred were counted at Long Running, Epping Forest, on 21 March by Tim Green and Dave Perry. Other reports from Grange Wood, Alresford; and Friday Wood, Colchester

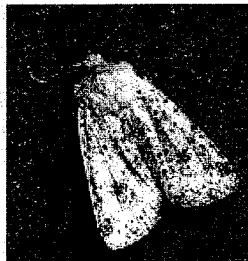
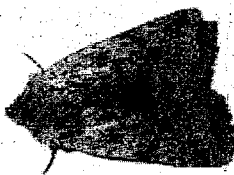
1736 **Royal Mantle** Tolleshunt Darcy, 21 May (Andy Cook). Third post-1990 record

1949 **Square Spot** Epping Forest, Oak Hill Farm, 17 May (Tim Green). Four records from this locality since last year. There are no other known sites in the county

2005 **Great Prominent** Layer-de-la-Haye, 22 April (Dave Allen) and 10 May (Peter Pyke). Ninth and tenth post-1990 sites

2010 **Scarce Prominent** Epping Forest, Oak Hill Farm, 23 and 24 April (Tim Green). Three from this site since last year

2260 **Dotted Chestnut** Great Dunmow (VC19), 12 March (Dave Perry) - **New to Essex**; North Chingford, 18 April (Bryon Pateman). Second Essex record and **New to VC18**. Other reports from surrounding counties included six from Kent. These may have originated from their Surrey headquarters or possibly from the continent. You will recall a few years ago (1999) the Blossom Underwing done a similar thing. (See also Colin Plant's article in *Entomologist's Record* 114)



Dotted Chestnuts, left Great Dunmow; right North Chingford

2480 **Buttoned Snout** Boreham, 4 April (Graham Ekins). New site, and the only record this year so far.

Volunteers required

Essex Moth Group have been asked to run a trap or two at Hyde Hall (a Royal Horticultural Society garden), Rettendon, just south of Chelmsford on 1 August. This will be a public event and a chance to show people what we do etc. They've also asked us to do a stall from 29 July to 4 August, advertising the group. If you'd like to do the 1st August mothing (a Thursday night) please get in touch with Mary McCloud, on 01245 402105, or e-mail marym@RHS.org.uk

A new sawfly on *Berberis* Andrew Halstead

I have been sent a female sawfly *Arge berberis* from a private garden at Church Langley, near Harlow, Essex (TL470094). The sender has had the larvae defoliating her *Berberis thunbergii* since 2000. I suspected that this European mainland species had arrived here as I received a telephone enquiry last autumn from someone in Stevenage, Herts, who was almost certainly describing the same pest in his garden. He was unable to send samples as by then the larvae had left the plant to pupate. According to David Alford's book, *A colour atlas of pests of ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers*, *A. berberis* has two generations with larvae in May and August. The larvae is greyish white with a black head and small black dots and larger yellow blotches on its body.

Berberis has no other sawfly pests, as far as I can tell, and it has few lepidopterous larvae, so any instances of *Berberis* being defoliated by caterpillars is likely to be due to *A. berberis*. I haven't seen a male but the female would key out as *A. nigripes* in the RES keys. It has, however, a rear end quite unlike other British *Arge* species. The saw-sheath consists of a pair of narrow curved arms that enclose a small acutely pointed inner saw-sheath, creating a heart-shaped space between the curved arms. A taxonomist may wince at that description! Liston's *Compendium of European sawflies* gives *Mahonia* as a foodplant as well as *Berberis vulgaris* and *B. thunbergii*.

I have informed the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate about this pest and they have taken the sawfly away to confirm my identification. Before the inspector came the female laid several batches of eggs in *Berberis* leaves, which are now hatching. Once I can get my hands on a male I will write up this addition to the British list. If you come across this sawfly, please let me know.

Andrew Halstead, Senior Entomologist, RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking, Surrey, GU23 6QB.

On the trail of *Coleophora fuscicornis*

Trying to obtain an image of this species for *The moths of Essex* has been more tricky than I imagined it would be. It is an Essex speciality, known from only four sites (plus one from Dorset of a single adult), and deserves a place of honour in the book, but has rather failed to excite local lepidopterists – certainly as far as the photographers amongst us are concerned. Yet, for a microlepidopterist at least, it is a strapping great big thing – 17 mm across its metallic, glossy green wings, a veritable hawk-moth amid its tiny cousins.

So recently I decided to put lens to subject and try and capture this stunning creature. My photographic skills are rudimentary (not helped by a fragile patience) and my camera not really suitable for such small (!) fry. We began our search at High Woods Country Park, near Colchester, where last year in May and June we had found it to be common. After a couple of hours searching we'd struck a blank. Then, by a lakeside meadow sheltered by a tall hedgerow, I netted a male. Once located, the grass seemed full of *fuscicornis* and often there were several males and females around us, waiting while I set up the camera. An hour later, with two memory cards full, we returned home to view the results (the camera's on board LCD screen proved pretty useless in the sunlight). A spectacular failure! Just one rather blurred picture showed a moth, the others having escaped outside the boundary of the image (blurred caused by the physical distance between the viewfinder and the lens). Even worse, the moth appears to have silvery ends to the antennae. One identification feature of *fuscicornis* which separates it from the related *C. trifolii* is that the antennae are dark along their whole length, whereas in *trifolii* the last quarter or third are white. Here was my only image of *fuscicornis* which, due to a trick of the light and glossy scales of the antennae, was pretending to be something else!

Luckily a few of our members have recently begun to send in some astonishing pictures of small moths and one of these, Dave Allen, lives close by, so I took a specimen for him to photograph and eagerly await the results.



Coleophora fuscicornis, High Woods C.P.

We searched other localities for *fuscicornis*, including the meadows and sea defences in the Friday Wood/Donyland Wood area, while Andy Cook checked several sites along the Blackwater Estuary, from Maldon to south of Tollesbury. Despite finding the foodplant, sometimes in abundance, neither of us were successful and it seems clear that there is a fickle side to *fuscicornis*'s nature. Where it's found, it occurs in numbers, but other apparently good areas of grassland are for whatever reason left vacant. Andy's results are especially disappointing, since it may put the southern distribution limit at Old Hall Marsh RSPB reserve to the north and east of Tollesbury.

The moths of Essex – an update

At long last all the major components are either in, arranged, or completed!

We have photographs of over 500 species, thanks to Ian Rose, Chris Gibson and a few others. Oddly enough, reducing some images down to life-size and portraying them in grey scale made them all but unidentifiable, patterns of harsh whites and blacks that got lost in confusion of the background. When viewed at normal size, the effects of flash light or sunlight does not seem so extreme, but at small size much definition is lost due to high contrast and shiny textures, aggravated of course by the loss of colour. I'd like to learn more about this, and how it is that Ian in particular can take photo after photo and retain the right balance of light and contrast. One might expect that a ring flash, or some 'soft' form of artificial light, or even overcast conditions or shade, would be preferable to the effects of sunlight or a simple, single-direction flashgun.

Chris has, despite a nasty attack of shingles, completed his chapter entitled *Recent population trends: the view from my garden*, which looks at the ups and downs of moth numbers over the past seven years. There is something here for us all, with ideas on how to convert information from garden traps into something of long-term value.

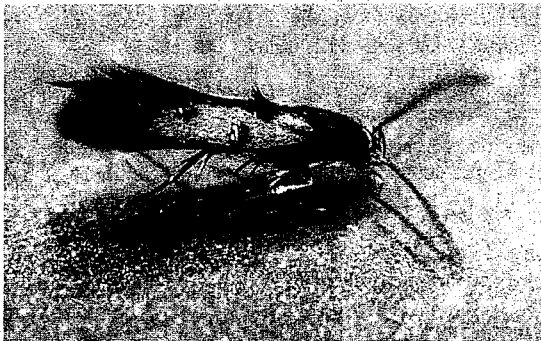
The Systematic Section has grown and grown - publisher David Corke has requested that, if possible, no new species are recorded in Essex until after the book is published! More seriously, it has been no small thing to try and include both macros and micros, all 1,779 species of them, in one volume. And that doesn't include over fifty species which have been mentioned in the literature but have not been accepted as valid records. These will form an

appendix. We still hope to provide an index, space allowing. By the time the next newsletter is due things should be hopefully advanced enough to give an indication of the publication date.

News on the web

The advent of digital cameras has certainly helped to sort out potential records. Every week I get a selection of around twenty images to go through, mainly of micros, and most of these I can do with a fair degree of certainty. Some of the moths in question are tiny, down to *Phyllonorycter* size (about 5mm), and I'm keeping all these and storing them on a CD. In a couple of years time we should have enough photos between-us to think about issuing this CD to members as a reference library, which could be updated yearly. What do you think?

A good example of a useful image to have, because pictures in books rarely do it justice, would be that of *Chrysoclista linneella* sent to me from Boreham by Graham Ekins on 2 June. Last year Chris Gibson trapped one on 29 July, causing us both to drool in a most unprofessional fashion, but we lacked the necessary photographic equipment. It is a tiny thing, with a wingspan of 10 to 13mm, and the wings are jet black with a large, bright orange patch within which are three shining silvery, pearl-like spots. If this can't convert you to micros, nothing will! Other records are Thundersley, 21 June 1997 (Don Down) and Saffron Walden in August 1990 and 1997 (Maitland). It is associated with mature lime trees. Graham chilled the specimen before using his digital camera and you can see a colour photograph on the web site.



The newsgroup has around 40 members at present and has been fairly quiet recently. Please use this if you have something to say, and don't forget you can have the news delivered as a daily digest, which means a compilation of notes in one message.

If you have any ideas on how to improve the web site let me know (as long as they are practical!). One suggestion for this, or possibly the newsletter, is to feature members' sites, be it garden, local woods or marsh. A photo, brief description of the site and something about yourself would be ideal.

Programme for 2002

These are events we are aware of. 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

Meetings so far:

Iron Latch Lane, 17 May: Joe, Ian and eight others recorded 25 species, including *Semioscopis steinkellneriana*, *Capua vulgana*, Green Carpet, Rivulet, Small White Wave and Speckled Yellow. The first two species and Speckled Yellow are local in Essex. They were joined by reserve warden John Thorogood.

Pods Wood, Tiptree, 20 May. Thirty-seven species were recorded at this excellent venue, including a female Fox Moth, only the tenth post-1990 site. The team added nineteen new moths to the site list. Among the more local species were *Capua vulgana*, *Ptycholomoides aeriferanus*, Barred Hook-tip, Grey Birch, Orange Footman, Least Black Arches and Miller.

To come:

Friday 21 June **Fordham Heath**. Meet at car park opposite Cricketers pub at 8.30pm.

Friday 28 June **Essex Wildlife Trust reserve** at Eight Ash Green. Meet at entrance at 8.30pm.

Friday 19 July **Hillhouse Wood**, West Bergholt. Meet at entrance at 8.30pm.

Sunday 21 July **Copt Hall**, Little Wigborough. Meet at National Trust car park at 8.30pm.

Chalkney Wood, near Earls Colne, meet at Forest Enterprise Car park at TL872280

Friday 12 July starting at 8.30 pm

Friday 16 August starting at 8.00pm

Old Hall Marsh RSPB reserve, near Tollesbury. Meet at reserve car park

Friday 13 September starting at 8.00pm

Please contact Joe Firmin on 01206 241389 before attending any of the above.

National Moth Night

Saturday 15 June **Epping Forest**

Tim Green will be hosting this event near the forest. A chance to sample the delights of this important area. Contact Tim on 01992 815605 (day), 01277 890474 (evening), 07951 704041 (mobile) or email Tim.Green@Peregrine-Livefoods.co.uk
Marion and I hope to join Tim and as many of you as possible.

Please send your results to me in the usual way, and good luck! Two target species are Bordered Gothic and Scarce Merveille du Jour. We won't succeed with the latter, which was last seen in Essex in 1936, but may possibly be luckier with the Bordered Gothic. There are three confirmed fairly recent records, at Grays on 21 June 1987 (David Agassiz) and two at Bradwell-on-Sea on 6 and 17 July 1993 (Stephen Dewick). Other records exist but these are unsupported, and the dates suggest confusion with the Feathered Gothic.

A request for a Heath trap

I am desperately trying to beg or buy the zinc coated aluminium metal box components of the 6W actinic Heath trap, previously sold by Entech Services. I still have the electrics and accessories but my box has vanished. Does anyone in the moth group have one to sell or dispose of, please? Entech Services is no longer providing them.

Rob Murray rob@kingfishers00.freeserve.co.uk

Contacts:

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

Photos: Ian Rose, Yaffles, School Lane, Mistley, Essex. CO11 1HN.

Lepidoptera records:

for Essex; Newsletter editor: Brian Goodey, 298 Ipswich Road, Colchester, Essex. CO4 0ET. (01206 841224, or Mobile 07941133944). E-mail: brian.goodey@dial.pipex.com

For neighbouring counties:

for Suffolk; Suffolk Moth Group: Tony Prichard, 3 Powling Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9JR.

E-mail: tony.prichard@btinternet.com

for Middlesex /Herts and Herts Moth Group: Colin Plant, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CM23 3QP.

E-mail: colinwplant@ntlworld.com

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

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

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

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

Essex Moth Group web Site: www.aave45.dial.pipex.com/

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