



## Goodbye 2002...

A busy year draws to an end, but it doesn't look like being a classic. 660 species have been recorded so far (though I have many lists still to process), which compares to 847 moths for 2001. Only one addition to the county list, dotted chestnut, but we are about to lose a micro (one of the Psychidae) so the running Essex total still stands at 1,778 moths. There were three new to VC19 and two new to VC18.

Much needed survey work took place at several important sites, such as at Chalkney Wood, Langdon Hills CP, Shoeburyness Ranges NR, Tollesbury Marshes, and Great Holland Pits NR, the first since 1999. The buttoned snout survey led by Robin Field was a great success, and the important study of Fisher's estuarine moth by Zoe Ringwood came to an end.

The capacity of the group to supply records is now exceeding my ability to comfortably process them, so unless we get a County Macro Recorder to share the workload things will need to change. For entering onto the county database all I really need from a garden is an end-of-year list, with the totals for each species added up so that for each site I only have to input data once. If you wish to send detailed daily/weekly/monthly reports, that would be great and I would keep these on file for reference purposes. Of course, I would still like to hear about important captures as and when they happen. For 'natural' sites, such as woodlands and nature reserves, I'd still like lists as and when they are made.

## Round up of records recently processed:

481 *Epermeria falciformis* Elsenham, Eastend Wood, 12 June (C.W. Plant). First record since 1988

1110 *Bactra furfurana* Layer-de-la-Haye, 29 August (P. Pyke, B. Goodey, J. Clifton)

1123 *Ancylis laetana* Elsenham, Eastend Wood, 12 June (C.W. Plant)

1157 *Crociosema plebejana* Jaywick, Midway, 17 June, 25 August, 4 and 7 November, six in all over several generations (J. Young)

1497 *Amblyptilia acanthadactyla* North Chingford, 28 September (B. Pateman). 10th post-1990 record

1596 *Camberwell Beauty* Little Leighs, 12 to 16 August (D. Scott)

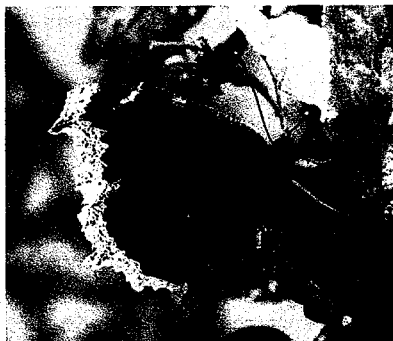


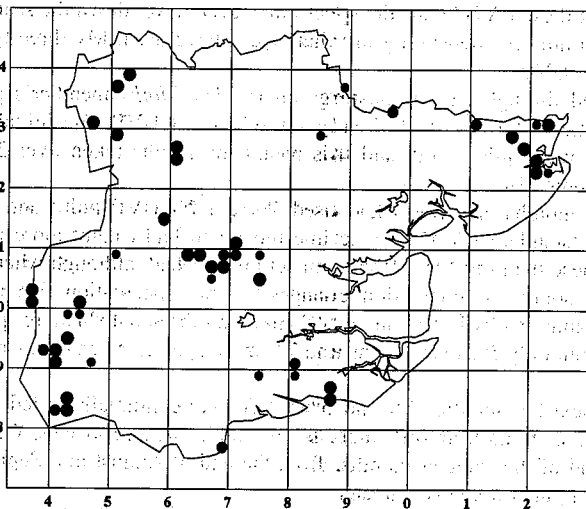
Photo David Scott

- 1720 **Gem North Chingford**, 17 and 19 July (B. Pateman); Jaywick, Midway, 31 October and 1 November (J. Young); Langley, Upper Green, 31 October (T. Ponting)
- 1761 **Autumn Green Carpet** 2 October (J. Young)
- 1952 **Common Heath** Epping Forest, Sunshine Plain, seventeen on 22 May (A. Middleton)
- 1978 **Pine Hawk-moth** Lawford, 27 July (A. Lansdown)
- 1984 **Hummingbird Hawk Moth** Magdalen Laver, 1 September (T. Green); Langley Upper Green, 3 September (T. Ponting); EWT Abbots Hall, 5 September (N. Harvey); Hockley, 9 September (J. Mann per N. Harvey); Halstead, Park Way, 13 September (per N. Harvey)
- 2138 **Green Arches** Elsenham, Eastend Wood, 12 June (C.W. Plant)
- 2194 **White-point** North Chingford, six from 9 to 20 July (B. Pateman)
- 2195 **Delicate** Jaywick, Midway, 3 October (J. Young)
- 2202 **L-album** Wainscot Jaywick, 26 September and 3 October (J. Young)
- 2247 **Merveille du Jour** Jaywick, 3 October (J. Young). Unusual coastal location
- 2275 **Dusky-lemon Sallow** Langley, Upper Green, 1 October (T. Ponting); Stanway, 2 October (D. Owen)
- 2276 **Pale-lemon Sallow** Epping Forest, Oak Hill Farm, 3 October (T. Green, D. Perry)
- 2321 **Dark Arches** Epping, Oak Hill Farm, 30 November (T. Green). Very late
- 2403 **Bordered Straw** Boreham, 7 September, two (G. Ekins)

### Buttoned Snout survey

A team of recorders led by Robin Field (Writtle College) surveyed over forty sites across the county this year and found larvae at 90% of those sampled. Robin's results have been added to those on the database to provide the following provisional map:

*Hypena rostralis*



There are notable clusters around the Chelmsford area and north east Essex together with a broad spread of records in the west of the county. The blank areas may be due to under-recording, of course, but certainly the lack of dots in the Colchester area are backed by field work which has returned negative results. Despite this, the species looks well entrenched in the county and set spread further.

## Moths of Essex progress

There has been a slight but unavoidable delay in publication, and we now hope to have the book ready in time for our annual meeting in February. However, the delay has enabled us to include all the most important 2002 reports, bringing the text bang up to date, together with an important set of micro records made in the 1990s by John Langmaid and others. Hopefully we can expand the range of colour photographs used, grouping these together (rather than dot them around the text) and so provide a useful identification guide of moths in their natural resting position.

## Nothing scientific, but...

Since moving to Hindolveston, north Norfolk in 1996 we have always ran a Robinson trap with a 125w MV bulb and in an average year trap around 350 species, not a huge amount compared to some gardens, I know. This year, though, we have experimented with 15w actinic and a Skinner trap. Traps were placed at the top and bottom of the garden, one with a 'standard' 15w UVA light and the other, an experimental 15w UVB which were kindly given to me by Tim Green (many thanks Tim!), the traps then being moved nightly to see any differences in catch results.

Light is measured in wavelengths (nanometres) and light which is visible to the human eye ranges from just below the 400 nm mark to just over 700 nm. Most lamps used for trapping moths run at the lower end of the scale into the UVA range, usually from 315 to 380 nm, ie from the UVA spectrum just into the 'visible' light range. This, to the best of our knowledge, is the most attractive for luring moths into our traps.

When using these UVB lamps the spectrum is even lower down the scale, usually around the 300 nm area depending in what type I have used. My three types were 2%, 5% and 7% UVB.

Having read through various postings on the *UK Moths* member's pages and noting that some enthusiasts had already started to test UVB, the initial thoughts were that they were quite good, and this meant my results taken over 2002 were interesting in comparison.

During the months of spring I had used 5% and 7% UVB bulbs and combined these with the 'standard UVA' 15w actinic tubes and had caught more moths and species with these than my 125w Robinson set up ever had, although whether this is down to light source or population changes is pure speculation. Up until early summer, the standard 15w UVA caught 89% more moths and 45% more species than the 5% UVB, but only 5% more moths and 7% more species when comparing it with the 7% UVB.

Over the next few months, 2% and 5% UVB were continually tested: The UVA usually yielded anything from 60% more moths and 20% more species. When testing towards the end of the summer months, from the end of August into September and October, these figures were even greater.

During a three-week period in early summer, I also tested a 70w metal halide lamp. This being incredibly bright, very expensive and not something I would recommend due to its unguarded UVB properties - and one's relationship with your dear neighbour! Even though I was never in attendance with this, on the instances I did glimpse the bulb through the kitchen window the intense glare still hurt the eyes! Here the catch compared more favourably with the 15w UVA, 20% more species but 17% fewer moths.

So as I write at the end of the year, my two separate 15w actinic tubes and traps have so far amassed 360 species this season, with sharp increases in numbers of species such as common swift, various geometers, prominents and the spring quakers, with forty-two species new to the garden, which was more down to the standard 15w UVA rather than the UVB but, as the title of this suggests, this was not a scientific evaluation but may give an insight as to what different light sources can attract. I would not recommend anyone using these UVB bulbs due to their harmful properties to eyes and skin. My traps were in a secluded garden and never attended.

This is not the end of testing, but rather just one year and as already mentioned the above results may be population highs and lows rather than responses to different light sources.

**NB.** Tests I did some years back with a 250w metal halide bulb left overnight, unattended on the north Norfolk coast, saw many moths landing up to thirty meters away from the trap due to the intense brightness. This was also the case with a 400w MV lamp used in Cornwall in 2000, on the first night 1,500 lunar underwings alone came in, but only 300 were in the trap, the rest were spread up to 40 metres away, much to the delight of the local birds. Although some coastal enthusiasts do use these lights with some success in trying to attract migrants due to their greater 'pulling' power it is not something I would recommend in the garden over a prolonged period of time, as it cannot do much for the conservation of moths.

If anyone else has data on various lighting techniques I would love to hear!

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### **Wormwood pug ~ beware**

This year Brian Goodey, Steve Palmer, Colin Plant and myself have been looking at possible specimens of bleached pug *Eupithecia expallidata*.

Three females, one each from the Ipswich Golf Course, North Walsham and Holme-next-the-Sea did indeed seem right for *expallidata*, and all would have been new to their respective vice-county, but to cut a long story short all three were sent to Gerry Haggett for his comments and thanks to his expertise in this field all three were re-identified on external features as wormwood pug *E. absinthiata*.

In an article regarding this in the autumn Norfolk Moth Survey newsletter, Gerry comments:

"There may be two reasons why these reports of bleached pug have come about. Firstly, because the adult moths are unusual forms of *absinthiata*, and secondly, because the only moths examined for determination by genitalia have been female." He adds:

"Although wings are commonly a warm, reddish-brown, the forewings are subject to ground colour variations which ranges to pinky-brown. And while the forewings may often be almost unicolorous, markings can be intensified especially at the costa, antemedian and postmedian lines, while the submarginal whitish dots become bolder and edged black towards the tornus, and finally the black discoidal spot can be elongated and thickened".

So if we have two moths that look the same would dissection of the genitalia point to the correct identification? Not the case it seems in *expallidata* and *absinthiata* as there is much confusion in the text figures used in the BeNHS

publication compared to diagrams in Pierce & Metcalfe *The Genitalia of the Geometridae*, especially with the shape of the sternum and of the cornuti. This seems to be the case with females too, and Gerry comments:

"The bursa of *absinthiata* and *expallidata* show such similar ornamentation that when I attempt to relate each to wing colour and markings I find contradiction" and "using this medium the insects taken at North Walsham in 2002 and at Holme in 2000 could be determined as both *expallidata*."

In an e-mail to Colin Plant, Axel Hausmann (editor of *Geometrid Moths of Europe* volume 4) states that there are many problems surrounding this species complex and that it is difficult to distinguish both taxa even on the base of their genitalia. He concludes that in males the shape of the sternum, and in females the smaller corpus bursae of *expallidata* with smaller spines, is the most reliable characters.

Gerry warns though that *expallidata* are exclusively *Solidago* feeders and in Suffolk wild golden-rod *Solidago vigaureata* is known from only twenty-five 10km squares and in Norfolk twenty-seven locations are scattered over the county. Beware if you are looking for the larvae, because in the south and west bleached and wormwood larvae can all occur together on the same plant at the same time of year!

With this in mind, anyone who thinks they have a specimen of *expallidata* adult or larvae (including anyone out of the county reading this) could they please forward them on to either myself, Colin or Brian for further examination and to see if these features hold true.

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[Ed.: The only accepted records of bleached pug in Essex are from Hadleigh in 1939 and Bradwell-on-Sea in 1981. There are a further three sites on the database, but these lack specimens and must remain unproven]

**The Butterflies of Colchester and North East Essex** by Ted Benton, Joe Firmin and Ian Rose (designed & edited by Dave Warner; computer work by Brian Corben). 128pages, 12 colour plates, line drawings. Perfect bound. CNHS. £9.99 + £1.50 p&p.

This is the second CNHS foray into the Lepidoptera of north east Essex and for a small society they have succeeded in producing an excellent guide, one which relies heavily on the authors' experience backed by information published in their house journal *Nature in north east Essex*.

The foreword is by Michael Chipery, author of many guides dealing with butterflies and insects of Britain and Europe, and leads to a chapter outlining life histories and behaviour of butterflies together with a section on recording techniques.

The systematic part is divided into three categories: *Current residents*, *Migratory species* and *The lost ones* - species no longer resident in the area covered. Each butterfly is provided with a description of the adult, an indication of separating similar species, the life history, habitats and behaviour, and the historical and current distribution. There are twelve colour plates, with six images on each.

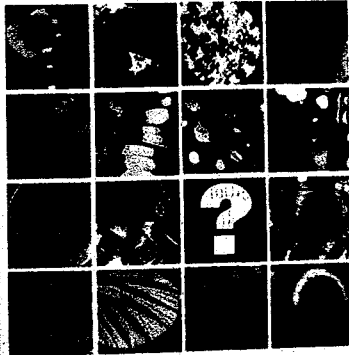
This section is followed by one entitled *Where to watch butterflies*, which discusses some of the best sites in north east Essex for seeing butterflies. Included

here is a fascinating account of how woodland has disappeared over the past few centuries, most being lost from 1770 to 1870 but surprisingly little since then. Finally there is a checklist of residents and migrants.

There are one or two typos, such as the use of a zero instead of a capital 'O'. I would have liked to have seen a map showing the area covered, particularly useful for those unfamiliar with the CNHS sphere of operations. Although recording methods and a checklist are provided, there is no indication of what one should do with records once made, and no mention of Butterfly Conservation or the recording system in place.

Not all potential sources of records have been searched. Thus, the swallowtail (four recent records) and monarch are not mentioned in the book. Only two sightings of Camberwell beauty are given for 1995 whereas there are records for twelve. There are a few marbled white reports missing, notably two from the Tollesbury area and one, the most recent (1999) from Friday Wood near Colchester.

THE BUTTERFLIES OF COLCHESTER  
AND NORTH-EAST ESSEX



*Published by the Colchester Natural History Society*

These minor criticisms should not detract from the overall impression; one of a book, packed with useful information, beautifully laid out and user-friendly. The seventy-two photographs in colour are well chosen and clear, and act as an index for the main entries. The CNHS team have done an excellent job with a limited budget and this work will provide a useful reference for those living in the north east, or indeed Essex in general, who have an interest in the subject.

To order: [peter.douch@talk21.com](mailto:peter.douch@talk21.com) or Mr P. Douch, 41 Oaks Drive, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3PS. Tel: 01206.574960

## Meetings

The season of indoor meetings fast approaches and arrangements have been finalised

for our own. We've lost the use of the Tendring Hundred complex at Horsley Cross but greatly appreciate the support they've given us in the past. For 2003 we're moving to nearby Lawford, near Manningtree, and the cracking new Venture Centre 2000 venue. Our thanks go to Joe Firmin and Bob and Sue Gooding for getting things rolling. We hope to provide refreshments in the form of soup, sandwiches and drinks etc and ask for a donation of £3 to £5 to cover the cost of hiring the hall and guest speaker fees etc (so please come or we'll be bankrupt!). There's a chance that *Moths of Essex* will be available and we hope to see all the usual stands there, such as Jon Clifton's ALS, AES and Harley Books. Guest speakers will include Dr Paul Waring and Robin Field, with the launch of the three-year four-spotted moth survey, and Zoe Ringwood concluding her Fisher's estuarine moth study. Plus all the fun surrounding the slide shows!

### **Provisional Programme:**

#### **Essex Moth Group Indoor Meeting 2003**

*February 22 Saturday 2003*

**Location:** Venture Centre 2000, Lawford, near Manningtree. On the B1352 (from Colchester) at TM094309, on the junction with Bromley Road. 10am to 5pm.  
**Contact:** Joe Firmin (01206) 241389 or Brian Goodey

**Paul Waring** main speaker – Britain's endangered moths

#### **Suffolk Moth Group Indoor Meeting 2003**

*February 1 Saturday 2003*

**Location:** The Ipswich Museum, from 10.30am onwards  
**Contact:** Tony Prichard, 3 Powling Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9JR.  
tony.prichard@btinternet.com

**Tony Davis** main speaker - the Pyralid Recording Scheme

Please bring your own lunch - the Greyhound pub is nearby and serves rather good food. This is a chance to bring along any pyralids for identification.

[Tony Prichard will be trying to bring a PC projector along this year so members will also be able to show digital photos stored on CD. If you are thinking of bringing along digital photos then it would be a good idea to check that he has been able to book the projector and lap-top.]

#### **Herts Moth Group Indoor Meeting 2003**

*March 8 Saturday 2003*

**Location:** Wheathampstead Development Centre, Butterfield Road, Wheathampstead, Herts., AL4 8PY (TL174133). 10am to 5pm.

**Contact:** Colin Plant, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CM23 3QP  
colinwplant@ntlworld.com

Slides, exhibits, discussion, books and equipment etc and hopefully a chance to see bleached pug specimens alongside those of wormwood pug.

## Contacts:

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(01206 841224, or Mobile 07941133944). E-mail: [brian.goodey@dial.pipex.com](mailto:brian.goodey@dial.pipex.com)

**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.

**Essex Moth Group web Site:** [www.aave45.dial.pipex.com/](http://www.aave45.dial.pipex.com/)

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

E-mail: [tony.prichard@btinternet.com](mailto:tony.prichard@btinternet.com)

**Middlesex /Herts Moth Group:** Colin Plant, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CM23 3QP. E-mail: [colinwplant@ntlworld.com](mailto:colinwplant@ntlworld.com)

**Butterfly records:** Val Perrin, 13 Pettitts Lane, Dry Drayton, Cambs. CB3 8BT

**Beetle 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).

**Harley Books:** [www.harleybooks.com](http://www.harleybooks.com)

**Lopinga Books:** [www.lopinga.co.uk](http://www.lopinga.co.uk)

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

## And finally...

A neighbouring County Recorder, who shall remain nameless, recently invited a colleague to his house to discuss moths. Whilst they were chewing the fat in the kitchen, tea in hand, the back door open, the guest noticed some mines on the leaves of a plant growing in the garden. The mines were made by a moth which proved to be a new county record (or will be once the CR admits it!). How embarrassing! What a faux pas the guest has committed! My only reason for mentioning this is that the CR in question has in the past been quick to pounce on my own indiscretions, so it's payback time! Though the sound of his gnashing teeth down the phone did promote some sense of sympathy for him. I just hope the same thing never happens to me! And with that I wish everyone a happy and productive new year...

Bah-humbug!

### 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