

Essex Moth Group



Newsletter 28

In this issue:

- Annual meeting date
- *British and Irish pugs* reviewed
- Dusky Hook-tip rearing notes
- *Field guide to the moths of Great Britain and Ireland* reviewed
- *The Moths of Essex* almost ready
- National Moth Night 2004
- National moth recording scheme
- Stour Wood big night

We're a bit overdue with the newsletter this quarter but there is a good reason! After a period of rest work has restarted on *The moths of Essex* and it is now complete. The species accounts, the bulk of the book, has been updated to incorporate the most important 2003 records, and there has been a fair number of these as it's been such a good summer. There have been six new species for the county, a record in recent years.

At the time of writing the disk containing the files is with the printer and Lopinga Books have accepted the revised quotation. We originally envisaged the volume to comprise of 300 pages, but it's now up to 370 pages (the species accounts runs to 290 pages alone). So the systematic part has grown somewhat, and we've added an index to make it more user-friendly. There will be no colour plates inside, but plenty of monochrome photos including most of the commoner macros. Over 560 species are illustrate, a credit to all who have supplied photos. The book will now be soft cover rather than hardback.

We're aiming to have the book ready by the time of our indoor meeting on 29 February, or at least be able to give a firm publication date.

Annual Meeting details

The date has been set for our indoor meeting, Saturday 29 February 2004. Once again, the venue will be the Venture 2000 Centre at Lawford, situated on the A137 near the junction with Cox's Hill and Long Road. Guest speakers will include Adrian Riley (whose new pug book will be available, signed if desired), and Paul Waring, offering the possibility of having his new macro book also signed. And if *The moths of Essex* is ready.....

National macro-moth recording scheme

Moves are afoot to create a central UK recording body which will process records from recorders. If you'd like to get involved with this, you can find a questionnaire on line at www.mothrecording.org.uk, or by post by sending an A5 SAE to NMRS (planning), Norfolk House, 16-17 Lemon Street, Truro, TR1 2LS

National Moth Night 2004

This will take place on 22 May 2004, during both the day and night. I won't be collating records this year so you will need to send your records by post to Dept. MNM, Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset. BH20 5QP; by e-mail to: results@nationalmothnight.info; or if you are a MapMate user by visiting www.mapmate.co.uk/. You can find further information at www.nationalmothnight.info/information.

Records of interest since the last issue

July

290 *Caloptilia semifascia* Stour Wood, 18 July (Jon Clifton, John Langmaid). First county record since 1868 *New to vc19 north Essex*.

430 *Yponomeuta plumbella* Lawford, 15 July (Anne Lansdown). Fifth post-1990 site

560 *Coleophora paripennella* Lawford, 11 July (Anne Lansdown). Fifth post-1990 site

1088 *Pseudosciaphila branderiana* Dovercourt, 8 July (Chris Gibson). Fourth post-1990 site

1145 *Epinotia nanana* Dovercourt, 29 July (Chris Gibson). The only other post-1990 site is Saf-ron Walden in 1990.

1441 *Oncocera semirubella* St Osyth, 31 July (Reg Arthur)

1688 *Tawny Wave* Copperas Wood, 12 July (Peter Smith); Little Oakley, 16 July (Gerry Slater)

1720 *Gem* Stour Wood, 18 July (Jon Clifton)

1721 *Balsam Carpet* Bradwell-on-Sea, 23 July (Stephen & Bob Dewick). *Second record & new to vc18* (This is in addition to the one mentioned in the last newsletter at Jaywick on 2 July (Jon Young))

2165 *Small Ranunculus* Pitsea, 18 July (Paul Harris)

2317 *White-spotted Pinion* Langenhoe, 31 July (Hugh Owen, Joe Firmin et al)

August

90 *Stigmella tiliae* Layer Marney Towers, 20 August (Jon Clifton). Third post-1990 record

281 *Caloptilia populetorum* Epping, Oak Hill Farm, 14 August (Tim Green). Fourth Essex record

296 *Calybites phasianipennella* Epping, Oak Hill Farm, 25 August (Tim Green). *New to Essex*

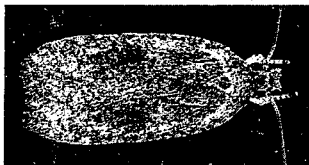
513 *Coleophora potentillae* Dovercourt, 8 July (Chris Gibson). First county record since 1986

562 *Coleophora asteris* Rainham Marshes, 19 August (Jon Clifton)

696 *Agonopterix propinquella*

Stanway, 1 August (Dave Owen)

Third post-1990 site



A. propinquella

714 *Agonopterix yeatiana* Boreham, 22 August (Graham Ekins). Third post-1990 site

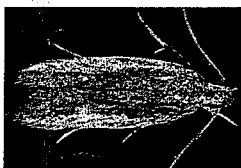
720 *Ethmia bipunctella* Dovercourt, 18 August (Chris Gibson). Third post-1990 record

789 *Bryotropha domestica* Langenhoe, 7 August (Hugh Owen). Fifth post-1990 record

801a *Gelechia senticetella* Stanway,

1 August (Dave Owen).

Fifth post-1990 site



G. senticetella

818 *Scrobipalpa atriplicella* Rainham Marshes, 19 August (Jon Clifton)

832 *Caryocolum blandella*

Stanway, 1 August (Dave Owen).
Third post-1990 site

C. blandella

877 *Stathmopoda pedella* Dovercourt, 10 August (Chris Gibson). The only other post-1990 record was at Saffron Walden in 1992

981 *Archips rosana* Great Bentley, 15 August (Jon Clifton). Sixth post-1990 record

1041 *Acleris sparsana* Epping, Oak Hill Farm, 18 August (Tim Green). Sixth post-1990 site

1171 *Gypsonoma minutana*

Langenhoe, 7 August (Hugh Owen).
Third post-1990 site

G. minutana

1479 Indian Meal Moth Layer-de-la-Haye, 8 August (Peter Pyke)

1575 Chalk Hill Blue Gosfield, 29 July (Jean & Colin Davies, Carl Blamire; per Neil Harvey).

1664 Rest Harrow Thundersley, 5 August (Don Down); Jaywick, 10 August (Jon Young). Second and third county records. *New to vc19 north Essex*

1688 Tawny Wave Beaumont-cum-Moze, 5 August (Ben Fisher)

1720 Gem Jaywick, 5 August (Jon Young); Maldon, 12 August (Simon Wood); Beaumont-cum-Moze, 14 August (Ben Fisher); Maldon, 23 August (Russell Neave)

1855 Cypress Pug Lawford, 31 August (Anne Lansdown).

1894 Latticed Heath moderate explosion of numbers: 106 on 17 August at Maldon (Russell Neave) and 41 at Boreham on 19 August (Graham Ekins)

1972 Convolvulus Hawk-moth Beaumont-cum-Moze, 8 August (Ben Fisher); Theydon Bois, 9 August (Jean Green); Stanway, 9, 10 & 11 August (J. Henderson per Dave Owen); Shoeburyness, 13 August (Tim Taylor); Langley Upper Green, 16 and 21 August (Ted Ponting); Kirby-le-Soken, 16 August (Paul Bergdahl); Saffron Walden, 18 August (Allan Beadle); Steeple, 18 August (Don Down); Thundersley, three, 20 August (Don Down); Langenhoe, two on 21 August (Hugh Owen); Old Hall Marsh NR, larva, 23 August (Chris Tyas); Landermere, 24 August (Ben Fisher).

2317 White-spotted Pinion Langenhoe, five between 2 and 7 August (Hugh Owen, Joe Firmin et al); Brightlingsea, two 6 - 7 August (David Scott)

2385 Small Mottled Willow

Langenhoe, 2 and 5 August (Hugh Owen);

Kirby-le-Soken, 3 August (Paul Bergdahl);

Beaumont-cum-Moze, 5 August (Ben Fisher);

Maldon, 5, 17 and 18 August (Simon Wood);

Landermere, 6 August (Ben Fisher);

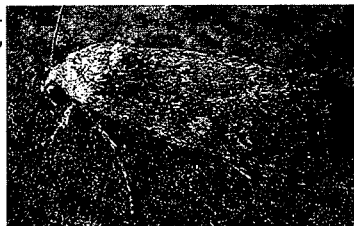
Dovercourt, 10 August (Chris Gibson);

Jaywick, 13 August (Jon Young);

Lawford, 15 August (Anne Lansdown); Maldon, 15, 17, 24 and 25 August (Russell Neave)

Small Mottled Willow

Photo:
Paul
Bergdahl



2400 Scarce Bordered Straw Dovercourt, 11 August (Chris Gibson); Lawford, 12 August (Anne Lansdown); Jaywick, 20 August (Jon Young)

2403 Bordered Straw Dovercourt, four, in August (Chris Gibson); Maldon, 12 August (Simon Wood); Jaywick, two on 12 August, 13 August (Jon Young); Boreham, 18 August (Graham

Ekins); Maldon, 21 August (Russell Neave)
 2439 **Gold Spot** Jaywick, 1 August (Jon Young)
 2441 **Silver Y** Jaywick, 1,200 on 14 August (Jon Young)

September

792 **Mirificarma mulinella**

Stanway, 1 September (Dave Owen,
 Brian Goodey). Fourth post-1990
 record



M. mulinella

965 **Cochylis hybridella** Stanway, 21 September (Dave Owen). This and the following two species are late records, possibly second brood
 977 **Archips podana** Dovercourt, 14 September (Chris Gibson).
 1293 **Chrysoteuchia culmella** Dovercourt, 14 September (Chris Gibson).
 1403a **Duponchelia fovealis** Dovercourt, 1 September, believed to be a genuine migrant (Chris Gibson). Fifth county record
 1922 **Swallow-tailed Moth** Kirby-le-Soken 30 September (Paul Bergdahl). Incredibly late.
 1972 **Convolvulus Hawk-moth** West Mersea, 9 September (Keith Woolsey); West Bergholt, 11 September (Nigel Rayner); Kirby-le-Soken, 18 & 27 September (Paul Bergdahl); Maldon, 21 September (Russell Neave); Bradfield, larva, sometime in September (Ian Rose)
 2030 **Yellow-tail** Stanway, 21 September (Dave Owen). Possibly second brood. Two other September records
 2205 **L-album** Wainscot Landermere, 28 September (Ben Fisher); Kirby-le-Soken 30 September (Paul Bergdahl).
 2275 **Dusky-lemon Sallow** Kirby-le-Soken 25 September (Paul Bergdahl)
 2385 **Small Mottled Willow** Boreham, 5 September (Graham Ekins)
 2400 **Scarce Bordered Straw** Kirby-le-Soken 30 September (Paul Bergdahl).
 2428 **Golden Twin-spot** Maldon, 7 September (Russell Neave)
 2480 **Buttoned Snout**
 Mashbury, 19 September
 (Moira Tarrant). New locality



Buttoned Snout
 (photo: Moira Tarrant)

October

1415 **Orthopygia glaucinalis** Lawford, 1 October (Anne Lansdown) Continuing recent trend of October reports
 1470 **Euzophera pinguis** Lawford, 1 October (Anne Lansdown) Possibly second generation
 1771 **Juniper Carpet**
 Little Hallingbury,
 21 October (Janice Green)



Juniper Carpet
 (photo: Janice Green)

1972 *Convolvulus* Hawk-moth Lawford, 1 October (Anne Lansdown)

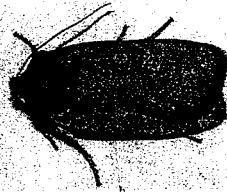
November

2268 Red-headed Chestnut

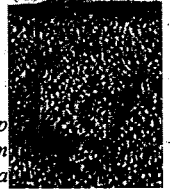
Dovercourt, 9 November

(Chris Gibson). New to Essex. This is our 1,849th Lepidopteran, of which 1,790 are moths.

Red-headed Chestnut
(photo: Chris Gibson)



Close-up
of reniform
stigmata



2477 Snout Stanway, 5 November (Dave Owen). A very late records

The Stour Wood 'big' night

With a public event ALS were holding at Dungeness RSPB on the 19 July, Adrian Wander and myself devised a plan of 'somewhere to meet' the night before. Why not Stour Wood, a superb place to trap, close to my in-laws and half way to Kent?

After agreeing final arrangements with the wardens, Mark Nowers and Rick Vonk, myself, Adrian, James McGill, Paul Chapman, Stuart Reed and Darren Underwood all met at dusk on the evening of 18 July. The plan was for them to set traps amongst the older parts containing oak within the wood and myself and Mark to set my traps on the salt marsh to give a little added flavour to the night.

Little were we to know what a bumper night this was to be! By the time Mark and myself returned from the salt marsh just after dusk moths were pushing their way passed assembled deck chairs and flasks of coffee to assemble themselves in our traps so carefully set up. The Triangle was one of the first to appear and by the time we had caught up on local gossip and done a round of trap checking we were well over the hundred species mark - only an hour and a half into the night! Pots were soon becoming full with "what is this" and "are you sure about that" and it was decided that after a second tour of the traps (that was to take almost two hours itself), we would turn off the traps in that were positioned in the wood and get down onto the salt marsh before dawn was up.

By about 3am we had logged fourteen Olive Crescent, forty-five Triangle, Poplar-Lutestrang, Least Carpet, Dark Sword Grass, Maple Prominent, Ear Moth, Gem, Slender Brindle, Lunar Spotted Pinion, and Fen Wainscot, and that was only from the wood - what about down on the salt marsh where another two traps were placed? By the time we had navigated ourselves through the wood and over the railway crossing (all this with special permission, and strictly adhered to) we arrived at the salt marsh almost half an hour's slow drive from the wood. First moths hanging to the side of the traps were two Mathews Wainscots along with Mullein Wave, Garden Tiger, *Agdistis bennetii*, and *Gynnidomorpha vectisana*.

After inspection of these traps it was 4:30am and sleep was urgently required before a 6am start on the day travelling onto Kent. With over 220 species already logged with many more in pots to do, we knew this was a bumper night and one of the best we had experienced.

Most of the species already mentioned are just some of the standard species this superb and outstanding area will produce. What about some of the less known species that had not been recorded here before? Well, after finalising the list, with those potted on the night, some of which required genitalia examination, Brian Goodey informs me that before our visit the Stour Wood list was standing at 435 species. After the visit the list had risen by over 80 new species to 516, including *Caloptilia semifascia* which was also new to vc19, north Essex. In all we recorded 253 species, a feat all of us there that night should be proud of and may I thank them all.

Listed below are some of the more interesting records, not just for the wood but for the county:

Caloptilia semifascia – new to north Essex (vc19)

Cnephasia genitalana – third post-1990 record

Coleophora adspersella - sixth post-1990 record

Coleophora deviella - fourth post-1990 record

Cydia fagiglandana – fourth post-1990 record

Endothenia ericetana – third post-1990 record

Hedya ochroleucana - fourth post-1990 record

Morophaga choragella - fifth post-1990 record

Nemapogon ruricolella - second post-1990 record

Special thanks go to Mark Nowers and Rick Vonk of the RSPB who, without their permission and help, would not have made this night so special, and also to Brian Goodey for his excellent and renowned speedy response in producing the above lists.

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Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland: Paul Waring and Martin Townsend. Illustrated by Richard Lewington. (British Wildlife Publishing) Paperback edition: £29.95; hardback edition: £45

With many people taking up moth trapping and identification over recent years, there has been a real need for a comprehensive field guide which shows moths in their natural resting positions rather than as pinned specimens. This excellent new book should prove a godsend to those starting out on mothing, and it offers plenty of interest for the more experienced, too. All the resident and migrant macro moths of Britain are included, plus descriptions of species believed to have been imported or doubtfully recorded.

Richard Lewington's illustrations are superb; the moths are generally shown life-sized in their natural resting positions, but sometimes with additional illustrations of the hind-wing if significant. How useful this would have been to me a few years ago as I puzzled over the first bordered white I caught, or marvelled over my first chinese character. The quality and detail of the illustrations are outstanding, but more than that, they are works of art; they convey the fact that moths are beautiful.

The text is concise and informative, and concentrates on aiding correct identification, detailing field characters and similar species, followed by flight season, life cycle, larval foodplants, habitat, and finally status and distribution for each species. Just over 80 photographs of larvae are also included. Each family of moths is given a short introduction with illustrations of typical members of the family, and information about life history etc. I found the layout of the book very user-friendly, with page numbers at the outer edge of the pages, colour-coded according to family.

My only quibble with the book would be that the terminology used to describe the moths' wing-markings has been changed to what is termed 'plain English'. All pursuits, mothing included, have their own terminology, and having got used to such terms as 'costa', 'orbicular stigma' and 'reniform stigma', I find it disconcerting to find them given here as 'leading edge', 'oval' and 'kidney-mark'.

Overall, as a fairly new convert to mothing, I consider this to be a valuable aid to identification, particularly used in conjunction with other guides; it is also a mine of interesting information on the various species' life history, and above all, a book which shows the beauty of moths.

Anne Lansdown

British and Irish Pug moths

Adrian Riley and Gaston Prior. Illustrated by David Wilson, 2003. Harley Books, Colchester. 264 pages, maps plates and figures. Hardback, £29.50

Not many people are willing to tackle this often awkward group of geometers, especially to the degree needed to do them properly. In this sense, books will never be a substitute for a collection but this is certainly the next best thing.

There are chapters on history and breeding before entering the systematic part proper, which outlines the features, variation, life-history and distribution of our native pugs. Included here are simple sketches to highlight the differences between similar species which are also discussed, although not exhaustively. Previously used names are given. I noticed that Riley has resurrected the name *E. fraxinata* (for the ash pug), which seems a rather retrograde step.

Next are a number of plates dealing with the genitalia, and these are well-drawn and clear. Riley has rightly relegated the male valves to an aside and concentrates instead on the aedeagus, which offer better characteristics for identification. For the first time we can see differences between the male aedeagus of the bleached and wormwood pugs, but where the females are concerned Riley can find nothing to split them and so sensibly has provided one diagram for both moths. Hoorah for the authors, as this will help to avoid confusion! I think they should have done the same for the females of the foxglove/toadflax pair.

Next come four black and white plates of larvae shown dorsally, which again are nicely drawn, concentrating on markings rather than colouration which can vary. There are a number of distribution maps, some of which I found confusing. Symbols depict 'generally distributed', 'not generally distributed' and 'uncertain status', but some maps look wrong. For example, the green pug is shown as being in the second category but it is one of our commonest and most widespread pugs. The plates are scaled at life-size, and one might think that x1.5 magnification would have been better for such small fry. Happily, the quality of the plates is such that they will stand being magnified with a hand lens. The colour rendition of the adults and shade of grey of the background is spot on. There are a number of plates showing easily confused species together.

Finally there are four plates devoted to living moths at rest in natural posture. These are not so useful, being orientated randomly, sometimes poorly lit, and others needing a degree of colour balance adjustment. Minor quibbles aside, this is an excellent book and if you're interested in pugs it's going to be indispensable. Once again Harley Books are to be warmly congratulated.

Notes on the rearing of Dusky Hook-tip

Following on from the capture of a female dusky hook-tip at Skipper's Island on 18 July this year, ten sage-green eggs were laid in a group in a jar before the adult was released back on to the island. On the seventh day they emerged, the larvae being black in colour. On the eighth day they began feeding on the upper surface of birch leaves and continued thus for five more days, after which they dispersed and attached themselves to the undersides of leaves where they changed skins.

In appearance they were now black and light green, and very warty. After the next change they became slug-shaped, with one half of the upper body light brown and the other half green and black. At this point they became cannibalistic, and I lost four. Shortly after, they pupated and I released them back on the island in soil under birch trees in the hope of creating a stock for next year. Paul Bergdahl had a dusky hook-tip at Kirby-le-Soken on 11 August 2002 and, as the crow flies, this is just one mile away.

Ray Marsh

Late Moths

There have been good numbers of moths and butterflies reported this autumn which are more commonly seen in the summer. These include: **Heart & Dart**, Stanway 18 September; **Gold Triangle**, Stanway 18 September; **Orthopygia Glaucinalis**, Stanway 18 September to 10 October; **Archips podana**, Stanway 20 September; **Buff Arches**, Landermere 29 September; **Yellow-tail**, Stanway 8 October; **Willow Beauty**, Stanway 10 October; **Mother of Pearl**, Stanway 12 October; **Clouded Yellow**, Abbots Hall Farm 28 and 30 October; **Snout**, Stanway 5 November; **Turnip Moth**, Stanway 11 November; **Humming-bird Hawk-moth**, Abbots Hall Farm 11 November; **Cacoecimorpha pronubana**, Woodford Green 10 November; **Phyllonorycter leucographella**, Stanway 10 November; **Epiphyas postvittana**, Woodford Green 11 November; **Snout**, 12 November Epping Forest; **Red Admiral**, Colchester 13 November. The list is not exhaustive.

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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

Lopinga Books: www.lopinga.co.uk

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

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