

Essex Moth Group

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[Note - this is a recreated version as only original located is a rich text file without photos or tables – SDW 13/02/25]

Four new species were added to the county list last year, including the horse-chestnut leaf-miner *Cameraria ohridella*, which could be more widespread than the current records suggest. We've already had a new addition in 2005, *Ectoedemia heringella*, mines of which were found on evergreen oak in the Great Horkesley area, and this too could be spreading.

Important records from last year

New to Essex:

233 *Monopis fenestratella* Stanway, 10 June (Dave Owen, Brian Goodey)

366a *Cameraria ohridella* (leaf-mines) Waltham Abbey, 24 September (Mark Hanson, Brian Goodey) Also found at Writtle College, 5 November (Martin Heywood); Epping Forest, Whipps Cross, 1 October (Robin Barfoot); Hylands Park, 3 November (Mark Hanson).

399 *Tinagma balteolella* Beckton, larvae on *Echium*, 17 May 2004 (Colin W. Plant). Adults reared

1262 *Cydia amplana* Dovercourt, 7 August 2004 (Chris Gibson)

New to North Essex VC19:

907 *Dystebenna stephensi* Wrabness, Stour Wood, 16 July 2004 (Tony Davies)

Recently received records

All refer to adults in 2004 unless stated.

36a *Ectoedemia heringella* Great Horkesley, 29 March 2005 (Tony Prichard). Mines on evergreen oak. Tony feels that the A12 could be acting as a convenient corridor. **New to Essex**

539 *Coleophora conspicuella* Woodford Green, 7 August (Robin Barfoot, Brian Goodey). First county record since 1985

724 *Metzneria lappella* Threshers Bush, larvae 30 January 2005; Epping Forest, Furze Ground, larvae 31 January 2005 (Tim Green, Dave Perry). First recent VC18 records

728 *Monochroa cytisella* Stour Wood, 14 July (Sean Clancy). First county record since 1984

768 *Teleiodes notatella* Stanway, 10 June (Dave Owen, Brian Goodey). Third recent record

843 *Approerema anthyllidella* Dovercourt, 26 July (Chris Gibson, Brian Goodey). Fourth post-1990 record

976 *Archips oporana* Woodford Green, 22 July (Robin Barfoot, Brian Goodey). First record since 1989, where it was reported from Writtle College between 1968 and 1989. These may be misidentifications or a long-lived, but very localised, colony

1118 *Ancylis uncella* Woodford Green, 6 June (Robin Barfoot, Brian Goodey). New locality away from Epping Forest

1430 *Paralipsa gularis* **Stored Nut Moth** Westcliff, 2004 (Roger Payne); Woodford Green, 2004 (Robin Barfoot, Brian Goodey). Third and fourth county records

1656 **Satin Lutestring** Stour Wood, 14 July (Sean Clancy). Third post-1990 record

1984 **Humming-bird Hawk-moth** Vange, adult nectaring on primrose flowers, 26 March 2005 (R. Cole)

2105 **Dotted Rustic** Dovercourt, 28 August (Chris Gibson). First record for five years.

2108 **Lunar Yellow Underwing** Dovercourt, 9 September (Chris Gibson). Fourth post-1990 record

2183 **Blossom Underwing** Dovercourt, 3 April 2005 (Chris Gibson). Possible migrant/wanderer

2260 **Dotted Chestnut** Epping Forest, 21 March 2005 (Tim Green). Fourth county record, second from this site

2465 **Four-spotted** Black Notley, wings in spider's web, 7 August; a second adult (this time alive!) on 8 August (George Brown)

Conservation of Fisher's Estuarine Moth project *Zoe Ringwood*

The main stronghold for Fisher's estuarine moth in Britain is the north Essex coast, where it is found within low-lying coastal grassland habitats that support its sole larval foodplant, hog's fennel. The future of the moth is threatened due to flooding, as a consequence of sea-level rise. The conservation of Fisher's estuarine moth project aims to secure the long-term future of the moth in Essex by creating a landscape-scale network of new sites for the species away from the dangers of flooding.

Following successful hog's fennel establishment trials in 2004, a large-scale plant-out of hog's fennel plants that had been pot grown from seed for one season was conducted during winter 2004/05. A total of around 12,500 plants were planted out at eight sites situated within the natural range of the moth. Four of the sites supported an abundance of long, coarse grass species to fulfil the moth's egg laying requirements. The other four sites were located within an agricultural area and had to be prepared by ploughing and drilling the grasses required by the moth before planting-out hog's fennel. The growth and establishment rate of the plants will be monitored and when conditions are suitable, Fisher's estuarine moth will be introduced in the egg stage.

Approximately 70 people helped with the plant-outs over 7 work parties. I am grateful to all the volunteers, including several from the Essex Moth Group, who enthusiastically offered their help. I am also grateful to Essex Economic Partnership, East of England Development Agency, English Nature, Essex Biodiversity Project, Environment Agency and Essex and Cambridgeshire branch of Butterfly Conservation for providing funding for this project.

MapMate and the County Database *Brian Goodey*

Over the past few weeks, and with the kind help of Peter Harvey, I've been moving data from the Lotus Approach database to MapMate. Nearly half of all counties use this biological recording package for moths, but it can also be used for a wide range of orders, other invertebrates and birds etc. A standardised method of record keeping and the moving around of data is a potentially useful thing, especially where national recording schemes are concerned. The Essex Field Club is also keen for its recorders to use MapMate, which allows it to hold a huge number of records at a central point.

So what is it like to use? From the individual's point of view, it makes sense to move over to the platform. Records are easily input by way of a small window which MapMate provides, allowing you to specify site, date, type of trap used, numbers caught etc. All these can be 'locked', which allows you the simple task of typing in the moth's name and clicking 'Save' (or hitting the return key). Thus, a list is speedily produced. Because a separate file of insects' names are held in the background unseen, you can simply type its log-book number, or part of its English or Latin name, and MapMate will either enter its full name for you or offer a list of matches should there be any. So, entering '2441' will yield silver y, or 'cox' will produce coxcomb prominent. You have to glance at the screen to make sure the record goes in as planned, because periodically MapMate will drift off for a few seconds and, in the case of silver y, will wake up in time to enter '41' instead of the '2441' you typed in. You could end up recording several thousand leaf-miners in your garden trap! MapMate can be set to warn you of anything unusual - if a species is new to your list, or if it's outside its normal flight time.

When the time comes to pass your year's results to me, you simply instruct MapMate to make a file which can be quickly emailed or sent on floppy disk. You can also send your National Moth Night results directly to where it's going to be processed. MapMate allows you to view your records in a number of different ways, including 'fun stuff' which gives you your year list or perhaps the top twenty commoners from your site. You can also throw up a map of Essex, or Britain, and see dots appearing as you enter records.

From my point of view, receiving your information and putting it into the county system is fast and easy. I simply download your file and tell MapMate where it is, and it imports your data automatically. If everyone were to use MapMate, I could process everyone's complete year lists in a single day! (For example, downloading 49,000 records from Tim Green took around ten minutes.)

It's once I have the supplied data that a few annoyances become apparent. MapMate allows me to remove errant records, but not edit them. So, for example, if you record toadflax pug larvae and your grid reference puts the site several miles offshore in the North Sea, I can't correct the problem. If you supply records for lesser common rustic or marbled minor, and I know you don't like dissecting, I can't change them to 'common rustic sp.' or 'marbled minor sp.' Why should I want to do that? Neither species (and a number of others, of course) can readily be identified by using the wing pattern alone, and even if I accepted such records others wouldn't. In the past I've been able to alter these but, because the copyright of records remains with the author (even if that record is clearly impossible), MapMate won't let me interfere with it. How we've managed in the past with paper records or files generated by other software, I don't know. Certainly no-one from the Anti Copyright Squad has ever knocked on my door! And I find it annoying when software I've bought and am using on my computer dictates to me rules I don't agree with.

A slight consideration to bear in mind when supplying information is with site names. If I wish to do a search for species from, say, Hatfield Forest, but a local recorder has used 'Elgin Coppice' (which is part of the forest), my search may well overlook his/her records. The same applies for Romford and 'Hutton' (a suburb of that town). Thankfully it's a straightforward task for the recorder to alter these to 'Hatfield Forest, Elgin Coppice', or 'Romford, Hutton'.

MapMate seems incapable of doing a bulk search and replace, so any cluster of records that need minor updating have to be done individually, which is pretty annoying. It also seems inconsistent when sorting dates into logical order, possibly because it doesn't use the year/month/day, format.

Records are viewed via the Data Browser, a window in which all or selected records are displayed. Using this window is like stepping back in time – it's speed, feel, looks and functionality seem very primitive after the flexibility of Lotus Approach (my copy of which is seven years old!). There is a mysterious function called SQL which, I think, may let you specify different parameters to refine a search and sort, but as this appears to have to use 'computer speak' to work, I've left it well alone for now.

These worries are, however, mostly overwhelmed by the positives to be had by using the programme. And it must be remembered that, despite being widely used by naturalists, it is still selling to a niche market. Help and guidance bundled with the package is minimal, but elsewhere there is a spirit of trying to make it all work, and this includes an online user's group where you can post and quickly get answered any queries. At group level, Tim Green has been helping me find my feet and showing me how to do certain tasks, and with use and experience we should be able to iron out some of the problems we've come across so far. Improvements by the manufacturer in later versions may solve some of the above points.

In conclusion, I'd recommend that you use this software if you plan to put your records on computer. It's quick and easy to use, and takes the chore out of writing lists. The Essex Field Club has bought a licensed batch which it is offering to its members, and a few copies are being made available to the moth group for £10.

MapMate guidelines for new/existing users

Please contact me at an early stage. Tim Green has put forward a few suggestions when using this package, which can be amended as we see fit:

Site terminology - state first the area and then the site, for example town followed by address; or major site (such as 'Epping Forest') followed by sub-site (such as 'Long Running').

Duplicate sites - people should ask first and make sure the site is not already in use under a different name.

Methods - not always straightforward, especially with non-light trap or immature stage records

Comments - which things to store in this field, such as 'dissected' or 'specimen retained'.

Determiner name - if expert clarification/verification has been sought

Recorder name - surname first followed by initial or Christian name.

Reference - you can simply put your name and year in here. (For non MapMate records, I've been putting the recorder's name, year, and method of transmitting the records to me, such as 'Excel sheet', 'Paper list' or similar. Should I need to check anything later, I know roughly where to look.

Synchronising - how and how often.

***Acleris logiana* ~ A moth to look out for John Clifton**

The tortricoid moth *Acleris logiana* was once thought of as almost a Scottish speciality, mostly found in birch woodland in the Highland area, with a few records over the past few years from southern counties. It resembles *Acleris kochiella* and has now been found locally, with in excess of twenty records from six sites from Suffolk, the majority from the Ipswich area, giving the clear impression of a local breeding population. Norfolk also produced its first two records during the 2004 season, and I would strongly suggest keeping an eye out this handsome moth in Essex, especially in the north of the county and at Epping Forest.

EMG indoor Meeting

This was held at the Venture 2000 Centre at Lawford on Saturday 26 February 2005 and was attended by around 60 people. Tony Davis gave an informative talk on pyralids, covering a selection of species with photos and maps and comments on distribution comparisons with Goater.

Jeff Higgott's display was entitled Digital moth photography in Suffolk, and this covered moths and the equipment he uses to photograph them (Nikon Coolpix 990 and Canon's EOS 300D

SLR). I particularly liked *Tinagma ocnestomella*, a tiny species but here portrayed so clearly you could see the individual elements of its compound eye!

Brian Goodey's talk covered the butterflies of Sri Lanka and some recent local captures of merit. Reg Fry showed a variety of images taken from the UKLeps web site of life-histories, stages from egg to adult, with a plea for more material; and Zoe Ringwood updated us on the Fisher's estuarine moth studies. That about wrapped up the digital portion of the day and it was nice to be able to put new technology to good use. In the afternoon Ian Rose and others showed traditional slides and Paul Waring wrapped things up by reminding us of BAP species found in our area. The food was as ever excellent (thanks Bob, Sue, Gordon and helpers).

How many pine hawk-moths in Britain? Colin Plant

In England we have one species of pine hawk-moth, *Sphinx pinastri*. However, in southern Europe there is another – *Sphinx maurorum*. Where they occur together the two species cannot be separated on wing pattern alone and adult identification is based entirely on the genitalia of the male, which can be seen easily by slightly squeezing the abdomen.

Why might this species be in Britain?

- because many of our resident populations are generally accepted to have arisen through the establishment of successive waves of immigrants;
- because "pine" hawks arrive in Britain as primary immigrants in most years;
- because the natural range of the second species includes with that part of Europe from which many of our other immigrant moths originate;
- because nobody ever looks at the genitalia of moths that are as obvious as pine hawks!

Extending its range

The southern species *Sphinx maurorum* appears to have been extending its range northwards over the past ten years or so and it now extends almost half way up France. The more it spreads north the greater the chance of it reaching Britain.

Separation by the male genitalia

The horny structure on the inner face of the valves is clear and obvious to the naked eye (though a hand lens improves things). Gently squeeze live or freshly dead abdomens, or for dried specimens break away the lower quarter of abdominal wall on one side to expose a valve.

(A picture is on the web site)

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Harley Books: www.harleybooks.com

Lopinga Books: www.lopinga.co.uk

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