

Essex Moth Group



Newsletter 34 July 2005

essexmoths.org.uk

Moth trap pioneer dies at 94 Joe Firmin

Bob Dewick, the doyen of UK lepidopterists and a recorder of Essex moths and butterflies for well over half a century, has died at the age of 94. Bob ran what is generally considered the world's largest moth trap at Curry Farm, Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex, since 1947, in recent years helped by his son Stephen.

The brick-built trap which has a catching chamber 11ft square and 6ft high is topped by a 400-watt pure mercury vapour tube. Among the many notable species recorded by the Dewicks was the first UK specimen of the plusiid *Macdunnoughia confusa* in October, 1951 and Bob was honoured by having it named after him as Dewick's plusia.

Bob was one of the longest serving members of the British Entomological and Natural History Society, having joined in 1947 and was a member of the Essex Lepidoptera Panel since its inception in the 1970s.



From around the county

Pine and small elephant hawks have been evident in traps recently and both are having their best years ever. Migration has been very poor and even silver ys have been low in numbers.

122 *Opostega spatulella*, Writtle College, 25 May (Martin Heywood, Brian Goodey). Previous British records are: Essex (Southend, 1859 and Witham, 1876 and 1877) and Somerset (North Curry, 1877). This is the only other British record.

371 Lunar Hornet Moth Maldon 26 June (David Collins). First record for several years.

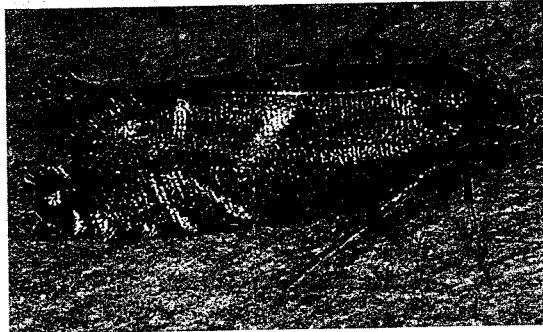


Lunar Hornet Moth Maldon 26 June David Collins

378 **Orange-tailed Clearwing** Langley Upper Green (Ted Ponting) and Grays, both June (Don Down).

379 **Red-belted Clearwing** Rayne, 26 June (Andrew Goodey). A thriving colony on an apple tree.

394 *Glyphipterix forsterella* Epping, Oak Hill Farm, 8 June (Dave Perry, Tim Green). *New to Essex.*



Glyphipterix forsterella Epping, 8 June Tim Green

539 *Coleophora conspicuella* Epping, Oak Hill Farm, 13 July (Tim Green, Dave Perry). Second recent record.

590 *Perittia obscurepunctella* Hainault Forest, Chigwell Row, 11 April (Martin Townsend, Brian Goodey). First Essex record for 25 years.

952 *Commophila aeneana* Canvey Island, 17 June (Don Down). First

recent VC18 record.

968 *Cochylis nana* Woodford Green, 27 May (Robin Barfoot); Epping Forest, 11 June (Tim green). The second and third post-1980 records for the county.

1033 *Tortrix viridana* Mass defoliation by green oak tortrix reported from several southern woodlands.

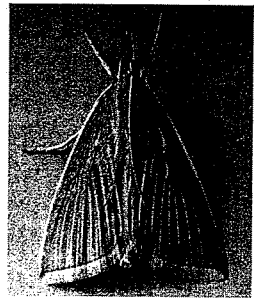
1208 *Pseudococcyx posticana* Woodford Green, 2 May (Robin Barfoot) Fourth county record; *new to VC18*.

P. posticana Woodford Green,
2 May Robin Barfoot



1374a *Scleroconus acutellus* Rayleigh, 14 June (Bill & Betty Doughty). Second Essex record; 11th UK record.

S. acutellus Rayleigh, 14 June Bill Doughty



1735 **Ruddy Carpet** Great Leighs, 4 July (Greg Bond). Seventh post – 1990 record.

1771a **Cypress Carpet** Little Oakley, 1 July (Gerry Slater, Peter Smith, Chris Gibson). Second Essex record; *new to VC19*.

1987 **Bedstraw Hawk-moth** Chrishall, 9 July (Phil Jenner). In cop with a privet hawk-moth.

1885 **Clouded Magpie** Friday Wood, 17 July (Brian Goodey).

1992 **Small Elephant Hawk-moth** A good number of records this year (also reflected in other parts of the country):

Daws Hall, Lamarsh, ten from 9 June to 24 June (Simon Perry); Epping, Oak Hill Farm, 15 June; Theydon Bois, 15 June (Tim Green); Langley Upper Green, 17 June and another on the 19 June (Ted Ponting); Maldon, 19 June (Russell Neave); Dovercourt, 21 June (Chris Gibson); Layer-de-la-Haye, 23 June (Dave Allen). Plentiful at Chrishall (Phil Jenner), where 60 - 80 have been recorded (the norm for Phil's sites one or two each year).

2039 **Red-necked Footman** Langley Upper Green, 23 June (Ted Ponting). Fifth post-1990 record

2194 **White Point** Reported from several sites, such as Wivenhoe, 28 May (Moira Jackson David Dutton); Maldon, 31 May (Russell Neave); Maldon, 12 June (Simon Wood); Epping, Oak Hill Farm 15 June (Tim Green); Dovercourt, 24 June (Chris Gibson).

2195 **Delicate** Maldon, 21 June (Simon Wood).

2223 **Toadflax Brocade** Kirby-le-Soken, 26 May (Paul Bergdahl); Woodford Green, 30, 31 May and 1 June (Robin Barfoot).



Toadflax Brocade Kirby-le-Soken, 26 May *Paul Bergdahl*

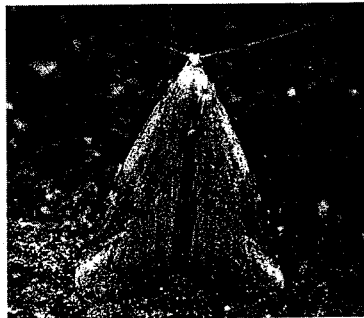
2396 **Rosy Marbled** Canvey Island, 20 June (Don Down). First record for south east Essex.

2403 **Bordered Straw** West Bergholt, 20 June (Joe Firmin)

2463 **Burnet Companion** Hanningfield, 31 May (Roy Widgery).

2465 **Four-spotted** Several locations in north west Essex, mainly in the Littlebury - Chesterford area. The most astonishing observation, from a site near Littlebury, was made by Colin Plant, during a hot day on 23 June, of around 100 adults on the wing between 8 - 9am. By 11.30am during a re-visit there were none to be seen. Other locations yielding small numbers of moths were Stump Cross on 8, 9 and 18 June and Chesterford on 18 June (Chris Tyler-Smith); Strethall - Great Chesterford area, 27 June, six, (Sharon Hearle); and several sites nearby reported by Phil Jenner.

2484 **Pinion-streaked Snout** Maldon, 18 June (Simon Wood).



Pinion-streaked Snout Maldon, 18 June *Simon Wood*

2495 **Olive Crescent** Two at a site in South Essex, 14 July. There is an old record from Epping and of presumed migrants at Bradwell-on-Sea in the early 90s, but this is a new and unsuspected location.

Canvey Island

Don Down is continuing to monitor this site and on 17 June he and several others recorded an interesting batch of moths which included a number of local species: *Commophila aeneana* (first recent VC18 record), *Ebulea crocealis*, *Melissoblyptus zelleri*, *Anerastia lotella*, rosy wave, satin wave, cream-spot tiger, obscure wainscot, southern wainscot, silky wainscot, and dotted fan-foot.

Elachista at Writtle College *Brian Goodey*

The Elachistidae is largely a neglected family of moths in Essex, despite literature such as *Moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* (vol.3) and *Fauna Entomologica Scandinavica* (vol. 6) being so readily available. This may be because they are small, often drab in appearance, and are rarely noticed in traps.

Since 1968 Writtle College near Chelmsford have been part of the national Rothamsted Insect Survey (part of whose task is to monitor pest species) and run a low-intensity trap which, because it kills its catch, is carefully designed to have a low impact on local populations. The trap is run usually nightly and the catch analysed at the college or sent to the Rothamsted institute in Hertfordshire.

Earlier this year Martin Heywood asked me to tackle some of the smallest moths, as these were being largely ignored because of the difficulty in identification. The star catch so far has been *Opsostega spatulella* (see *From around the county*), but equally as interesting has been the numbers of elachista taken.

Before this year, I had recent records for *E. canapennella* (= *pulchella*) from seventeen sites comprising of thirty-two specimens. Writtle has so far yielded around five hundred *E. canapennella* from 12 April to 26 May, peaking on 1 May when 192 were recorded. Curiously, all have been

males!

Other members of the family have been *E. apicipunctella*, *E. maculicerusella* (2); *E. argentella* (7), *Cosmiotes freyerella* (18), and *C. consortella*, again all males.

Clearly *E. canapennella* is more common than light trap information suggests, it may in fact be one of our commonest moths. It can also be found as larva mining the leaves of grasses such as soft-grass and false oat-grass but, Maitland aside, this method of recording is not popular.

National Moth Night, 2005

Hope you had a successful day/night - the weather was, for a change, half-decent! Results for NMN 2005 must be received by 15 December 2005. You can contribute in the following ways:

On line by going to www.nationalmothnight.info/form1.html

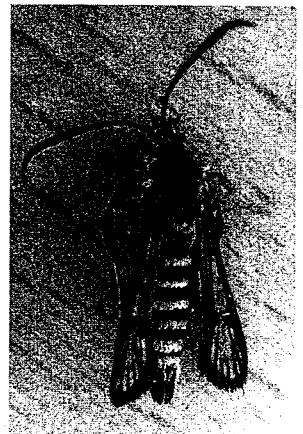
By post to Dept NMN, Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset. BH20 5QP.

Mapmate via www.mapmate.co.uk

A full account of the event will appear in the April 2006 issue of *Atropos*. An early but interesting result from Ted Ponting is of eight orange-tailed clearwing and two new sites for six-belted clearwing.

Six-belted clearwing, Langley. Ted Ponting

Another, from Chrishall by Phil Jenner, was of a male bedstraw hawk-moth *in cop* with a privet hawk-moth in his trap. Any port in a storm! Imagine the possibility of bedstraw hawks the size of privets, even if they were mules. For those interested, Phil took a photo and we'll try and get a copy.



Chris Gibson reports (*EMG Newsgroup*) 465 moths of 90 species: good but could have been better, say Chris. Probably the highest total was at Oak Hill Farm, Epping Forest, where Tim and Dave recorded 152 species so far, with one or two still to be identified.

Latticed Heath log for 2005

Specimens counted this season compared to the same period in 2004

<i>Week</i>	2004	2005
18	5	5
19	4	15
20	46	7
21	65	1
22	15	17
23	15	25
24	2	0
25	6	0
26	5	3
27	3	1
28	8	2
29	401	478

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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).

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