

Essex Moth Group

Newsletter 35 November 2005 essexmoths.org.uk



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

It's been a busy period since the last newsletter with three new additions to the county list and one other under investigation. At last migrants have appeared in better numbers following an indifferent summer.

A reminder that our **Annual Meeting** will be held at Lawford on *Saturday 18 February 2006*. We have had a few problems with our newsgroup service, which for reasons unknown was classified by Yahoo as a site containing 'adult material'. This has now been resolved thanks to Tony Prichard and an x-rated e-mail from myself to Yahoo!

From around the county

- 20 *Ectoedemia decentella* Jaywick, 28 September (Jon Young). Third post-1990 record
78 *Stigmella incognitella* Jaywick, 12 September (Jon Young). Third post-1990 record
103 *Stigmella nylandriella* Jaywick, 28 September (Jon Young). Third post-1990 record
158 *Antispila metallella* Jaywick, 27 September (Jon Young). Third post-1990 record
174 **Triangle** Beaumont-cum-Moze, 18 July (Ben Fisher)
290 *Caloptilia semifascia* Jaywick, 16 September (Jon Young). Third post-1990 record
330 *Phyllonorycter cerasicolella* Jaywick, 3 October (Jon Young). Third post-1990 record
331 *Phyllonorycter lantanella* Jaywick, 1 October (Jon Young). Second post-1990, new to north-east Essex
365 *Phyllonorycter comparella* Jaywick, mines on poplars, 3 October (Jon Young). **New to Essex**. See below
366a *Cameraria ohridella* Jaywick, 30 September (Jon Young); Walton-on-Naze, 10 October (Greg Bond); Ongar, 23 October (Tim Green); Colchester, various locations, 24 October (Mark Boddington)
458 *Ypsolopha alpella* Layer-de-la-Haye, 29 July (Peter Pyke). Fifth post-1980 record
481 *Epermenia falciformis* Jaywick, 15 September (Jon Young). Third post-1990 record
552 *Coleophora lassella* Writtle College, three, 27 - 29 May (Martin Heywood, Brian Goodey). **New to Essex**
573 *Coleophora atriplicis* Layer-de-la-Haye, 29 July (Peter Pyke). Third post-1980 site; first away from the coast
606 *Elachista humilis* Jaywick, 26 September (Jon Young). First recent record
744a *Monochroa moyses* Jaywick, 19 September (Jon Young). Second recent record
790 *Chionodes fumatella* Hockley Woods, 19 July (Graham Bailey). First county record since 1984
806 *Gelechia nigra* Jaywick, 16 September (Jon Young). Second recent record
877 *Stathmopoda pedella* Hockley Woods, 19 July (Graham Bailey). First recent vc18 record
999 *Adoxophyes orana* Magdalen Laver, October (Tim Green). Fifth recent record
1079 *Piniphila bifasciana* Magdalen Laver, 22 July (Tim Green). First recent vc18 record
1157 *Crociosema plebejana* Magdalen Laver, October (Tim Green). Second vc18
1385 *Ebulea crocealis* Canvey Island, two, 17 June (Don Down); Layer Marney Towers, 10 July; West Bergholt, 19 July Pods Wood, 31 August (Joe Firmin)
1403a *Duponchelia fovealis* Woodford Green, 21 July (Robin Barfoot). Second vc18 record
1454b *Dioryctria sylvestrella* Magdalen Laver, 28 August (Tim Green). **New to Essex**
1649 **Dusky Hook-tip** Kirby-le-Soken, 17 August (Paul Bergdahl). Fifth Essex record
1664 **Rest Harrow** Black Notley, 31 August (George Brown)

1716 **Vestal** Epping, 27 October; Magdalen Laver 27 and 30 October, 8 November (Tim Green); Rayleigh, two, 28 October (Graham Bailey)

1720 **Gem** Jaywick, 27 June (Jon Young); Maldon, 10 September (Simon Wood); Dovercourt, 20 October (Chris Gibson)

1735 **Ruddy Carpet** Black Notley, 14 July (George Brown)

1894 **Latticed Heath** Holliwell Point, Dengie 16 July, 200-300 black-headed gulls feeding on larvae and freshly emerged adults on lucerne (Dave Wagstall per Graham Smith)

1912 **August Thorn** Chalkney Wood, 16 August (Joe Firmin et al)

1972 **Convolvulus Hawk-moth** Lamarsh, 17 July (Harvey Davies); Cudmore Grove CP, Mersea, 31 August (Dougal Urquart); Great Waltham, 23 October (William Willis per Val Perrin)

1984 **Humming-bird Hawk-moth** Hanningfield Reservoir 25 May (Roy Widgery); Little Hallingbury 9 August (Janice Green); Lawford, 15 - 16 August (Anne Lansdown); Black Notley, 23 August (George Brown) West Bergholt, 27 September (Joe Firmin); Langley Upper Green, 3 October (Ted Ponting)

2033 **Black Arches** Stour Wood, thirty, 6 August (Joe Firmin et al)

2076 **Kent Black Arches** Maldon, 18 July (Simon Wood)

2119 **Pearly Underwing** Magdalen Laver, 8 November (Tim Green)

2131 **Square-spotted Clay** Langley Upper Green, three, 9 August (Ted Ponting)

2165 **Small Ranunculus** Dovercourt, 12 July (Chris Gibson); Great Leighs, 16 July (Greg Bond); Jaywick, 4 August (Jon Young)

2177 **Hedge Rustic** Rayleigh, 3 Sept (Graham Bailey)

2194 **White-point** West Bergholt, 29 May (Joe Firmin); Woodford Green, 29 July (Robin Barfoot); Woodford Green, 3 August (Robin Barfoot); Hockley Woods, 15 August (Graham Bailey); Lawford, 15 August (Anne Lansdown); Hockley Woods, 18 August (Graham Bailey); Alresford, 28 August (Robin Cottrell); Basildon, 28 August (Graham Bailey); West Bergholt, seven between 27-31 August, 28 September (Joe Firmin); Chelmsford, 8 October (Stephen Wilkinson)

2202 **L-album Wainscot** Jaywick, June and September (Jon Young); Kirby-le-Soken, 27 September (Paul Bergdahl)

2208 **Cosmopolitan** Magdalen Laver, 7 November (Tim Green). Third county record

2275 **Dusky-lemon Sallow** Hockley Woods, 28 September; Rayleigh, 28 September and 7 October; Hadleigh Castle CP, 7 October (Graham Bailey); Great Leighs, 9 October (Greg Bond)

2292 **Tree-lichen Beauty** Woodford Green, 29 July (Robin Barfoot), **new to vc18**; Kirby-le-Soken, 9 August (Paul Bergdahl)

2400 **Scarce Bordered Straw** Dovercourt, 15 October (Chris Gibson); Kirby-le-Soken, 26 October (Paul Bergdahl)

2413 **Silver Barred** Langenhoe, 3 July (Hugh Owen)

2428 **Golden Twin-spot** Dovercourt, 20 October (Chris Gibson); Beaumont-cum-Moze, 22 October (Ben Fisher)

2465 **Four-spotted** Langley Upper Green, 28 July (Ted Ponting)

2466 **Blackneck** Maldon, 14 July (Russell Neave)

The possible occurrence of *Simyra albovenosa* ab. *murina* Aur. in Essex *Russell Neave*

Bretherton, Goater and Lorimer (1983) stated in *The moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* (10: 142), that the melanic aberrant of the reed dagger known as *murina*, a form occurring in northern Scandinavia, had not been found in Britain.

On the morning of 16 July 2005 I noticed a dark 'dagger' in my trap along with three typical examples of *S. albovenosa*. I passed this specimen to Brian Goodey who kindly carried out a dissection and confirmed it as being a male *S. albovenosa*.

My trap is situated in my semi-wild garden in Maldon, Essex, which backs onto open farmland, with a seawall about half a mile away. Dykes around the fields contain common reed *Phragmites australis*, the nearest being 250 metres away.

The reed dagger is a frequent visitor to my trap from mid-July to early August: fifteen examples in 2004 and twenty-five so far in 2005. Recently I have noticed variation in the ground colour of the moths, ranging from typical pale forms to those with light greyish brown forewings and the dark example. Given the

abundance of local populations and this colour range, it seems far more likely that this dark moth is home-bred and not a migrant, and there was little migrant activity noted around the date of capture.

Has anyone else noticed a similar variation in other parts of the country?

***Phyllonorycter comparella* new to Essex at Jaywick**

(Digging for diamonds and finding gold instead!) *Jon Young*

I had heard that a new 'nep' (*E. hannoverella*, feeding on hybrid black poplar) had been found in Suffolk in 2002, so on 3 October this year I decided to see if I could find it myself in the Jaywick area.

I decided a walk around the Tower Camp area might be rewarding as it is surrounded by the fast-growing black Italian (Lombardy) poplars which are so useful as wind-breaks. In fact, the first tree I came to seemed to have brown blotches and small holes on many of its leaves – as did all the others.

When I got home I was disappointed – the mines were certainly not made by any nepticulid as there was none of the characteristic 'squiggling'. They were silk-lined holes, all on the undersides of the leaves, and it seemed obvious that whatever had caused them had only just vacated the mines, leaving many fresh droppings behind. I realised that only one family feeds in this way – the Gracillariidae.

The first group (Gracillariinae) make holes on the underside and then rolls the edges of the same leaf over as they continue feeding. As there was no sign of this rolling I concluded that the larvae must be from the second group (Lithocolletinae) – a *Phyllonorycter*, in fact.

Looking up black poplar feeders in Ford only gave one option, *P. comparella*, which I realised must be new to Essex.

The flight time of the adult moths is August and again in October to May, this second generation hibernating, but it would be unrewarding trying to find them doing this! Leaf-mine hunters are just as fortunate as trackers in the snow – you don't have to see the beast itself to know it's out there. However, I shall be breeding out the July generation of larvae next year so as to obtain some moths in August.

Ford also gives grey and white poplars as foodplants, so on the 16 October I put this to the test. Again all the poplars of these types in the area had numerous mines, including those planted along Midway, Jaywick, which further confirms the identification.

The Moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland (volume 2) gives the distribution of the moth as scattered (1970's record) - Herts, other home counties, some on the south coast, others in the north – an obvious candidate for under-recording by the look of it, as it is common enough here, even though referred to as 'scarce' in that book.

Despite few migrants, this year's new species brought the Jaywick total to 923 (455 micros, 27 butterflies and 441 macros). Forty newcomers were located during 2005 but out of them only six turned up in the two 250watt traps I now run. The others were all recorded the old fashioned way, as leaf-mines or larvae.

I'd like to thank Brian Goodey for looking at the *P. comparella* mines and reaching the same conclusion.

References

Ford, 1979, *A field guide to the smaller British Lepidoptera*
Moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland, volume 2, 1985.

***Amblyptilia acanthadactyla* Don Down**

Over recent years I have recorded this little species on numerous occasions, mostly early in the spring, but this year I have observed many more arriving at lighted windows around my bungalow just after dark, especially late July into early August when I recorded no less than seven.

Today, 21 September 2005, whilst gardening I disturbed at least five perfect specimens and, by the time I had completed my tasks, the total has risen to eight. All seemed to be freshly emerged, so it seemed obvious to me that they were breeding in the garden: but what was their foodplant?

I was working amongst a mixture of shrubs and herbaceous plants, but there was no *Ononis repens* or *O. spinosa* (restharrow) and certainly no members of the *Stachys* family, which are among the larva's recognised pabulum. However, whilst tidying amongst a couple of plants of *Salvia patens* 'Cambridge Blue' (sage), which were in rather poor condition after a period of drought, I found five small green pupae attached to the undersides of some of the remaining leaves. There was also one empty pupa case.

So I had solved the mystery of where this species was breeding. There is no doubt when they emerged in the next few days they will be specimens of *A. acanthadactyla*, a pretty little plume moth which has a very slender body, very long legs and divided wings. It is a resident, scarce species and is to be found in coastal gardens and some woods.

Follow up to the above

23 September: searching amongst *Salvia*, 11.30am, I found three freshly emerged *A. acanthadactyla*, two with wings still limp. The weather was cloudy and mild.

Contacts:

Records, Newsletter editor: Brian Goodey, 298 Ipswich Road, Colchester, Essex. CO4 0ET. (01206 841224), E-mail: brian@essexmoths.org.uk

EMG enquiries *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.essexmoths.org.uk

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

E-mail: tony@suffolkmothgroup.org.uk

Middlesex /Herts Moth Group: Colin Plant, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CM23 3QP. E-mail: cpauk1@ntlworld.com

Butterfly records: Val Perrin, 13 Pettitts Lane, Dry Drayton, Cambs. CB3 8BT valperrin@doctors.org.uk

Beele records: Nigel Cumming, 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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