

Staffordshire Moth Group Newsletter No. 2

January 2005

Introduction

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2005. The EGroup has now been running for a year and has been very successful with a constant stream of emails flying round the ether. In November a meeting to launch the Staffordshire Moth Group was held at the Staffs Wildlife Trust HQ at Wolseley Bridge at which over 40 attended. There was general agreement that the formation of the Group was a good thing and it was agreed to hold a further meeting of those willing to help in its running, in early 2005. During the meeting presentations were given by Dave Emley (County Recorder), Guy Corebtt-Marshall (Staffs Wildlife Trust), Craig Slawson (Staffs Ecological record) and Jon Clifton (Anglian Lepidoptera Supplies). We also have to thank Darren Taylor for his excellent Group logo. It was a very enjoyable evening and nice to meet fellow moth-ers that one had had only "virtual" contact with so far!!

So, how was 2004? There were six new species to VC39 plus three from recently received older records. Details of these given later. From 20,800 records received, a total of 669 species was recorded and the 10Km square with the most species is still SJ73 with SJ84 and SK05 being joint second. The richest site is Burnt Wood with 673 species followed by Coombes Valley RSPB reserve with 560 and Kinver Edge with 520. The species found in the most 10Km squares are Large Yellow Underwing, Common Carpet and Silver Y. There are now over 90,000 records in the database. and all VC39 records have been exported to Butterfly Conservation and we have received records from them too.

In this issue, as well as records of species, we have an article from Darren Taylor on his use of pheromones to attract Clearwings, and Mick Green's answer to Bridget Jones's Diary - I wonder if he wears the large knickers too! My thanks to them both.

Clearwing Hunting in 2004

Following past successes assembling such species as The Vapourer, I decided to try the synthetic version of this method and purchased a set of clearwing pheromone lures from Jon Clifton of ALS in May.

The hunt started on the 14th of June, a sunny Monday afternoon. I decided to try the Currant Clearwing lure in my garden, even though we have no currant bushes and to my knowledge none of our neighbours have any either. The first Currant Clearwing caught me off guard, mainly because I didn't truly believe there would be any in the area, but also because of its remarkable resemblance to a member of the Hymenoptera, even down to its flight: swift and deliberate. By the time I had armed myself with a net it was gone. I shouldn't have worried; within 10 minutes I had seen at least four more, all hovered around the lure without settling, so I netted and potted one to confirm identity.



There were perfect conditions on the 16th of June, full sun with a light breeze, so I tried for White-barred Clearwing and Large Red-belted Clearwing at Baggeridge Country Park in birch heath/woodland. I was without success, even though Large Red-belted was recorded at the park using old methods (searching for larval signs) in 1998. At 2.30pm, I hung the lure for Six-belted Clearwing as I noticed the adjoining meadow was blanketed by Birds-foot Trefoil, the larval food plant. Again, like the Currant Clearwings, they arrived at the lure almost immediately - three within 10 minutes. If I had stayed longer I'm sure I could have recorded many more.

I went on to record Thrift Clearwing on The Isles of Scilly but failed to find any more species in Staffordshire. However, I was delighted with the two species I had found and I'm looking forward to recommencing the hunt this year! To anyone who hasn't tried clearwing pheromone lures, I can't recommend them enough, even for those people who only usually use light traps. Personally I can't think of anything better on a sunny summer's afternoon than to hang out a lure, sit back, and observe some of the most fascinating and sought after moths in Britain.

Darren Taylor

New and interesting records

New county records

The following species were added to the Vice-county list in 2004 or the records have only recently come to light (sorry about the pun!).

0224 **Triaxomera parasitella** : Harborne, 26/05/2004; Jim & Christine Chance.

0287 **Caloptilia robustella** : Harborne Reservoir, 08/08/2004; Alan Prior & Dave Grundy.

0891 **Mompha sturnipennella** : Fradley Junction - Pool Wood; July 2004; Jon Clifton.

1689 **Mullein Wave** : Stafford, 22/8/2004; Graeme Lyons.

1818 **Marbled Pug** : Caverswall, 01/07/1999; Steve Cooper.

1842 **Plain Pug** : Caverswall, 30/07/1996. Warren cast doubt on the two records in Victoria County History so this is the first definite record for the county. Also recorded on 20/07/1998, 11/08/1998, 05/07/1999; Steve Cooper.

1949 **Square Spot** : Hawkbatch, Wyre Fores, 08/05/2004; Alan Prior & Dave Grundy

2044 **Dingy Footman** : Hednesford Hills, 09/08/2004; Dave Grundy. Also Consall Country Park; 14/8/04 James Hill et al.

2385 **Small Mottled Willow** : Caverswall, 11/08/1996; Steve Cooper.

Other records of note

0175 **Narycia monilifera** : Fradley Junction, 27/07/2004; Jon Clifton. Second county record; the last being in 1924.

0273 **Bucculatrix thoracella** : Penn, 15/08/2004; Darren Taylor. Third county record.

0409a **Argyresthia trifasciata** : Acton Trussell, 06/09/2004; Simon Phipps. Second county record.

0458 **Ypsolopha alpella** : Penn, 17/08/2004; Darren Taylor. Second county record; the first being in 1989.

0656 **Tachystola acroxantha** : Harborne Reservoir, 08/08/2004 and Queslett 16/08/04; Alan Prior & Dave Grundy. Second and third county records.

0670 **Depressaria daucella** : Acton Trussell, 02/05/2004; Simon Phipps. Second county record.

0966 **Cochylis atricapitana** : Wolseley Bridge, 05/07/2004; Simon Phipps. Third county record.

1054 **Acleris cristana** : Harborne Reservoir, 08/08/2004, Alan Prior & Dave Grundy. Third county record.

119a **Ancylis diminutana** : Swineholes Wood, 27/07/2004; Jon Clifton. Second county record; the first being 1869!

1231 **Pammene spiniana** : Wolseley Bridge, 29/07/2004; Jon Clifton. Third county record.

1233 **Pammene aurita** : Queslett, 25/07/2004; Alan Prior & Dave Grundy. Second county record. Also recorded in 2004 at Wolseley Bridge (Simon Phipps) and Fradley Junction (Jon Clifton).

1377 **Perinephela lancealis** : Postenplain, Wyre Forest, 16/06/2004; Dave Grundy. Third county record - yes, VC39 even reaches parts of the Wyre Forest.

1424 **Endotricha flammealis** : Harborne, 24/07/2004; Jim & Christine Chance. Second county record.

1425 **Galleria mellonella** : Fradley Junction, 26/07/04; Jon Clifton and Penn, 28/07 and 15/08; Darren Taylor. Third to fifth county records.

1481 **Homoeosoma sinuella** : Cannock Chase, 15/06/2004; Dave Grundy. Second county record.

1647 **Barred Hook-tip** : Brindley Ford, 29/07/2004; John Bryan. Fifth county record and the furthest north.

1804 **Barred Rivulet** : Apedale, 06/08/2004; Nick Pomiankowski, John Bryan, James Hill. Fifth county record; also recorded at Abbots Bromley 07/08/2004; Gilly Jones.

1812 **Maple Pug** : Wolseley Bridge, 29/07/2004; Jon Clifton. Second county record; the first being in 2002.

1973 **Death's-head Hawk-moth** : A dark form larva was found at Weston Coyney feeding on garden privet, August 2004. David Fisher.

1984 **Humming-bird Hawk-moth** : Brierley Hill : 19/03/2004; Graham Hill. Was this an over-wintering individual?

1999 **Lobster Moth** : Two at Hawkbatch, Wyre Forest; 08/05/2004. Dave Grundy et al. These, plus four in 2003, are the only VC39 records.

2033 **Black Arches** : Baggeridge CP; 2/08/2004; Darren Taylor and Hednesford Hills, 9/08/2004; Dave Grundy. Fifth and sixth county records of this superb species.

2090 **Crescent Dart** : Bradnop, 15/07/2004; Mick Green. Third county record of this coastal species.

2197 **Southern Wainscot** : Aqualate, 09/08/1998 (several); Steve Cooper. The 3rd and 4th county records; the last being in 1948 at Trentham. Interestingly the first was at Forton; not far from Aqualate. Look carefully at Common Wainscots caught in damp grassland areas.

2362 **Butterbur** : Caverswall; 28/09/1997 and 21/08/2004; Steve Cooper. The 2nd and 3rd county records; the first being at Froghall in 1930. An exciting find of a species that is probably more common. It pays to look at drab Rosy Rustics!

2379 **Small Rufous** : Aqualate, 09/08/1998; Steve Cooper. This constitutes the 3rd county record. It has since been found at Pipe Green in 2002 and Hednesford Hill in 2004.

2399 **Bordered Sallow** : Hednesford Hills, 13/07/2004; D. Grundy, A. Prior & N. Stone and Penn, 20/07/2004; Darren Taylor. Third and fourth county records.

2440 **Lempke's Gold Spot** : Caverswall, 05/07/2001; Steve Cooper. Second county record.

2475 **Waved Black** : Penn, 27/07/2004; Darren Taylor. The third county record; the other two being on Kinver Edge in 1980 and 1986.



0224 *Triaxomera parasitella*
Harborne; J&C Chance



0966 *Cochylis atricapitana*
Wolseley Bridge, S. Phipps



1233 *Pammene aurita*
Wolseley Bridge, S. Phipps



1424 *Endotricha flammealis*
Harborne; J&C Chance



1973 *Death's-head Hawk-moth Brown-form larva*
Weston Coyney, D. Fisher



2090 *Crescent Dart*
Bradnop, M. Green



2399 *Bordered Sallow*
Penn, D. Taylor



2475 *Waved Black*
Penn, D. Taylor

Reflections on my first year as a moth trapper

April 10th: I made a hole in the bottom of a washing up bowl, placed it on the top of a cardboard box and hung a 100w light bulb over it. The next morning I was completely surprised to find that I'd trapped 3 moths. But after an hour of frustration and total confusion looking through the field guide, I eventually 'phoned Dave Emley who explained that the two moths that I thought were "a first for science" were, in fact, Clouded Drabs; and the battered moth that I'd managed to identify as a Hebrew Character was a Twin-spotted Quaker!

April 11th: 5 *obvious* Hebrew Characters today (now that I'm an expert I can't imagine how on Earth I could have got it so wrong yesterday!).

By now I'm hooked and, after a helpful talk to Jon Clifton of Anglian Lepidopterists, I ordered a kit of parts to build a Skinner-type trap.

April 12th: 2 Hebrew Characters today and - after one hour with the field guide and a 'phone call to Dave - a March Moth and a Pale Pinion. The latter was a first for my square according to Dave's Atlas; this is better than birding!

April 16th: My first night with a 125w MV lamp and a home-made trap.

What a difference the proper kit makes! I trapped 58 moths of 9 species, which took me 2.5 hours and a few calls to the Dave Emley hot line to identify! It galled me but I had to realize that some of the moths were too worn (or too small) to identify, but I could live with that given that I was getting so many new "ticks".



April into May: And so it continued. The identification-times (and 'phone calls to Dave Emley) reduced as I gained experience and got familiar with the field guide. Also the number of species (and their beauty) gradually increased. I bought a digital camera and photographed every species. Dave kindly checked all my identifications - and I'm pleased to report that most of them were correct!

May 19th: a Poplar Hawk-moth blew my mind this morning. How could something so exotic and beautiful turn up in my garden? Why hadn't I ever seen one before? I showed it to all the neighbours; a couple of them even feigned interest!

June: Calamity!! I discovered that the resident birds were devouring significant numbers of moths before I got to the trap. I had to do something to protect my moths from the enemy. I briefly considered removing all my bird boxes in order to teach them a lesson! Eventually it dawned on me (literally) that I had to beat them to the trap.

June 5th: Even though I got up at 5AM I was too late to beat the

birds to their breakfast, as the discarded wings around the trap testified. So I resolved to get up before the birds from then on. I was especially motivated as I had five hawk-moths this morning (2 Elephant, Lime, Poplar and Eyed) - fantastic.

June 6th: Up at 2AM! Silly me it was still dark; so back to bed until 4:30AM - aaarrggghhh - more wings - I was too late again.

June 7th to 30th: Most mornings I was up at about 4:15 AM (the earliest being 3:45!). But I had a mission to protect my moths. It paid off because of the 69 new species in June a significant number was found outside the trap.

July 3rd: Trapped in Consall Country Park (near Leek) with some other moth-ers. Another eye-opener. Even though there was no time for leisurely examination and identification, the sheer variety and number of moths was surprising. As was the fact that the others were all addicted too and, by the light of the day, (almost) looked like normal human beings!



July 15th: 163 moths this morning of which 40 were Large Yellow Underwings (I thought that this was a lot at the time!). I also had a Crescent Dart which is a coastal species and very rare in Staffs; the identification was confirmed by the Gods Emley and Grundy.

July 27th: Trapped at Swineholes Wood SWT Reserve with Jon Clifton. It was a revelation seeing an expert at work and a salutary lesson on how much I didn't know. He even identified those little buggers that I just pretended weren't there! Also notable was the veritable blizzard of LYUs that you could attract in the appropriate location.



July 30th: A record catch (so far) of 241 moths, including 44 species. Unfortunately there were 104 Large Yellow Underwings (at this stage I still thought that this was a lot of LYUs!).

July 3rd: Trapping at Gib Torr SWT Reserve with other

aficionados including, to my surprise, several females (they all seemed to be humanoids but, as it was dark, you never know!).



Aug 9th: my highest morning total of moths today - 395 including 274 LYUs. I resolved to erect more bird boxes so that the next year's fledglings would have plenty to eat! I would dedicate my life to recycling LYUs into Great Tits!

Sept 18th: No LYUs this morning – hooray!?! But, alas, this signaled a drastic reduction in moths in general.

Sept 25th: No moths at all this morning – a sign of the lean times to come. Oh for those heady days in August with my beloved LYUs! I dug out my bins and went birding!

Nov 22nd: I mothballed the trap today (metaphorically of course) and reflected on my first year in the twilight zone.

Statistics:

5667 moths trapped or which 1484 were LYUs.
 211 species identified (189 macros) of which 61 were seen only once and 24 only twice.
 about 15 ticks for my square.
 monthly species totals: Apr = 23; May = 35; Jun = 94;
 Jul = 106; Aug = 88; Sep = 23; Oct = 13; Nov = 8.
 Maximum morning total was 395 moths.
 Maximum number of species in a day was 46 on 30th July.

Mick Green, Bradnop, from an organic garden, on a windy site, overlooking fields, hedges and distant moorland, altitude 830 feet, at SK 011 551.



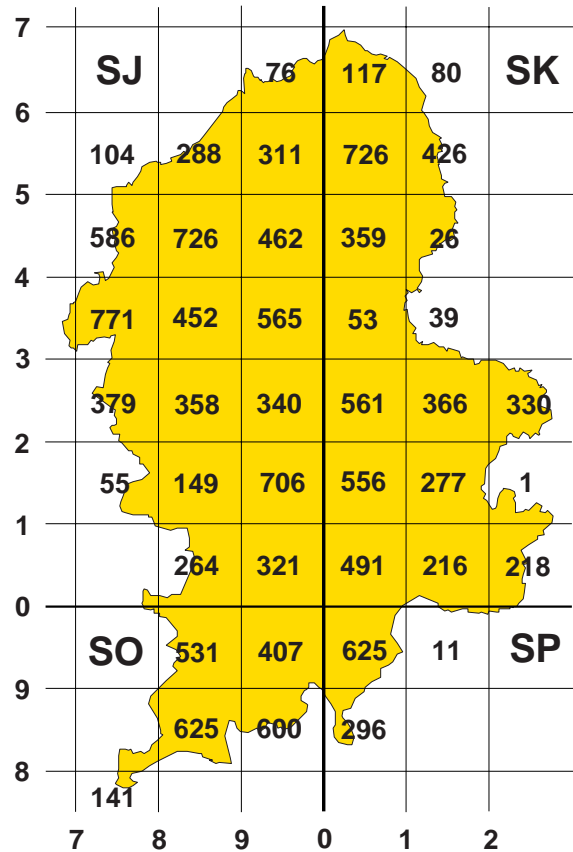
Special thanks to Dave Emley for his encouragement and patience!

EGroup

The EGroup permits members to send emails, pictures etc to each other. It has proved popular when arranging mothing evenings or when trying to identify problem specimens. Membership is by invitation to reduce spam. If you are interested in joining then email me at the address opposite.

Recording progress so far

Species per 10Km Square to 2005



The map shows the number of species recorded per 10Km square up to January 2005. While it shows clearly which areas have not been covered, bear in mind that many of the records are now pre 2000 or even pre 1980. So, there is a lot of work to be done to update our records. Also bear in mind that for some 10Km squares the records come from only a single site! So, the county is your oyster and away from the “honeypot” sites, almost anything is going to be an addition. Even the records from some of the best sites e.g. Burnt Wood, are now quite old and in need of updating.

Future Records

As usual please send any further records to me via email at:

d.w.emley@keele.ac.uk

Files can be in any format but preferably in Excel. Please include the Bradley & Fletcher number. If you want to send MapMate files then let me know beforehand.

Hardcopy can be sent to me at Earth Sciences and Geography, Keele University, Keele, Staffs, ST5 5BG

Future Developments

We will be able to say more after the next Group meeting but one thing I am keen to do is increase interest and that means arranging “public events”. If you are able to help with this by opening one of your sessions to the public under the SMG banner then let me know. As we are linked to the Staffs Wildlife Trust we are covered by their insurance. I would welcome any other ideas for future activities etc.