



Suffolk Moth Group Newsletter

Issue 20 - August 2000

Edited by Jon Nicholls

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Editorial

Traditionally this is the busiest time of the year for entomology and a lot seems to be going on around Suffolk. At last we have had some reasonable weather over the past few months of summer even if July was pretty poor. The numbers of species found on most Friday nights has been well up into three figures most of the time and my actinic garden trap has been producing thirty or so, which is as good as it gets here in Felixstowe.

After several years of reported sightings of the White-mantled Wainscot Tony Prichard has found it at several sites around Minsmere and Dunwich this year. Also the rare *Monopis monachella*, only found reliably in a few tetrads in Suffolk, has shown itself to be abundant in the marshes along the coast this year.

As we move towards the autumn the trees are changing and the moths with them but there is still a lot of light trapping left so happy hunting.

Changes since Morley : Notodontidae - Jon Nicholls

In 1937 Morley published the "Final Catalogue of the Lepidoptera of Suffolk". It contains a wealth of information on the then current knowledge of lepidoptera in Suffolk. What follows is a comparison of the changes that seem to have occurred to the distribution of the members of the Notodontidae.

These are medium-sized moths which often have a tuft of scales on the hind margin of the forewing

which projects when the moth is at rest - hence the name 'Prominents'. There are twenty-seven species, of which twenty-three are resident in the UK.

Both the males and females are unable to feed and so are not attracted to flowers or sugar and are difficult to locate during the day. The males are frequently attracted to light and the females also come but to a lesser extent. All of the larvae feed on trees or shrubs such as oak, aspen, poplar, hazel, birch and willow.

The following is a summary of the status of these moths in Morley's catalogue compared to their current status as we understand it.

Buff-tip; Morley states "Very common in Suffolk, usually feeding on lime, rarely flies to light, little noticed in west Suffolk". It is still a very common moth. We have had over two hundred records since 1990 and these include the west of the county as well as the rest of Suffolk. The improvement in MV lights would likely account for this extra coverage and one can presume that its distribution has changed little since Morley.

Puss Moth; Morley states that it was "frequent everywhere throughout east Suffolk on poplar and willow, remarkably not met with in west Suffolk". This moth has recently been found throughout Suffolk, including the west, with nearly forty records. Again it is possible that its apparent absence from west Suffolk was erroneous however Morley states that its absence is "remarkable"!

Alder Kitten; Morley states that there was only "one sole record in Suffolk from Elmsett near Hadleigh". Recent records have been just as elusive with only one confirmed recent sighting in Ipswich in 1997.

Willow Kitten; Morley states "scarcer than poplar but equally widespread, excepting in the north-east, whence are few records" . It would now seem to be just as widespread with over ninety recent records but it is still absent from the north-east and the south-west of the county. This may be due to the lack of recording in these areas and it will be interesting to see if the increased effort by the SMG to cover the county more widely will turn up any more sightings.

Poplar Kitten; Morley states that it is to be found "over the whole county, Sudbury, Bentley, Waldringfield, Martlesham, Ipswich, Witnesham, Monks Soham, Needham, Barsham, Lowestoft, Gorleston, Downham, Brandon, Tuddenham and Timworth". This would now seem to be a much scarcer moth, with only a dozen recent records, it is found only occasionally at light.

Lobster Moth; Morley states that it is "widespread, but quite rare with us, occurring almost always singly, but the insect must be very rare in west Suffolk". With over thirty recent records this would seem to indicate that the Lobster Moth has become more abundant recently. However many of the records are from the Thetford area, with another small cluster around Minsmere, and so I would suggest that this is still an infrequent visitor to moth traps around the county.

Iron Prominent; Morley states that it is "uncommon and usually found singly, rare". With over two hundred recent records the occurrence of this moth is now anything but rare. It is found throughout the county and seems to turn up wherever we are mothing in May and June.

Large Dark Prominent; A migrant yet to be found in Suffolk.

Three-humped Prominent; Morley states that it "was taken at a gas-lamp at Ipswich about 1867 and a male similarly flew to light in a shop-window at Southwold, 1884". We have not had any further records of this rare migrant in Suffolk since then.

Pebble Prominent; Morley states that it is "not very frequent". This is another species, like the Iron prominent, that is now a widespread and common moth found throughout the county.

Tawny Prominent; A migrant yet to be found in Suffolk.

Great Prominent; Morley is less precise here stating it is "tolerably plentiful at Playford, found sparingly

round Stowmarket, Nayland : Copdock at light, and eggs in Bentley Woods". This would imply that it was not a very common moth. Although it is still not very widespread, being found mainly towards the Brecks and on the Sandlings, I suspect it is found more readily at present possibly due to the use of MV light traps.

Lesser Swallow Prominent; Morley states that it was "scattered sparingly over the entire county, Playford, Ipswich, Blythburgh, Lowestoft, Worlingham, Hopton, Ampton, West Stow, Tuddenham". This is now a frequently encountered moth with records from most corners of the county.

Swallow Prominent; Morley states that it is "considered to be rare by Paget in Yarmouth, though actually commoner than the last species in Ipswich, uncommon about Stowmarket". With well over two hundred recent records covering most of Suffolk this is now a common species.

Coxcomb Prominent; Morley states that this moth is "widespread, in at least the east, and not rare; usually taken by casual beating hedges, occasionally at Ipswich lights". This moth is still widespread and common throughout the county.

Maple Prominent; Morley states that "this rare central European Prominent occurs but singly, at long intervals, one at Playford in March 1857, six or seven taken during the last few years within a few miles of Stowmarket, one beautiful example taken by myself on nettles close beside the river Deben's creek at Martlesham in 1900". This moth is now widespread, but rarely abundant, in East Anglia and is found throughout Suffolk, with over one hundred recent records.

Scarce Prominent; Morley again states that "this rare central European Prominent is as rare in Britain as the last one, not been observed since the Revd. Joseph Greene wrote of it in Playford :- one larva, which however unhappily died in 1858". There are no new records of this moth in Suffolk although Skinner states it to be "widely distributed in southern and south-east England".

Pale Prominent; Morley states that this moth is "by no means infrequent at light in August at Copdock, Ipswich, Playford, Martlesham, Monks Soham, Wangford and Beccles". With over two hundred recent records this is one of the most common Notodontids in the county and has probably increased in abundance since Morley's time.

White Prominent; Not recorded in Suffolk.

Plumed Prominent; Not recorded by Morley. We have only a few recent records of this local species showing that if it was present it may well have been overlooked by Morley.

Marbled Brown; Morley states that this moth was "very plentiful, two hundred dug in one week at Playford, also at Woolverstone, Stowmarket, Nayland, Bentley, Copdock, Ipswich, Martlesham, Henham, Sotterley, Beccles, Fritton, West Stow, Tuddenham, Barton Mills and Wangford". We have over one hundred recent records from most areas of the county showing that this oak feeder is still as abundant as ever it was.

Lunar Marbled Brown; Morley states that this moth is "apparently somewhat local in Suffolk, mainly around Ipswich where a few came to light in mid-April 1894". Still a local species, however this oak feeder is now found throughout Suffolk albeit in small numbers.

Dusky Marbled Brown; Not recorded in Suffolk.

Small Chocolate-tip; Morley states that this moth is "Not very scarce and widely distributed, not uncommon at Brandeston, discovered at Bentley where it would seem now extinct". There have been no records of this moth since Morley, it would now appear to be extinct in Suffolk.

Scarce Chocolate-tip; A rare migrant with only three records in Suffolk, one in 1898 in Ipswich, one in 1956 in Waldringfield and one in 1976 in Southwold.

Chocolate-tip; Morley states that this moth is "now certainly commoner than the last species (Small

Chocolate-tip), Copdock at light in 1896, occasionally at light in Ipswich". This is still a local species found throughout Suffolk but only in small numbers. It could be that this is another Notodontid moth with a reduced distribution since Morley.

Figure of Eight; Morley regarded this moth as a member of the Plusiinae and states it to be "extremely abundant on whitethorn". Although this is regarded as a common species we only have three recent records for it in Suffolk.

WANTED - Records of Beetles at light - David Nash

Work is progressing well on gathering records for the new "Coleoptera" of the county which is to be published by The Suffolk Naturalists' Society. With the very active recording programme of The Suffolk Moth Group I have been aware for some time that a potential source of many interesting records of beetles from across the county is being lost. I would be very grateful, therefore, for any specimens (alive or dead) of beetles taken at light (especially the insignificant looking ones!) to be sent to me with date, locality and 4- or 6-fig. N.G. ref. Plastic film containers or blood sampling mini phials travel safely and cheaply. If you are certain of the identification then records without supporting material could be acceptable e.g. if you can distinguish between the black silphids *Nicrophorus humator* and *Necrodes littoralis* or know the large characteristic ladybirds. You might even achieve fame by discovering the large (12 - 17 mm) oedemerid *Oncomera femorata* new to the county if you are trapping near to old ivy this autumn. All collectors contributing specimens or records will be fully acknowledged in the book. Please help if you can.

Send records to : David Nash, 3 Church Lane, Brantham, Suffolk CO11 1PU. Or e-mail : dr.nash@talk21.com

Records from recorders around the county

Location : Felixstowe. Recorder : Jon Nicholls. June –August 2000.

Things seemed to improve in June with weekly totals reaching three figures in my actinic trap. The number of species found was also up as more and more came to light. The most abundant species have been, not surprisingly, Heart and Dart, Mottled Rustic and Large Yellow Underwing closely followed by Riband Wave, Willow Beauty, Lime-speck pug and Dark arches.

Notable species have been Peacock, *Catoptria falsella*, *Galeria mellonella*, Phoenix, Figure of Eighty, Vestal (a beautiful migrant), Gothic, *Eudonia pallida* and, feeding on the petunias during the day, a Broad-bordered Bee Hawk.

I have also had four Old Ladys in the trap in August, I usually get one but this year has been exceptional. Also after a poor start another five *Tachystola acroxantha* turned up in July to confirm that the colony is still flourishing somewhere in Felixstowe. On the 23rd August another Cypress Pug appeared to go with the one I had last year, Has anyone else found this moth in the area, there is certainly plenty of food plant for them!

Location : Eye. Recorder : Paul Kitchener. June - July

Paul reports that poor weather has restricted his catches but he put out his trap on 14 occasions and has had the following; Beautiful Golden Y, Broom, Buttoned Snout, Cream-bordered Green Pea, Double Lobed, Elephant Hawk, Fen Wainscot, Green Silver-lines, Herald, Lime Hawk, Marbled White Spot, Peach Blossom, Phoenix, Shark, Small Elephant Hawk, *Cryptoblades bistriga* and *Myelois circumvoluta*.

Location : Ipswich Golf Club. Recorder : Neil Sherman. May - July 2000.

Moth numbers in May have been below average, with few species reaching double figures in the trap. 67 macros were recorded, most towards the end of the month. May began with the tail end of the spring species, including Frosted green, good numbers of Seraphim, Great prominent, Hebrew character and Clouded drab. The first hawk moth also appeared, a Poplar on the 6th. The Orange footman appeared again this year, being noted on the 8th, 14th and 16th, all as singletons. Other highlights have included: Powdered Quaker (after the first ones last month, seen again on the 8th - has been in good numbers at several sites this year), 2 Ochreous pug (on the 14th), White pinion spotted, Yellow belle, Eyed hawk (perched on the clubhouse wall on the 31st), Birch mocha, lots of Brown silver lines (as usual!), Figure of 80, Lime hawk, Common heath (seen by day on heather) and on the last night (31st) the Plain golden y, a new site record. Micro numbers gradually increased, with good numbers of the common *Eriocrania subpurpurella*, *Scoparia ambigualis* and *Adela reaumerella* (swarming round Oaks during the day). Of interest were: *Phtheochroa rugosana* (seen at a number of sites this year), *Eulia ministrana*, *Capperia britanniodactyla* (good numbers around the foodplant, Wood sage) and *Micropterix calthella* on Marsh marigold flowers.

June was a much better month, with a wonderful spell of warm humid nights mid month enabling a good list of 128 macros and 55 micros to be recorded. Seen this month were: Barred red, Blotched emerald, Bordered white (all in good numbers), Common Lutestring (one on the 28th), Gold swift, Small yellow wave, Orange footman (3 on the 3rd were the last of the year), Satin wave, Festoon (singles on the 19th and 28th, 5 on the 20th), Pinion streaked snout (singles on the 18th and 20th), six species of hawk moth: Lime, Poplar, Elephant, Small elephant, Privet and 2 Pine hawks (back after a years absence). The best night was the 17th/18th when 100 species were recorded, the best moths being: Broad barred white, Foxglove pug, Grass emerald, Large emerald (an early one!), Lunar yellow Underwing, White point and 2 new site records: Dusky brocade and Sloe pug (confirmed by comparison with a specimen bred from a larva I had obtained from another site). Freyer's pug, another new site record was also seen this month (16th), bringing the Golf club total up to 364 macros. Also seen this month during the day was reasonable numbers of Silver y and *Nomophila noctuella*, indicating that a migration had taken place. The caterpillars of Beautiful yellow Underwing, Emperor, Fox and Drinker have also been found whilst working on site, even though I have not seen any of these species as adults so far this year! Micros have also become more abundant with notables including: huge numbers of *Tortrix viridana* (over 200 a night during the warm spell) and *Platytes cerussella*, *Argyresthia spinosella*, *Schoenobius gigantella* (on the 16th), *Triaxomera parasitella* (a tineid seen on 16th and 19th), *Batia lambdella*, *Eudonia pallida* (on the 18th), *Arygresthia retinella*, *Calybites phasianipenella* (back after first being seen last year), *Myelois cribrella* (the Thistle ermine on the 20th), *Monopsis obviella* (also on the 20th), *Homeosoma sinuella* and good numbers of the migrant *Plutella xylostella*.

July should be the best month of the year for mothing, but this year it did not live up to expectations. Dull, cold and wet weather dominated the middle of the month, more like autumn than summer, so no trapping was done at all between the 3rd and the 18th. Despite this 102 species of macro were recorded at the beginning and end of the month. Of interest were; Gold swift, Short cloaked, Dotted fan foot, the strangely shaped Lilac beauty, Shaded fan-foot (a singleton) all on the 3rd, second brood Purple thorn (in good numbers on the 19th), Grass emerald, Canary shouldered thorn (on the 27th and 31st: autumn is coming!), Plain wave, Lackey (back after several years absence), a big furry female Oak Eggar (31st), Broom tip (another species not seen for a few years), Pinion streaked snout (numerous here and at a few other sites this year) Common Lutestring, Buff footman, Slender brindle and 2 more Pine hawks after the first of the year last month. Two new macro species were also seen: the Rufous minor (on the 3rd) and the Southern wainscot (on the 27th-this species seems to be on the increase in the county being noted at several other sites this year). Daytime discoveries this month were: Emperor larvae (numerous on heather around the site), Broad bordered bee hawk moth larvae (fully grown specimens on low growing Honeysuckle found on the 19th), a Small elephant hawk larva (green form) on the 26th and the Beautiful yellow Underwing feeding at heather flowers on the 31st. Micro numbers have not been too good this month but a few notables have occurred. These were: *Orthopygia glaucinalis*, *Epinotia brunnichana*, *Capperia britanniodactyla*, *Ypsolopha dentella* (on the 27th), *Pediasia contaminella* (towards the end of the month), *Schoenobius gigantella* (2 on the 27th), *Caloptillia stigmatella* (also on the 27th), the pretty little tortrix *Acleris holmiana* (31st), *Batia lunaris* and lots of *Synaphe punctalis* (as usual at this time of year here).

Suffolk Moth Survey

Aldringham Walks—26th May 2000

Cancelled due to bad weather.

Raydon - 2nd June 2000.

Raydon Great wood is an ancient woodland near Hadleigh that used to carry a railway line through the middle but this is now a public bridleway. Several areas along this bridleway have been cleared and coppiced in an attempt to produce more open grassland. Six MV lights were run and 77 species ventured out including: Poplar Lutestring, Seraphim (both aspen feeders), Least Black Arches (lichen), Mocha (maple), Flame Carpet, Pretty Chalk Carpet, Barred Red (conifers), *Teleiodes luculella*, Large Nutmeg, Lobster, *Ancylis laetana*, *Epinotia demarniana*

Beck Row - 9th June 2000.

Beck Row is an unusual area of Breck type grassland with 180 pollarded oaks near Mildenhall. Four MV traps were put out and 86 species were attracted including: Cream-spot Tiger, Fox, *Sitochroa verticalis*, *Evergestis extimalis*, Satin Wave, Small Elephant Hawk-moth, Common Swift, Sandy Carpet, Buff Arches, Lychnis, Figure of Eighty, Pale Oak Beauty, Maiden's Blush, Burnished Brass, Purple Bar, Blotched Emerald, Cinnabar, Peppered, Silver Y, Elephant Hawk-moth, Poplar Hawk-moth, Eyed Hawk-moth, *Thisanotia chrysonuchella*, Four-dotted Footman, Netted Pug (a widespread species but rare visitor to light, it feeds on bladder campion) and Grey Carpet (a Breckland species that again does not often come to light).

West Stow - 16th June 2000.

West Stow is well known for the Anglo Saxon village but it is surrounded by an excellent variety of habitats. The River Lark slowly flows over a sandy bed and there are areas of grassland and woodland as well. This year we found over 130 species including; Heart and Club, Cream-spot Tiger, *Ostrinia nubilalis* (European Corn-borer), Marbled White-spot, May Highflyer, Small Yellow Wave, Bird's Wing, Small Elephant Hawk-moth, Marbled Brown, Small Clouded Brindle, Small Seraphim, Brown Rustic, Shoulder-striped Wainscot, Fox, Clouded Buff, Pine Hawk-moth, Lobster, Barred Red, Clouded-bordered Brindle, *Pempelia palumbella*, Shaded Pug, Royal Mantle, Rosy Footman, True Lover's Knot, Lunar Yellow Underwing, Dingy Shears, Pale-shouldered Brocade, Eyed Hawk-moth, Cream-bordered Green Pea, Large Emerald, *Nascia ciliaris*, *Adela croesella* (not at light).

Boyton Marshes - 23rd June 2000.

Boyton Marshes is a coastal grazing marsh owned by the RSPB near Orfordness, it has a substantial area of salt-marsh bordering the Butley River. The weather was not ideal with temperatures around 10oC. Over 60 species were eventually found including; Mathew's Wainscot (a saltmarsh-grass feeder), Water Ermine (only found in East Anglia), Rosy Wave, *Agdistis bennetii* (plume feeding on sea-lavender), Dotted Fan-foot, Double Dart, Drinker, Elephant Hawk-moth, Poplar Hawk-moth, Eyed Hawk-moth, Double Dart and Cream-spot Tiger. Migrants included *Nomophila noctuella* (Rush Veneer), *Plutella xylostella* (Diamond-back) and Silver Y.

Pashford Pools - 30th June 2000.

Pashford Pools Fen is situated in the north-west of the county near Lakenheath. It is in the process of drying out but still has a rich flora and in addition to the fen has a small area of heathland. With over 100 species there was an excellent variety found including; a day flying Forester arriving at dusk to the light, Blackneck, *Evergestis extimalis*, Dark Umber, Coronet, White Colon, *Sitochroa verticalis*, Dingy Shears, Four-dotted Footman, *Eucosma campoliliana*, Wood Carpet, Pale-shouldered Brocade, Dog's Tooth, Triple-spotted Clay, Dotted Fan-foot, Drinker, Buff Arches, Green Silver-lines, Small Elephant

Hawk-moth, Peach Blossom, Elephant Hawk-moth, Coronet, Iron Prominent, Lychnis, Poplar Hawk-moth, Eyed Hawk-moth, Dusky Brocade, Broom, *Evergestis pallidata*.

Sizewell Belts - 7th July 2000

The area called Sizewell Belts contains a variety of habitats including deciduous and coniferous woodland, fen, grassland, marshland and sand dunes. This visit we concentrated on the more coastal areas of the reserve and drove the cars down to the sand dunes just north of the power station.

With 4 four lights running we managed to record 75 species. Nothing really spectacular but more notable moths included; Dotted Fan-foot, a few Garden Tigers, Bordered Sallow, *Cochylis dubitana*, *Donacaula forficella*, *Evergestis pallidata*, *Synaphe punctalis*, Six-spot Burnet, Drinker, V-Pug, Peppered, Privet Hawk, Small Elephant Hawk, Buff-tip, Lychnis, Bird's Wing, Bordered Sallow, *Marasmarcha lunaedactyla*. A Clouded Magpie was also noticed in car headlights as we met up in the car park on the way out.

Bentley Long Wood - 21st July 2000

This site is the remnant of a piece of ancient woodland that was previously famous for its lepidoptera - notably butterflies - with people traveling up on the train from London to visit the site. The recent building of the A12 has reduced the size of the wood. We are currently surveying the wood to see what remains in terms of its moth flora. Four MV lights were run in the southern half of the wood. What was particularly memorable about this night was the large number of micro-lepidoptera, especially tortrix species; with large numbers of *Pandemis cerasana*, *Ditula angustiorana* and *Archips xylosteana*. The occurrence of Shaded Fan-foot adds this wood to the list of woods around Ipswich where this RDB moth is found. Species of note recorded; *Athrips mouffetella*, *Teleiodes luculella*, *Synaphe punctalis*, Poplar Lutestring, Slender Brindle, Oak Nycteoline and Shaded Fan-foot.

TheInetham Fen - 28th July 2000

This small area of Fen, only 9 hectares, is situated on the northern border of Suffolk. The fen is dominated by great fen-sedge and black bog-rush with grass-of-Parnassus in the calcium rich flushes. The old fen is mainly alder carr close to the River Ouse.

Some of the more interesting moths included; *Cochylis dubitana*, *Cochylis hybridella*, *Acleris holmiana*, *Acleris shepherdana*, *Epinotia cruciana*, *Agriphila selasella*, Chevron, Dark Umber, Bordered Beauty, White Satin, Suspected, Ghost, Peach Blossom, Privet Hawk, Poplar Hawk, Sallow Kitten, Olive, Dingy Shears, Slender Brindle, Double Lobed, Small Rufous, Silver Hook, Nut-tree Tussock, Blackneck and Dotted Fan-foot.

Reydon Wood - 4th August

This attractive little wood near Southwold is a remnant of a much bigger medieval wood. It contains hornbeam, hazel, ash and field maple that were once all coppiced. Three decades ago speculative industrial conifers were planted but these are now being removed by local volunteers to return the wood to its traditional roots.

Several lights were set up and good numbers of *Acleris laterana*, Black Arches and 5 adults of Scallop Shell were attracted. Other species of interest; *Ebulea crocealis*, Lesser-spotted Pinion, Ghost, Leopard, Blue-bordered Carpet, Privet Hawk, Poplar Hawk, Elephant Hawk, Olive, White Satin.

Dunwich Heath— 11th August 2000

This is a National Trust owned site just north of Minsmere offering mainly heathland habitat but bordering onto the reedbeds in the northern part of Minsmere (Scottshall Covert). 7 Lights were split between the heathland area and the area adjacent to the reedbed. A clear sky and fullish moon, with lots of shooting stars, probably didn't help things.

A couple of White-mantled Wainscot were recorded, with one picked up from the heathland area. Another species of note was the tineid *Monopis monachella* which seems to be doing well in the area between Sizewell and Dunwich. Other species noteworthy species included; *Chilo phragmitella*, *Calamotropha paludella*, *Pediasia contaminella*, *Platytes alpinella*, *Schoenobius gigantella*, *Eudonia pallida*, *Synaphe punctalis*, *Pempelia palumbella*, Kent Black Arches, Star-wort, Silky Wainscot, Reed Dagger.