



Suffolk Moth Group Newsletter

Issue 31 - Winter 2003

Edited by Tony Prichard

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Editorial

As another moth recording year starts I am currently busy entering moth records into the database and still finishing off reports on surveys and fields trips from 2003. Many thanks to those recorders who have already sent in their moth records for 2003 and a gentle reminder to those who have yet to send them in that early submissions would be much appreciated. It is hoped to produce an update to the checklist this year so the earlier the records are received the earlier an updated checklist can be produced.

The events list for 2004 is still in the process of being organised but should be finalised within the next month or so. I'll be sending out the events list separately to the newsletter as the next newsletter will probably be produced a bit too late for the start of the programme. Part of the events will be concentrating on those species that we looked for last year and had a distinct lack of success with; False Mocha, Marbled Clover, White-mantled Wainscot and Marsh Carpet.

Thanks again to those people who have contributed material for this newsletter. I initially thought that this would be a particularly lean issue but some late submissions have managed to boost the page count. I would really like to see more recorders sending in site reports or at least a summary of unusual

species they have caught recently. The reports do not have to be long if you do not have much to say but it is interesting for people to hear what is being recorded elsewhere in the county.

It has been a topic of discussion recently as to how moth numbers and species will be affected this year after last year's rather long hot dry summer. Personal experience combined with reports I have heard from people looking for larvae in the late summer and autumn last year was that larval numbers were particularly low. Is this an indication that we are not going to see large numbers of certain species this year? Something to bear in mind during the year's recording.

Indoor Meeting - 2pm, 27th March 2004 - Alder Carr Farm, Needham Market

The date of this year's indoor meeting has now been fixed for Saturday, 27th March 2004. This is a little later than in the past but up until now I have been unable to commit to any time in January or February to organise or run the day. This year's proceedings will be more informal than previously with no guest speaker so for entertainment we will be relying on members bringing along things of interest to show others. I will be bringing along a slide projector and we should also have a digital projector - so slides and digital photographs are most welcome. Other types of exhibits are also welcome - anything that you think might be of interest to other moth recorders. Alternatively just bring yourself and see what others have been up to in the last year.

We are trying a new venue this year - Alder Carr Farm outside Needham Market. We used this venue for the Butterfly Conservation AGM last year and it would seem a good venue for our needs. There is good parking at the site and this is a more central location in the county - so it should hopefully suit more people.

For those reading this on the web a map showing the location of Alder Carr Farm can be found [here](#). Alternatively the grid reference for the farm is TM091553. Approaching Needham Market from the A140/A14 junction the farm is clearly signposted. On parking at the farm go through the farm shop to the courtyard and the Barn Room we will be meeting in is opposite.

The meeting will start at 2pm and probably last until around 5pm, depending on how much we have to keep us going. We will be setting up from around 1.30pm if you would like to come along and help set up. Refreshments will be available.

Hope to see more than a few of you there.

Whatever Happened To.....? - by Arthur Watchman

It was not until I was loading moth records on to MapMate from Record Cards that I discovered how many macros, which were regularly attracted to light when we lived in Ipswich (records from 1975) and subsequently, when we moved to West Suffolk in 1978, had become non-existent at light in Monks Eleigh. It seems that most of those looked at so far are now rather scarce on a County wide basis also, so the following notes are mainly of historical interest.

In Ipswich most records were from a trap left out overnight and this form of recording continued for the first five years or so at Monks Eleigh. However after 1982 the trap was only used occasionally and most observations were of moths attracted to the Mercury/Tungsten blended bulb at the front of the house, together with those at other external lights. These lights were usually turned off by midnight which naturally affected both the number of species and their overall totals. Nevertheless many moths could still be seen on the house wall in the vicinity of the MTB light for some years after 1982, including the subjects of these notes. Actually, there seems to have been an overall reduction in the numbers of moths at light in Monks Eleigh, but with their natural fluctuations, one can never really be sure of their real status.

The following species, members of the Lasiocampidae and Geometridae are just some of the ones that fit the criteria mentioned in the first paragraph.

Pale Eggar, *Trichiura crataegi* - This species was not seen at Wye Road Ipswich, but was a frequent visitor to the trap at Onchan Monks Eleigh, often in double figures until 1980. Then spasmodic until 1987 when the last one was noted on 15th September.

Lappet, *Gastropacha quercifolia* - Rarely seen in any numbers this attractive moth is another not noted at Wye Road, but a regular at Onchan in small numbers. The last one was seen on 12th August 1984.

Spinach, *Eulithis mellinata* - Frequent in good numbers in Ipswich. Less common but still a regular at Monks Eleigh. Last one seen on 13th July 1986.

The V-Moth, *Semiothisa wauaria* - The same comments apply to this moth as to the previous one. Last recorded on 26th July 1985.

Large Thorn, *Ennomos autumnaria* - Unknown at Wye Road, but frequent for the first few years at Onchan. Then regular but scarcer until 1992, when the last one, a female, was noted on 2nd September.

Dusky Thorn, *Ennomos fuscantaria* - Frequent but in small numbers in Ipswich. Much more common at Monks Eleigh (up to 15 per night) and noted every year from 1978 to 1990. Only 6 recorded in 1991 and last seen on 26th September 1992.

September Thorn, *Ennomos erosaria* - Occasional, mostly singles at Wye Road. At Onchan this species was much in evidence during 1978 and 1979, but only a few in the next two years. Then 1 on 2nd September 1986 and the last on 10 August 1987.

Lunar Thorn, *Selenia lunularia* - This predominantly woodland species 'fills the gap' between the first and second broods of the Early and Purple Thorns, all records being made in June except two at the end of May. One seen at Wye Road in 1976. Five singles at Monks Eleigh in 1979, one in each of the years 1980 and 1981 and the last noted on 30th May 1984.

Brindled Beauty, *Lycia hirtaria* - Frequent in good numbers (up to 9 per night) in Ipswich. More abundant at Monks Eleigh with 35 in the trap on 4th May 1978. Then much in evidence up to the mid-1980s, equally as common as its close relative the Pale Brindled Beauty which is usually on the wing earlier. Becoming much scarcer, only singles being noted in 1994 and 1995. The last one was seen in March 1996. Skinner suggests that this moth flies in March and April, but in twenty years I only saw it twice in March, the majority being noted during April and up to the end of May! MBGBI Volume 7, part 2 also thinks it is not on the wing during May! It makes one begin to wonder whether those late fliers were actually a different species! Any thoughts anyone?

Arthur Watchman

British and Irish Pug Moths - A Guide to their Identification and Biology by Adrian Riley and Gaston Prior. A Review By Neil Sherman

At last, after many years of waiting, this Pugs book has arrived, and it was worth the wait. This particular group of moths can be very difficult to identify, even sometimes with fresh specimens, but this book has the means to sort some of them out.

The text is excellent, with each species having its characteristic features listed at the very start, followed by the different variants. This is followed by a list of 'similar species' with which to compare to. My only complaint on this bit is the fact they are all listed in Latin, with no English names as well, but there is a reference to figures within the text that will eventually lead to the English name. These figures will also be very useful, showing the features to be looking for on the particular specimen you are trying to identify in relation to the others.

This identification section is then followed by a comprehensive description of the life history of each moth, including descriptions of the larvae at various stages of growth, foodplants, habitats, flight periods

and finally a collecting and rearing section. This will certainly be extremely useful as a lot of the Pug moths are far easier to record as larvae than adults, a good example being the Sloe pug, whose larvae can be beaten in Spring from Blackthorn blossom, but the adult moth is rarely seen (in my experience anyway).

Following on from the text on each species are plates of the genitalia and illustrations of the fully -grown larvae. These caterpillar pictures are in black and white, which show up some of their features quite well, removing the complexities of colour as some species have larvae that are very variable in this respect. After this are the Vice County maps, with simple dots to show whether a species is widespread, not generally distributed or of uncertain status.

Then is the section that most people will head to first – the colour plates, split into three sections. First, species are shown in taxonomic order, followed by species grouped together of similar appearance, then by species in their natural resting postures. The plates of the set moths are of good quality, although each moth is a bit on the small side. Certainly the idea of grouping together the similar looking species is a good one and will probably be the most used section of my book. The plates of the moths in their resting postures however are quite variable in quality. Some are 'flashed out' so you are unable to see any features at all! Others are placed on too cryptic a background so you can barely see them – the specimens resting on leaves are by far the better ones.

If you are interested in this difficult little group of moths (like me), then this book is a must, and, at £29.50 is reasonably priced for a hardback book these days.

Lunar Yellow Underwing Larval Survey 2004 - so far - by Tony Prichard

This winter's survey was rather delayed in starting due to the spell of cold nights running from mid-December through to early January. Since then we have managed to make four outings to look for larvae in the Rendlesham and Tunstall areas. Although it is still early days the impression that we are getting so far is that in general numbers are down on last year's survey and that the habitat in most locations searched is degraded in terms of the acid grass available for the larvae. It would appear that the long dry summer last year has not been good for the fine grasses used by the larvae and what was present has been severely cropped by rabbits. Another thought in our minds at the moment is that the adults may not have fared well last summer - what sort of impact do hot summers have on aestivating species? The picture is slightly confused by the results from two sites in Rendlesham Forest where we recorded our highest ever counts of larvae (70+). It would seem that they have fared well in these spots. We need to carry out quite a bit more surveying before coming to any firmer conclusions and unfortunately we have, at the moment, only one previous year's data against which to compare the current results.

The objectives of this year's surveying are to find new sites for the species, begin monitoring of selected sites to build up detailed information on these sites and to investigate the day-time behaviour of larvae in the short sward sites found in Rendlesham Forest. The surveying will continue into the spring and any results will be published in a later newsletter.

A very interesting leaf-miner, possibly - by Tony Prichard

The story starts in 2002 when Jon Clifton and myself were doing some leaf-miner recording in the north-west of the county at Howlett Hills. At the site is some hybrid Black Poplar and on these we noticed that there were some mines at the base of the leaves coming out of the petioles. Consulting the MOGBI key there was only one species that mined poplar leaves in this manner and that was *Ectoedemia turbidella*, so we recorded the species as such. On hearing about our finding this species Neil Sherman also managed to find similar mines in hybrid poplar at the Ipswich Golf Course and these too were attributed to *E. turbidella*.

In the following year I sent these records into John Langmaid (the National Micro-lepidoptera recorder). After checking the foodplant we had found the species on he informed me that *E. turbidella* was known only to occur on Grey Poplar in this country (I'd passed over the 'grey' in the MOGBI key when matching

it to *E. turbidella*). Initially I thought we might have mis-identified the poplar as the mine was a classic for a petiole-mining *Ectoedemia* and I remained confident that it was a lepidopterous mine. Further investigation concluded that the poplar was a hybrid poplar and not Grey Poplar.

The only solution was to rear some mines through and identify the species from the adult. In the autumn of 2003 a few of us collected leaf-mines to breed through. This species needs to be over-wintered to rear it through and belongs to a group that can be tricky to rear through so the plan was to have several people over-wintering the mines, thus increasing our chances of success. Neil Sherman took some mines down to the BENHS meeting to hand over to Jon Clifton as part of this plan and while there the mines were shown around interested members and managed to raise a bit of puzzlement and excitement over their identity.

During the autumn of 2003 similar mines were also found at 3 more sites, one in the Brecks (AWP), one in the Woodbridge area (AWP) and one in Norfolk (Andy Musgrove).

Thoughts on the identity of the moth fell into two main possibilities. The first was that it might be a new species to the country - *Ectoedemia hannoverella* - which mines hybrid Black Poplar and occurs on the continent, alternatively it could be *E. turbidella* on a new foodplant for this country - although European literature mentions Black Poplar as unconfirmed foodplant for this species.

John Langmaid pointed out that there are differences in the larvae between the two species. So a couple were examined and would seem to indicate that they are probably *E. turbidella*. Despite this we are still waiting for the adults for conclusive determination of the identity.

My money is on *E. turbidella* at the moment.

Bits and Pieces Quiz - by Neil Sherman

Test your knowledge on these moth/caterpillar pictures. Each shows part of either the wings, body or head of a moth or larva, all you have to do is identify the species. The only clue is that all have been seen within Suffolk in the last year. Answers will be in the next newsletter.



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Field reports - by Tony Prichard

5th September 2003 - Bromeswell Green - SMG Moth Night

This is an SWT reserve in the south-east of the county with recording this night concentrated mainly in the woodland and meadow areas. We had rather productive evening's mothing given the time of year with 73 species recorded. Prior to the light trapping some leaf-miner recording turned up some new site records; *Bedellia somnulentella* and *Cosmopterix zieglerella*. New species to the site that appeared at light included Feathered Gothic, Red Underwing, Centre-barred Sallow and *Acleris emargana*. Given

that this is a frequently recorded site it was interesting that 24 new species for the site were recorded, with 12 new species for the 10km square. Other seasonal species included; Canary-shouldered Thorn, Hedge Rustic, Brindled Green, Copper Underwing and Frosted Orange.

12th September 2003 - West Stow CP - SMG Moth Night

This county park in the Brecklands has some good heathland habitats but as experience has shown these can be rather cold at night. This was the case for this meeting and we took refuge with the lights in the birch copses dotted around the heathland. Only 18 species were recorded with four new site species; *Hypatima rhomboidella* (also a new 10km record), *Epinotia ramella*, *Agriphila geniculea* and *Eudonia truncicolella*. Species also recorded included; Spruce Carpet, Autumnal Rustic, Feathered Gothic and Pink-barred Sallow.

13th September 2003 - Alder Carr Farm - BC Moth Night

This was a moth night organised to follow on from the Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation's AGM and provide some evening entertainment for those attending. Weather conditions were fair and 21 species were recorded. Interestingly the sheet light out in the open attracted more moths than those positioned in the copse - a bit unusual for this time of year. BC Members had the opportunity to see a fair selection of autumnal species including; Feathered Gothic (new site species), Large Wainscot (new site species) and Rosy Rustic along with some more unseasonal species - Small Fan-footed Wave and Single-dotted Wave. *Bedellia somnulentella* would appear to have had a good year in 2003 and some mines of this rather localised species were noted on the abundant bindweed - providing a new 10km square record.

19th September 2003 - Priestley Wood - SMG Moth Night

A night at this ancient woodland site owned by the Woodland Trust that will be remembered more for the large number of hornets than the moths. No trap avoided attracting their share of these gentle giants with a sting in their tail (not how I would normally refer to them). Some leaf-mining prior to the meeting proper turned up a new 10km record - *Ectoedemia louisella* - that forms mines in the keys of field maple. 43 species were recorded in total with those of interest being; *Ypsolopha sequella*, *Argyresthia bonnetella*, Red-green Carpet, Brindled Green, Brick, Centre-barred Sallow, Sallow, Brown-spot Pinion and Pink-barred Sallow.



Successful field trial of the SMG hornet trap © Neil Sherman

20th September 2003 - Aldeburgh/Thorpeness - Moth Night

This coastal site may not have seemed the ideal location for a moth night at this time of year - apart

from looking for migrants. Large numbers of Fox Moth larvae were found amongst the low-growing vegetation while we were walking around the site prior to setting up - not surprising given the numbers of adults we see here earlier in the year. As the night progressed a single *Dupocheia fovealis* turned up at the lights - presumably a migrant as other records of this species appeared at this time in Essex and Suffolk. Thirteen new site species from 37 species recorded proved the value of holding the event here at this time of year with new site species being Feathered Gothic, Barred Red, Autumnal Rustic, Feathered Ranunculus, Red-line Quaker, Lunar Underwing, Pink-barred Sallow, Sallow, Frosted Orange, Bulrush Wainscot and Large Wainscot.



Duponchelia fovealis © Neil Sherman

26th September 2003 - Great Martins Wood - SMG Moth Night

This was our second visit of the year to this privately owned woodland not too far from Ipswich and the last official moth night of the year. As with the previous visit lights were concentrated on the heathland area and adjoining woodland. It was touch and go as we were setting up whether the evening was going to be a wet one or not - shortly after setting up the lights the question was answered when quite heavy rain started. Despite the rain we carried on and recorded 31 species, with 20 new species to the site - not too surprising as not much recording has been done here previously. Those species new to the site included Autumnal Rustic, Barred Sallow, Pink-barred Sallow, Mallow, Plain Wave and Lunar Underwing. The moth of the night was a singleton Black Rustic that made up for most of us feeling rather soggy. This species in recent years is being recorded more frequently and this probably indicates its continuing establishment within the county.



Black Rustic © Neil Sherman

12th October 2003 - Reydon Wood and Benacre Woods - SMG Leaf-miner Recording Day

The annual leaf-miner meeting seems to have become well-established and attracts several members

of the group - the lunchtime visit to the pub for something to eat could have something to do with that. This year we were up in the north-east of the county covering the SWT reserve Reydon Wood in the morning before moving on to Holly Grove (part of the Benacre Estate) in the afternoon. During the late summer I had had concerns that by the time this meeting took place there would hardly be any leaves on trees due to the exceptionally dry summer but as it turned out there were still plenty of leaves on the trees. At Reydon Wood recording started in the track leading up to the wood and a fair number of species had been clocked up before we even entered the wood. Of the 62 species recorded in the morning seventeen were new site records and fifteen were new to the 10km square. The more unusual species included *Ectoedemia lousella*, *Ectoedemia argyropeza*, *Ectoedemia minimella*, *Stigmella viscerella* and *Deltatornix torquilella*.

When we moved on to Holly Grove in the afternoon the wind was picking up making it harder to spot the mines on the fluttering leaves. A search of the reed-beds failed to find any of the species associated with Common Reed - we've not had much success to date locating these reed-dependent species. In the end 57 species were recorded and again a good number (30) were new to the 10km square. Species of interest included; *Stigmella viscerella*, *Stigmella alnetella*, *Heliozela sericiella*, *Bucculatrix albedinella*, *Bucculatrix cidarella*, *Caloptilia stigmatella*, *Caloptilia syringella* and *Phyllonorycter schreberella*.

19th November 2003 - Ramsey Wood - Moth Night

This meeting at the tail end of the season was held at this RSPB-owned woodland site on the off-chance of recording Plumed Prominent. A previous search has been made for this species at the site in the past. The previous visit failed to find the species and we had a similar lack of success this time. Scarce Umber turned up in reasonable numbers as well as good numbers of December Moth. Other species recorded at light were Northern Winter Moth, Sprawler, Feathered Thorn and Brick.

Reports from Recorders around the county

Records reported in this section have not been checked by the Suffolk Moth Panel.

Moths at Rendham – September to December 2003 – by Matthew Deans

September

The first week of the month was fairly quiet with a couple of Dark Sword-grass, single White-point and four *Nomophila noctuella* being the pick of the bunch amongst the hordes of Square-spot Rustics.

Mid-month saw the emergence of a number of autumnal species notably Brown-spot Pinion, Orange Sallow and Lunar Underwing all on the 15th. With near-perfect mothing conditions the trap was run nightly for a week. This effort paid-off with two species new for the garden on the 16th - Scarce Bordered Straw and Hedge Rustic. A single Dark Sword-grass also arrived with a Pearly Underwing. The night of 17th produced a Bordered Straw, which was excellent comparison with the previous night's Scarce! An unseasonable Buff Arches and an early Satellite also appeared. Yellow-line Quaker on 18th was a surprise this early.



Scarce Bordered Straw and Bordered Straw
© Matthew Deans



Satellite © Matthew Deans

As the month came to a close Grey Shoulder-knot and Autumnal Rustic showed up on 24th and 25th respectively. There was one final long-awaited addition to the garden list - a Pink-barred Sallow on 29th.

October

What a start to the month I had, when the first moth I set eyes on during the trap inspection after the night of the 1st was a superb example of The Vestal! It was a very fresh red individual and a welcome garden addition.



Vestal © Matthew Deans

The Mallow was quite numerous during the month as was Barred Sallow. Two Large Wainscots appeared on the 2nd with another on the 5th – this species occurs annually in small numbers. The first November Moth showed up on the 5th, which was somewhat depressing. On the 8th Feathered Thorn, Blair's Shoulder-knot and Green-brindled Crescent emerged.

An impressive 22 species were notched up on 9th including two Merveille du Jour - the first of many. A few late immigrants included White-point on 9th and Silver Y (12th). The Deep-brown Dart showed up on the 13th - only the second garden record following one last year. Two Red-line Quaker and a late Large Yellow Underwing rounded off October on the 28th.

November

The Rendham trap was operated on 13 trap nights this month, far more coverage than any previous November due to the unseasonably warm conditions.

A December Moth was the first new species for the year appearing on the 3rd. The last Brick and

Orange Sallow of the year were trapped on the 5th.

As an interesting exercise on the night of the 8th the trap was run and monitored during a lunar eclipse. With bright moonshine no moths appeared until a single Feathered Thorn was lured to the light half way through the eclipse at 11.30pm. At midnight a November Moth showed up by which time three-quarters of the moon was eclipsed. Once the eclipse was over, the garden was illuminated until dawn by strong moonlight and no further moths appeared.

The following night (9th) was much better with Mottled Umber and Sprawler the best of nine species. A flurry of late immigrants included Silver Y on the 18th and *N. noctuella* and Dark Sword-grass on 21st.

The month ended with two Winter Moths on 21st with three Scarce Umbers during 22nd - 30th.

December

Single Winter Moth and December Moth were recorded on the 2nd. The only Dark Chestnut of the year appeared on the 4th. A Mottled Umber on the 8th was one of only two autumn records this year. The trap was run on Christmas Day night but rather disappointingly the only moth that appeared was a Winter Moth!

Moths at Bawdsey – September to December 2003 – by Matthew Deans

September

The Light Emerald was plentiful in the first week of the month with five on the 3rd. A couple of *Nomophila noctuella* were recorded on 4th with three Centre-barred Sallows. Small Dusty Wave and Mullein Wave were present on 7th and 8th respectively. A single Archer's Dart was found on the 14th, Treble-bar on 16th and an impressive 11 Garden Carpets on the 17th. The green *prasinaria* form of the Barred Red was seen on the 18th. Excitement on the 19th was provided by two Humming-bird Hawk-moths nectaring on Buddleia late morning. The last week of the month was dominated by Feathered Ranunculus and Lunar Underwings although did include a Dark Sword-grass on the 28th.

October

One of the more exciting discoveries this year was a single L-album Wainscot on 1st. This species seems to be on the increase in Suffolk with more records from nearby Landguard every year. Most of the usual autumnal species showed up during the month with November Moth appearing from 12th. The last White-point was 15th and Silver Y on the 22nd. An *Acleris sparsana* was noted on the 30th.

November

November Moths and Feathered Thorns were regular throughout. A single example of The Streak was welcome on the 11th – a species I have never trapped at Rendham. Three Scarce Umbers were recorded in the final week of November along with a couple of Mottled Umbers.

December

A disappointing end to the year with just two species recorded this month – Winter Moth and Mottled Umber. The highest count of Winter Moth was ten on the 23rd.

Moths at Ipswich Golf Club - September to November 2003 - by Neil Sherman

The warm dry weather continued into the first half of September, only being broken mid month for a short time by a few cold nights (with the first frost) and some much needed rain showers. The end of the month had some cloudy mild nights which produced some interesting records for the site, including a few species 'out of season', a trend that was noted by other recorders in Suffolk at the same time.



Sallow © Neil Sherman



Large Ranunculus © Neil Sherman

Light traps were put out on 9 nights during the month, which, along with daytime observations of larvae and a few leaf miners produced a total of 127 species recorded. Of possible interest on the macro front were the following. The Mallow appeared on the 27th (2), the first for the year. Also a yearly first was a singleton Spruce carpet on the 9th. Lunar Yellow Underwing appeared as single moths on 5 widely scattered nights, in previous years there have been multiple records in a night – maybe this is a species that didn't like the really hot weather. More numerous were Hedge Rustic, Feathered Gothic, Feathered Ranunculus and, from mid month, Lunar Underwing. Heath Rustic appeared right on time, with 4 on the 11th followed by another on the 21st. Another Heathy grassland moth, the Deep-brown Dart appeared on the 27th (4). The Sallows always add a bit of colour to what can be a drab selection of moths at this time of year. Orange Sallow (11th – just the wings left in the trap as a Hornet had eaten the rest!) and the Sallow have been noted so far. No Centre-barred Sallow have been seen, a species that seems to be common elsewhere in Suffolk but certainly isn't here! Other colourful moths included Red Underwing (a tatty one on the 27th), Flounced Chestnut (30th) and Brick (2 on 18th). The Large Ranunculus was seen on the 27th, this being the first record since 1995 here. Another notable record was the Chestnut seen on the 11th – this is the earliest autumn record I have for this common species here. Even better were two new macros for the site – a Small Mottled Willow on the 17th, followed by a Black Rustic on the 30th. I have seen the Black Rustic elsewhere in the UK, where it seems to be common, while in Suffolk it is very local, but is almost certainly spreading.



Heath Rustic © Neil Sherman



Small Mottled Willow © Neil Sherman

Micros of possible interest were fewer in number, but included *Prays fraxinella* (form rustica) on the 11th, *Ypsolopha sylvella* (21st), *Archips podana* (second brood quite numerous), *Orthopygia glaucinalis* (11th) and *Udea ferrugalis* (on the 4th).

What was notable about September this year was the number of species appearing that I would not normally expect to see at the time of year. Here is a list of the species seen at the site, followed by the numbers recorded - *Acleris forsskaleana* (1), *Pediasia contaminella* (7), *Eudonia pallida* (2), Buff Arches (1), Willow Beauty (1), Engrailed (1), Riband Wave (1), Plain Wave (1), Yellow-tail (7), Rosy Footman (1), Nutmeg (1) and Mottled Rustic (1). Some of these the literature states do have a small second brood, but some of the others do not. It has certainly all been caused by the weather this year.

Noted as daytime sightings of larvae were Festoon (the larva falling on one of the staff as we were driving a buggy under an oak tree!), Grey Dagger and 2 specimens of the Knot Grass.

October was in complete contrast to September – apart from a few mild nights early on, conditions were awful for recording moths. A combination of below average temperatures, wind and, at the end of the month rain meant the trap didn't go out much (only 4 times).

Things started well enough on the 2nd, with 20 species. This included 109 Lunar underwings, Deep-brown Dart, Beaded Chestnut, Barred Sallow, White-point, Flounced Chestnut and a second brood Smoky Wainscot. 19 species were seen on the 8th, with 5 Barred Sallow, Sallow and Pink-barred Sallow brightening up the catch. Also seen were Brindled Green (7), Green-brindled Crescent and the first November Moth of the season. On the following night, Merveille du Jour, Vapourer, Feathered Thorn (first for year) and another second brood *Pediasia contaminella* were seen along with the usual suspects for early October. The trap then went into storage; not coming out again until the 28th, when a brief let up in the weather tempted me to try the trap. I was not rewarded by my efforts, with only 5 species appearing, with the most interesting being Flounced Chestnut (2) and a late record of Large Yellow Underwing (2).

Diurnea lipsiella (*phryganella*) was seen twice in daytime flight, this being the only adult moth of interest seen all month during the day! Attention switched to leaf miners, which are much more interesting when conditions are this bad in the autumn. Most recording was done on other sites in Suffolk, to help get good coverage of the whole county for this group of moths. However, the following were found at the golf club that are of possible interest (foodplant listed afterwards in brackets).

Ectoedemia intimella (sallow), *Ectoedemia argyropeza* (aspen), *Stigmella trimaculella* (poplar), *Heliozela resplendella* (alder) and *Bucculatrix cidarella* (alder).

In November, light traps were operated on 4 nights, when conditions were mild for the time of year. This resulted in 24 species being noted, with 15 being trapped on the night of the 18th. After this successful catch, the weather worsened with wet or frosty conditions finally arriving, bringing a halt to recording.

Moths of possible note seen in the traps were Merveille du Jour (4th), Red-green Carpet (also on the 4th), Streak (regular), Northern Winter Moth (on 10th and 4 on the 18th), Brick, Scarce Umber (3 on the 18th were first for the year) and Pale November Moth (one on the 4th confirmed by genitalia examination). There were several records of moths not normally seen at the time of the year, including 2 Large Yellow Underwing on the 5th, *N.noctuella* (18th – latest ever) and Vine's Rustic (also on the 18th and the latest ever record.). On top of all of these sightings were good numbers of the usual species seen at this time of the year including Feathered Thorns, December Moths and November Moths.

One species notable by its absence during the month was the Chestnut, normally quite common here. Perhaps the dry summer and autumn has had an effect on this species.

Both Angle Shades and *Acleris cristana* were found while coppicing gorse on the 19th and were the only notable daytime sightings.

A year at Hopton and tales of a season end puzzler... - by Paul Bryant

Greetings from the ex-Thurston recorder. You may recall that last year Ann & I moved to Hopton whilst looking for a new home. However, neither of us expected to still be living there a year later. The good news is that we've finally found a new home in Woolpit. The downside is that we can't move in as it needs re-decorating from top to bottom. Consequently, we now spend most weekends learning new skills like putting up coving and artexing ceilings! So what I hear you cry, well, I did get to spend an unexpected year moth trapping in Hopton so with a promise to try and be a bit more seasonal in my write-ups in 2004 here is a flavour of mothing in Hopton during 2003.

Our temporary home is on the NW side of the village. I have the choice of two 'back' gardens which are laid mostly to lawn. These in turn back on to an arable field that slopes gently down to Hopton Fen, a few hundred metres away. We are surrounded by a number of well established gardens and to one side is a semi-scruffy hedge. Not too far away there is a scattering of mixed deciduous trees with the odd

conifer amongst them. Apart from a few pots and some young conifers at the front of the house there is also a lone pine tree in one back garden that stands some 10 - 12 metres tall. Hopton Fen is not too dissimilar to Market Weston Fen, which is little more than a mile or two away as the crow flies. Both gardens are quite exposed and there always seems to be a breeze or gale blowing in from the west, which did cause problems at times but didn't prevent me from trapping whenever time and conditions allowed.

Throughout April and May I started to notch up all the species you would typically expect to find in and around your average garden or hedgerow. Of the more interesting species (? immigrant) Dark Sword-grass was trapped on 24/4, a Pale Oak Beauty on 8/5 and a Netted Pug on 29/5. Indications that I was within wandering distance of the fen arrived in the form of Sallow Kitten on 25/5 and Pale-shouldered Brocade on 27/5. The first of seven hawk-moth sp. to appear (alas all the commoner ones and no Bedstraw or Striped) was a Lime Hawk on 10/5. Best of all was a female Emperor Moth trapped on the 4/5. Wanting to impress Ann the following morning I kept her in the fridge overnight (the moth, not Ann!) only to discover that during the night she had laid 40 eggs inside the pot. These all hatched and I few were retained which (fingers crossed) should currently be metamorphosing in the garage. Like their mother, the rest were liberated on Knettishall Heath.



Netted Pug © Paul Bryant



Emperor Moth © Paul Bryan

In June and July things gathered momentum. Heart & Dart numbers peaked at 52 on 10/6 and Large Yellow Underwing appeared on mass during July. A Peach Blossom on 4/6 was very welcome, as was a Pretty Chalk Carpet on 26/6. Three Privet Hawk-moths; a species that impressed the neighbours, were seen on 17/6 and probably came from a nearby garden where the food plant can be found. Fenland reminders were Round-winged Muslin on 8/7 and Fen Wainscot on 22/7. Dark Sword-grass was seen again on two nights during this period and a single Garden Tiger on 28/6 was a bonus.



Pretty Chalk Carpet © Paul Bryant



Dark Sword-grass © Paul Bryant

August was a good month for the common species. Good conditions on the 4/8 produced 30+ Flame Shoulder, c50 Large Yellow Underwings and 100+ Setaceous Hebrew Characters – numbers of the latter species peaking at 120+ on 22/8. Whilst weeding one afternoon in August I saw a Vapourer moth larva crawling about, presumably looking for somewhere to pupate. By September autumnal moths started to appear and typically included Brown-spot Pinion, Beaded Chestnut, Grey-shoulder Knot and a

selection of Sallow sp. A Bordered Straw was trapped on 7/9 and Lunar Underwing was also seen throughout the month. A real treat was two Red Underwings seen on the 4/9, only one of which stayed in the trap.

Late October and early November was a frustrating period as I suffered a run of blank nights. My luck eventually changed on the night of 19/11, when favourable conditions saw single Feathered Thorn, December Moth, Blair's Shoulder-knot, Dark Chestnut and two Yellow-lined Quakers appear in the trap. Most intriguing of all was what I tentatively identified as a Shark, although a quick read through the literature left me pondering as surely it shouldn't be on the wing at this time of year. I potted the specimen up with a view to having a better look when I got home from work but it wasn't until the weekend that I was finally able to have a good look. Thankfully, the moth was still alive. I had already mentioned its capture to Lee and Matthew during the week who both wondered if I had not mistaken it for a Pale Pinion or a Grey Shoulder-knot, both species with which I was familiar. It was not until Lee saw it for himself on the Saturday evening that opinions changed. It was obviously a Shark sp, with Chamomile being favourite. A quick phone call to Matthew saw him travel across to have a look and by the time he left we were all in agreement - Chamomile Shark it was. But what was it doing out at this time of the year?

Realising the importance of the record Matthew kindly offered to pin the specimen for me, which also gave him a chance to confirm its identification using external characters – overall size, hindwing pattern and detail of the wing-tip. This does still leave one unanswered question, where had it come from? From memory the days leading up to its capture were mild so it could have been of local origin, although literature implies that the flight period is generally considered to be April to May / June. Alternatively, it could have been an immigrant. Whatever, it was a real surprise and somewhat typical of what seemed a bit of a mixed up year.



Chamomile Shark © Matthew Deans



Vapourer © Paul Bryant

Come the end of the year, I had recorded just over 300 species which came as quite a surprise especially considering the time that it took to reach this figure at Thurston. Thanks as ever must go to everyone involved with the SMG for their help and identification skills.

Happy trapping in 2004.

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The Newsletter

This is the newsletter for the Suffolk Moth Group. It is distributed free to those with email and at a £2 per annum subscription for paper copies. Four issues are produced per year although the precise time of production varies. I am always on the look out for articles that will be of interest to moth recorders in Suffolk, although field and site reports should be topical. Please contact me for publication deadlines as this varies with each issue and tends to be flexible.

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