



DEVON MOTH GROUP

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NEWSLETTER 2012 ISSUE 3 (June)

Well it is approaching the height of the moth recording season, although you wouldn't know it from the daily deluges of rain and the pitifully poor numbers of moths in many traps. Hope you are having better luck than most. There are certainly a few interesting moths around for those lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time.

The highlight over the past couple of months was the capture of a single specimen of the Pyralid *Agrotera nemoralis*, the first record of this species in Devon. This was found at light by Roy McCormick at Holcombe nr Teignmouth on 1.6.2012. The new *Field Guide to the Micro-moths of Great Britain and Ireland* (Sterling, Parsons & Lewington, 2012) states that this is a rare species, perhaps restricted to a single site in Kent, but which has been recorded recently in Cornwall, Dorset and Sussex, presumably as immigrants. Indeed, by coincidence, the article on p.3 about recent moth news next door in East Cornwall also highlights this species.



Agrotea nemoralis (Roy McCormick)

Other notable June migrants have included *Cyclophora pupillaria* Blair's Mocha, one seen by Geoff Wisdom in Exmouth and another by Roy in Teignmouth, and *Orthonama obstipata* Gem caught at Colyford by Peter Vernon.

May I also take this opportunity to remind you about Moth Night 2012, which takes place on three days and three nights this year (Thursday 21st – Saturday 23rd June), hopefully giving us all some chance to record moths whatever the weather may have in store. Devon Moth Group is holding a field meeting, as always, for Moth Night, one of several in the coming weeks. You're very welcome to come along to these meetings so see details on p.6.

Happy mothing!
Richard Fox

**Members of Council: Richard Fox, Chairman; Roy McCormick, FRES, Secretary/Treasurer;
Rob Wolton, Conservation; Nicola Bacciu, Membership & Distribution; Barry Henwood, Ordinary Member.**

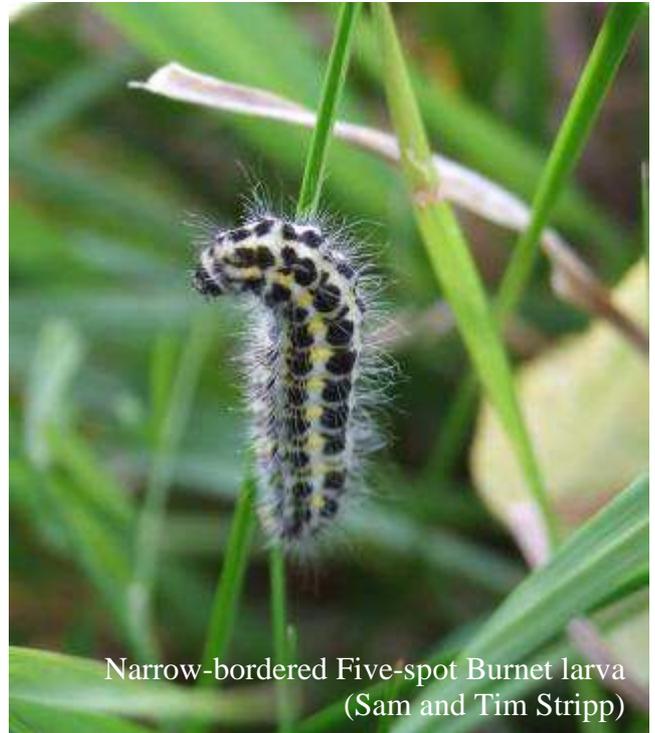
Another colony of *Zygaena lonicerae* in Devon

A second colony of *Zygaena lonicerae*, Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet, has been found in Devon on Mincinglake Valley Park, Exeter.

After reading Barry Henwoods's article in the spring newsletter last year about *Z. lonicerae* being found in Devon, we decided that we would make the effort to take more notice of the Burnet moths. For us, Burnets were evocative of sunny summer days walking along the coast, which is not always the safest place to bug-hunt with small children, so we'd not done more than watch them.

A few days after reading the article, whilst dog-walking in our local nature reserve, Mincinglake Valley Park, Exeter, we were surprised to find a host of adult burnets gathering on thistle flowers drinking the nectar and mating. Luckily, we had collecting pots with us, so decided to catch some to try to identify them and take photos, before releasing them in the same spot the following day.

We were certain they were five-spot burnets of one sort or another, but we only caught tantalising glimpses of hindwing; even then Barry told us that we would need to look at the larvae to make a proper identification. Fortunately, one of the moths had laid eggs in the pot, and the larvae which hatched have been positively identified by Gerry Tremewan as *Z. lonicerae*. Also, after several fruitless searches in the rain, we have now found an area on Mincinglake that has larvae which are just getting ready to pupate. We're now looking forward to another brilliant show when the adults emerge in a few weeks' time.
Sam and Tim Stripp



Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet larva
(Sam and Tim Stripp)

Moth Night 2012

As you'll probably be aware, National Moth Night has returned this year in the guise of Moth Night 2012. The aims are all much the same – to encourage as much moth recording as possible, hopefully in some different or unusual places, and to raise awareness of moths and moth recording to the public via events and the media.

Moth Night 2012 takes place on three days and nights from Thursday 21st to Saturday 23rd June, and we hope that all Devon Moth Group members will take this opportunity to get out and record moths, whether in your garden or, even better, somewhere new.

The special focus this year is on the moths of brownfield sites. Under-recorded and often unappreciated, brownfield sites, such as old quarries, disused railway lines, gravel pits and spoil tips, can be wildlife havens and it would be great to have a better knowledge of the moth species occurring on Devon's brownfield sites. You don't have to focus on brownfield sites though. As always with Moth Night, you can make of it what you wish. Why not invite some friends round for a moth breakfast, visit a site that you've never trapped at before or target a species that you've never seen. With three days and nights to choose from there is plenty of scope, even in this unseasonal weather.

Whatever you do, please make sure you submit all your sightings through Moth Night's easy-to-use online recording system after the event (and to Barry Henwood, County Moth Recorder, in due course). To find out more and to submit your sightings, visit www.mothnight.info

Richard Fox

A view from the west: Moth recording in East Cornwall (VC2)

Across the Tamar in East Cornwall moth recording activity is spread around the region, although most recorders are based in the larger population centres such as the towns in the east or in mid-Cornwall. Most of these recorders are associated with the Cornwall Moth Group and possibly the Caradon Natural History Club.

As in most counties, garden moth traps produce the majority of records as they are operated more regularly than those in the field. In recent years garden traps have produced such local or national rarities as *Acleris umbrana* (Downderry, 2006 followed by records at three further sites), *Conogethes punctiferalis* (Torpoint, 2007), Chocolate-tip *Clostera curtula* (Marsland 2008 and Duloe 2011), *Evergestis extimalis* (Downderry 2008), *Acleris myrtilana* (Torpoint 2010) and Small China-mark *Cataclysta lemnata* (Higher Downgate, nr Callington 2011).

Field meetings organised by the Cornwall Moth Group or by local organisations such as Mount Edgcumbe Country Park, take place regularly as do moth nights in the field conducted by individuals. The most successful meetings tend to be those held in woodland areas such as Kilminorth Wood near Looe and Pont's Mill, Luxulyan. Other woodland areas producing good results in the past have been those in the Tamar Valley, such as Luckett and Cotehele House, the Camel Valley between Bodmin and Wadebridge, the wooded valleys of the north coast, such as Millook and Marsland and the West Looe Valley around Herodsfoot. Some examples of species of note found in these areas are *Duponchelia fovealis* (Pont's Mill, 2001), Scarce Merveille du Jour *Moma alpium* (resident at Kilminorth Wood and Herodsfoot) and Bilberry Pug *Pasiphila debiliata* (found at several of the above sites).

One of the most notable species found recently is *Agrotera nemoralis*, an RDB1 species breeding only in the extreme southeast of England. One was recorded in Kilminorth Wood by Phil Boggis in 2009, as was another at Mt Edgcumbe Country Park by John Nicholls in 2011. The latter was a fresh-looking individual which came to light near some Hornbeam, its larval food-plant. Subsequent trapping at the same site in 2011 produced no further examples!



Agrotera nemoralis at Mt Edgcumbe
(Leon Truscott)

Regular checking at similar sites has turned up other interesting records. *Acleris logiana* was found by John Nicholls at Great Trethew near Menheniot in 2009 and has been found there every year since. (This species was also found in Devon by Bob Heckford around the same time.) This site is also one of those now producing *Acleris umbrana* (since 2010) as well as, in 2011, *Triaxomera parasitella*, new to Cornwall.

have included *Diasemia reticularis*, *Oxyptilus laetus*, Clancy's Rustic *Platyperigia kadenii*, Small Marbled *Eublemma parva* and Bloxworth Snout *Hypena obsitalis*, which might have been a migrant from Devon! In 2008 *Tebenna micalis* was found at Penlee Battery, near Rame Head. This was followed by records at a further 17, mostly coastal, sites in East Cornwall, totalling 130 moths.

The East Cornwall coast, like other parts of Cornwall and Devon, contains local species like Beautiful Gothic *Leucochlaena oditis* and Black-banded *Polymixis xanthomista*, both recorded quite regularly at Rame Head in recent years, and the particularly notable *Agonopterix kuznetzovi*, recorded at Boscastle. Recent coastal migrants

Recent daytime recording has revealed a more widespread nature of a couple of local species. In 2009 several new sites were found for Orange Underwing *Archiearis perthenias*. At one of the sites, near Pillaton, *Adela cuprella* was noted, flying around willow catkins. This prompted a search of sites containing willows, resulting in records from about 50 sites in April 2009. Further records from suitable sites have been made in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Before 2009, there were only about eight Cornish records.

It's a similar story for *Metriotes lutarea*. At the end of April 2009, five moths were found nectaring on Greater Stitchwort flowers on the coast path near Rame Head. Subsequent searching of similar paths and hedgerows came up with another 30 records throughout May, always associated with Greater Stitchwort. Before 2009 there were only four Cornish records. Again, many more sites were found in 2010 and 2011.

Leon Truscott

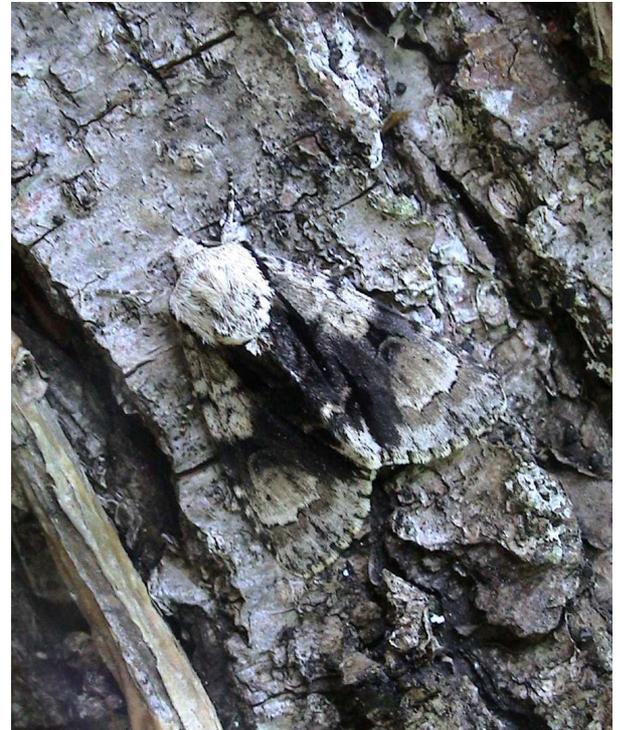


Adela cuprella (Leon Truscott)

Yarner Wood Spring Festival

At the invitation of Natural England, I represented Devon Moth Group at the Spring Woodland Festival at Yarner Wood National Nature Reserve on Saturday 26th May 2012. I collected a few logs, moss and leaf litter and set it up on a table - it looked like the most uninteresting stall imaginable! Then I placed previously-caught moths onto the pile and let them find places to hide. The public loved it - I was inundated and hardly stopped talking for about five hours. The Buff-tip *Phalera bucephala* was the star of the show, though it took some time to convince some people that was actually a moth!

John Walters



The unusual stand (above) and hiding Alder Moth (right) (John Walters)

Field Meeting Reports

Whiddon Deer Park, 9.6.2012

This was a joint event with the National Trust, who manage the site by extensive cattle grazing and some bracken rolling, and Butterfly Conservation. It lies along the south side of the river Teign and has a variety of habitats. There are many veteran trees with Oak, Beech, and Lime, in particular, on the upper slopes, a good woodland edge cover of Hawthorn, Sallows, Birches, Hazel and Broom, and some good marshy areas with Lousewort and Marsh Birds-foot Trefoil in the lower parts.

After two days of storm force winds and heavy rain we were lucky that the night was overcast, calm and humid with an initial temperature of 13°C. This dropped to 10.5°C around 11.30 pm, which signalled the start of the packing up process with traps out at around midnight.

I started the evening with the usual introductory talk and safety warnings, with Mick Jones from the National Trust adding a few points relevant to the site. About 16 people were in attendance.

The action began by beating for larvae on low hanging Hawthorn and Sallow branches. We found a variety of juvenile shield bugs, a few Heather flies (similar to St.Marks fly but with red femurs), and a selection of larvae, most of which were too small to be positively identified, with the exception of *Erannis defoliaria*, Mottled Umber and *Orthosia cerasi*, Common Quaker. It was possible to point out the difference between the two superfamilies of the Noctuidae and Geometridae by referring the two distinct types of larvae.

We also tried our luck with sugaring early on in the proceedings, a mixture of Black Strap molasses, brown sugar and red wine, which was painted onto various trees and telegraph poles. This is often a hit and miss affair so we were delighted with the appearance of *Thyatira batis*, Peach Blossom; *Charanyca trigrammica*, Treble Lines;

Scoliopterix libatrix, Herald; and *Phlogophora meticulosa*, Angle Shades, only the latter of which came to light later.

Once darkness had well and truly fallen the lights started to attract a variety of species, the most colourful being a beautiful fresh *Arctia villica*, Cream-spot Tiger. *Colostygia pectinataria*, Green Carpet was probably the commonest moth and the fresh examples were stunningly green. The nationally local *Cybosia mesomella*, Four-dotted Footman was a first for several present, as was *Stauropus fagi*, Lobster Moth. The traps at the woodland edge attracted a few *Alcis repandata*, Mottled Beauty; *Plagodis dolabraria*, Scorched Wing; and *Xanthorhoe designata*, Flame Carpet, with *Diachrysia chrysitis*, Burnished Brass being much admired.

The actinic traps also provided a few more species, of particular note was a still fresh *Peridea anceps*, Great Prominent and *Macaria alternata*, Sharp-angled Peacock, both nationally Local. Tawny Owls were heard very nearby and several bats were detected on the bat detector brought along by Mick.



Four-dotted Footman (Patrick Clement)

The best moths were kept until last, at the MV illuminated sheet tied between two trees, just as we were packing up a perfect *Euphyia biangulata*, Cloaked Carpet appeared, our first and only Nationally Notable species of the night. Other moths at the sheet included a female *Hepialus humulus*, Ghost Swift and the locally distributed *Pterapherapteryx sexalata*, Small Seraphim.

A good night was had by all with 58 species in total for the night. My thanks to all who came along, and especially those who helped with the recording effort by bringing their traps. The full list can be obtained by emailing me at paulnbutter@hotmail.com
Paul Butter

New Devon Moth Group website goes live

Our new website www.devonmoths.org.uk went live at the end of April. Made possible thanks to a grant from the OPAL project (funded by the Big Lottery Fund), the new site has lots of information about Devon Moth Group and moth recording and conservation in the county. News items and forthcoming events are listed along with details of how to join DMG. The website will be updated very regularly and will hopefully be useful to members as well as telling the world about our activities.

One very important feature of the new site is the full list of micro-moths known from Devon. This authoritative work was prepared by Stella Beavan and Bob Heckford and is published for the first time on the new website. The list shows which micro-moths have been recorded in each of the Devon Vice-counties either before or after 1960. It should be an extremely useful reference for recorders and we are very grateful to Stella and Bob for allowing us to make it available on the site.

In addition, for those using social media, there is also now a Devon Moth Group Facebook page.



Welcome to New Members

Sharon Attrell, Yonder Hill, Shepherds Lane, Colaton Raleigh, EX10 0LP.

Telephone: 01395 567075. e-mail: sharonbattrell@yahoo.co.uk

Karen Aylward, 3 Pullins Terrace, Chudleigh, TQ13 0LB.

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Chris & Janet Proctor, 37 Grenville Avenue, Torquay, TQ2 6DS.

Telephone: 01803 612388. e-mail: chrisjanet@blueyonder.co.uk

Steve Whitehouse, 6 Skipton Crescent, Worcester, WR4 0LG.

Telephone: 01905 454541. e-mail: stevewhitehouse123@btinternet.com

Forthcoming events

Saturday 23 June 2012 Hobby Drive, Clovelly (full details given in the Annual Report). **Moth Night 2012.**

Meet at 21.00 by the black gates at SS316249. Please phone Rob Wolton (01837 810416), in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Friday 6 July 2012 Halsdon DWT reserve (full details given in the Annual Report). Meet at 21.15 at the car park at

the north end of Halsdon Nature Reserve at SS554133. Please phone Paul Butter (07876524184), in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Saturday 14 July 2012 Dartmeet, Dartmoor National Park (full details given in the Annual Report). Meet at 21.00

at the public car park at SX672732. Please phone Barry Henwood (01626 364080) or Rob Wolton (01837 810416), in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.