



# DEVON MOTH GROUP

Please reply to: The Secretary/Treasurer  
Roy McCormick  
36 Paradise Road  
TEIGNMOUTH  
Devon TQ14 8NR  
Telephone: 01626 779543  
181525131225.devmg@talktalk.net

## NEWSLETTER 2012 ISSUE 4 (August)

What a summer! Record-breaking rainfall in both April and June, with much dismal weather in between (and since) has delivered a summer that is proving poor for moths and much of the rest of our wildlife. Two of our field meetings have been cancelled due to awful weather and the nationally, Moth Night 2012 was also plagued with very difficult trapping conditions. A reminder, though, that if you did record any moths by day or at night from Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> June – Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June this year, please visit [www.mothnight.info](http://www.mothnight.info) and enter your sightings. Over 5,500 records have already been submitted nationally representing over 500 moth species.

This would have been a very brief newsletter, reflecting the poor trapping experienced by many of late, but I'm very grateful to Bob Heckford, Stella Beavan and Barry Henwood for coming up with some interesting and, hopefully, inspiring articles at short notice. If you do catch something interesting and important please do let me know so that it can be included in the Devon Moth Group newsletter.

Let's hope that the weather improves for our two forthcoming field events and that the autumn brings a bumper set of immigrants to make up for such a disappointing summer!

Happy mothing!  
Richard Fox

## Field Meeting Reports

### **Paignton Zoo Moth Night Bioblitz, 22.6.2012**

A Bioblitz event organised by Paignton Zoo happened to fall within Moth Night 2012 so there was extra impetus to record moths in some of the more natural habitats at the zoo. Accordingly, among the bat experts, botanists, small mammal specialists and the like, a Devon Moth Group team led by Barry Henwood and Bob Heckford attended to try to add as many moths as possible to the 24-hour Bioblitz total.

Other Devon Moth Group members were in attendance too, alongside Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust staff and the public. Most of the traps were set along a sheltered woodland path but, more exotically, one was placed in the middle of the Giant Tortoise enclosure. The residents of the latter were all tucked away for the night, but the neighbouring baboons were very interested when the trap was switched on.



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

It was a reasonable night by 2012 standards with around 80 species caught overnight. There was little of any real interest, but some local species such as *Melanthia procellata* Pretty Chalk Carpet and *Horisme tersata* Fern, among the crowd-pleasers such as *Lomographa temerata* Clouded Silver; *Campaea margaritata* Light Emerald; *Calliteara pudibunda* Pale Tussock and *Anaplectoides prasina* Green Arches.

Richard Fox



Pretty Chalk Carpet  
(Patrick Clement)

### **Hobby Drive, Clovelly, 23.6.2012**

This event fell foul of the weather and was cancelled.

### **Halsdon DWT reserve, 6.7.2012**

The awful weather continued and led to another cancellation.

### **Bioblitzing the unexpected**

Four of our members, myself, Barry Henwood, John Randall and Leon Truscott attended a Bioblitz at Cawsand, east Cornwall during 7-8 July 2012.

The aim of the organisers was to record at least 1,000 species of all orders, both terrestrial and marine, and this was achieved. The wet weather that has dogged this year put in an appearance in the morning of the first day but it then cleared to such an extent that by the evening the sky was clear, it became cool and rather windy. As well as making daytime moth records, three light traps were run overnight. These did not produce the number of species normally to be expected at that time of year but did have the usual crowd pleasers such as Poplar and Elephant Hawk-moths, Buff-tip and others. The greater interest, although not showy, lay with the micro-moths with *Coleophora versurella* new to VC2 (East Cornwall) and only the second Cornish record of *Eana incanana*.

The event was extremely well organised with free T-shirts and food being provided to the participants and the 'operations' building was open throughout the night so that records could be continuously logged. An almost carnival atmosphere prevailed at one point when one of our members found a group of ladies, scantily dressed in novelty costumes, in a nearby road collecting money for a good cause, and ushered them in. They certainly outdid the molluscs in entertainment value.

I experienced a different form of entertainment in the early hours. Barry, John and I were quartered in a dormitory in a Nissan hut in a muddy field which had a number of tents occupied by people of various nationalities, who were not part of the Bioblitz. That was fine. What I didn't expect when trying to find a suitable convenience at about 4.00 am was another Nissan hut occupied by two teenage lads winding thick, brown parcel tape around a third who was attached to a long wooden pole! They all seemed to be enjoying themselves and as this was clearly not a novel means of attracting invertebrates I left them to it.

Bob Heckford

## Watch those Willowherbs

*Mompha divisella* is rarely recorded in Devon, there are just four records on the Devon database. I recorded an adult 15.10.11 in my garden and Kevin Rylands recorded one on 13.11.11 in Newton Abbot. Thinking that the moth's fortunes might be improving, I kept an eye out for galls this year. In mid-July, I found galls in Abbotskerswell village right outside the primary school. I quickly brought them into captivity as the "weeds" were about to be cleared.

I found a gall in *Epilobium montanum* Broad-leaved Willowherb but it was not very obvious - not a well formed gall as the stem is somewhat woody. I found much better formed galls in *Epilobium parviflorum* Hoary Willowherb - they were in three separate plants, one of which had 12 galls. One gall had the end of a cocoon sticking out of it (see photo below) just as described in *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland Volume 4 (part 1)*. It is well worthwhile checking Willowherb stems for such galls to help improve our knowledge of this moth in Devon.

Barry Henwood



*Mompha divisella* galls. Image left shows about eight galls in the plant's stem, while the right hand image shows the end of a moth cocoon sticking out of a gall (Barry Henwood)

## Want to know about the moths in your garden?

I would like to canvass opinion regarding trapping in other peoples' gardens, especially large woody ones. Perhaps there are members who do not themselves run a trap or have a large property that hasn't been thoroughly surveyed. I would be willing, in principle, to run moth traps in such gardens. It would help if the owners were able to provide electricity, but it is not essential; I'd be happy to pay for it.

Geoff Wisdom [geoff.wisdom@btinternet.com](mailto:geoff.wisdom@btinternet.com)

## *Pancalia schwarzeella* in Devon

*Pancalia schwarzeella* (Cosmopterigidae) is a very attractive micro-moth that has recently been accorded Provisional Red Data Book 2 status (meaning that it occurs in only 6–10 10km squares nationally) by Tony Davis of Butterfly Conservation. It is not uncommon in parts of Scotland but it seems to have declined considerably in England with the result that before 2008 the last English record was from Cornwall in 1956.

In July 2008 we found adults and larvae at the extensive sand dune system of Braunton Burrows in north Devon. This was the first county record.

The larva was unknown until 2004 when Bob found larvae in Scotland. The larva feeds on the leaves of various Violet species, and seems to require leaves that almost touch the substrate, which can either be bare, light soil or moss, because it makes a silken tube extending from this to the leaves.

In May this year at Braunton Burrows we found larvae feeding on *Viola tricolor* ssp. *curtisii*, a plant from which we had not recorded larvae before. There is a similar species, *Pancalia nodosella*, which is found in mainland Europe and often in sand dunes, whose larva feeds on this plant. But apparently the larva mines the leaves and ours did not do this. Moths emerged in July and, as rather expected, were *P. schwarzella*. Nevertheless it was good to find a new foodplant.

It is certainly worth looking for this species wherever violets grow amongst short vegetation on shallow and light soils.

Stella Beavan and Bob Heckford



*Pancalia schwarzella* (Bob Heckford)

### Rearing the unexpected (and new to Britain)

Micro-moths are often more easily recorded in their larval stage than as adults. Rearing them has the advantages of understanding their life histories and making identifications easier when the moths emerge, especially as they will be in perfect condition.

Sometimes, however, the end result may not be a moth but a parasitoid. Some species of flies and a large group of wasps parasitize the early stages of various invertebrate groups.

A few years ago we collected a few micro-moth larvae on the edge of a saltmarsh at Instow in north Devon. We were hoping that they would produce *Scrobipalpa salinella* (Gelechiidae), which had not been found in Devon. Instead we reared three examples of a Hymenopterous (wasp) parasitoid, *Dolichogenidea appellator*, which was new to Britain!

The next year Bob collected a larva of *Phycitodes maritima* (Pyralidae) at Billacombe in south Devon. This produced a Hymenopterous parasitoid that was also new to Britain, *Apanteles lacteus*.

Both these records have just been published by Mark Shaw of the National Museums of Scotland in the *Entomologist's Gazette*. So the message is that if you collect moth larvae you may get more than you expect!

Stella Beavan and Bob Heckford

## Forthcoming events

Friday 17 August 2012 The Churchills, Newton Abbot (full details given in the Annual Report). Meet at 21.00 in the car park beside Highweek Church at SX851721. Please phone Barry Henwood (01626 364080) or Neil Harris (07817 072085) in advance if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Friday 24 August 2012 Hittisleigh Woods (full details given in the Annual Report). Meet at Barton farm, Hittisleigh at SX735954 at 17.00 for a late afternoon butterfly walk and/or 19.30 for moth trapping. Please phone Rob Wolton (01837 810416) or John Milverton (01647 24509) in advance if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Friday 7 September 2012 Ford Park Cemetery, Plymouth. This public event is not organised by Devon Moth Group but is advertised here as it may be of interest to members. The event, entitled "Meet the Night Creatures" is organised by John Boon, a DMG member and a trustee of the charity that looks after Ford Park Cemetery. This 34 acre site in the centre of Plymouth has much wildlife within its boundaries. There will be moth trapping and bat detecting. The organiser would welcome any DMG members who'd like to come along to the event either with or without trapping equipment. The event will start at 19.30 with talks on moths and bats respectively. Refreshments will be available in the visitor centre cafe throughout the evening. The Cemetery address is Ford Park Road, Mutley, Plymouth PL4 6NT.



Black Arches – a beautiful moth with fantastic antennae!  
(Peter Vernon)

