



DEVON MOTH GROUP

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NEWSLETTER 2012 ISSUE 6 (November)

Not many recent sightings to report as this generally disappointing year draws to an end. However, we've just heard of a highly significant record from back in August. Allan Jenkins caught a *Pseudeustrotia candidula* Shining Marbled at Chardstock, north of Axminster on 18th August 2012 (specimen shown below). This incredibly rare immigrant moth is new for Devon and is one of only a handful of British records (the first being in 2006 in Herefordshire).



No matter how good or dismal your moth recording year has been, please ensure that you send in all your 2012 moth sighting to Barry Henwood, the County Moth Recorder. As mentioned in 2012 Newsletter 1 and in the recording guidelines circulated earlier this year, if you have a computer please use it to send in your moth records already computerised (on a spreadsheet or using MapMate) directly to barry.henwood@btinternet.com. Please contact Barry by email or on 01626 364080 if you have any questions relating to records submission.

There are exciting moth-related indoor events to keep your interest up over the coming months. Our Christmas meal and AGM are on the horizon and, in between, is the National Moth Recorders' Meeting up in Birmingham.

Happy mothing!
Richard Fox

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

www.devonmoths.org.uk

Field Meeting Reports

The Churchills, Newton Abbot, 17.8.2012

The weather on the morning of 17 August was dreadful with heavy rain and strong wind. Later in the afternoon the rain stopped and the wind dried the vegetation. By the evening the skies were cloudy, the temperature was warm and the wind had completely gone. The result was perfect conditions for moth trapping. This was especially helpful as The Churchills is an exposed area of limestone grassland.

About 17 people attended. I am very grateful to Sian Avon from the Teignbridge Countryside Service for coming along at short notice to facilitate the evening as Neil Harris was unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances.

A total of 89 species of moths were recorded and *Maniola jurtina* Meadow Brown butterfly was attracted to light. There were about 20 *Euplagia quadripunctaria* Jersey Tiger, which made a very pleasing sight for attendees. Amongst the most interesting moths were *Perizoma bifasciata* Barred Rivulet; *Eupithecia inturbata* Maple Pug; *Caloptilia semifascia*; *Furcula furcula* Sallow Kitten; *Hepialus sylvina* Orange Swift; *Parapoynx stratiotata* Ringed China-mark and *Amphipyra berbera* Svensson's Copper Underwing. Rarest and most surprising of all were four *Cydia amplana*. This is a scarce immigrant moth that has been recorded more frequently in recent years. These individuals at The Churchills were part of a huge immigration of the species in 2012. The first confirmed British record was actually just 22 years ago in Bob Heckford's garden at Plympton.

The highlight for me personally, was actually a spider not a moth. Tim Stripp managed to find a *Argiope bruennichi* Wasp Spider in the grass by torch light. I had never seen one before and it is certainly a very spectacular spider.

Barry Henwood



Micros on the move

The smaller the moth, the greater the number of individuals a single plant can support. Many of the micro-moths are so small that the populations can comprise vast numbers of individuals and as a consequence they have the capability of spreading quickly if conditions are right. You will undoubtedly have noticed this with the mines of *Cameraria ohridella* on *Aesculus hippocastanum* Horse Chestnut. In October 2009 I caught a single *Calybitis phasianipennella* flying by day in my garden at Abbotskerswell. That was the second Devon record. In 2011, I found larvae on *Polygonum persicaria* Spotted Persicaria at Hackney Marshes, Kingsteignton and abundantly on *Lysimachia vulgaris* Yellow Loosestrife at Exminster Marshes. The larvae mine the leaves at first and subsequently feed externally, cutting a strip of leaf, leaving it attached at the proximal end and rolling it into a cone on the underside of the leaf.

Also in the autumn of 2011, at Exminster Marshes, I noticed larvae of *Cosmopterix lienigiella* mining the leaves of *Phragmites australis* Common Reed. At the time I was unaware of any Devon records, but later a record of a single adult trapped at the same site in June of that year was submitted by Brian Bewsher. A further visit to Exminster Marshes in September 2012 again revealed many larval mines and cones of *Calybites phasiannipennella* on Yellow Loosestrife. A few *Cosmopterix lienigiella* larvae were also found, but they are not at high density and therefore hard to find.

In October 2011, I noticed a moth at the kitchen window which I had never seen before. I mis-identified it as a rare moth *Mompha divisella*. Subsequently, this year, I searched for larval galls of this species on willowherbs and found them on *Epilobium parviflorum* Hairy Willowherb and *E. montanum* Broad-leaved Willowherb here at Abbotskerswell, as described in Devon Moth Group Newsletter 2012 issue 4. From these galls I reared and positively identified *M. divisella* and also found galls of this species in Penzance, Padstow and abundantly in Newquay, Cornwall.

In September 2012, Phil Sterling was visiting and had a look at *E. hirsutum* Greater Willowherb at the bottom of my garden. He found a great many galls of *Mompha bradleyi*. Re-appraisal (including dissection) of the original adult moth that I found in October 2011 revealed it to be *M. bradleyi* – the first Devon record.

The distribution map in the Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland, published in 2002 shows that it had then been recorded in just six Vice-counties in the Midlands. It was only added to the British list from specimens taken in Herefordshire in 1982, but museum specimens dating back to 1874 have subsequently been found (originally mis-identified as *M. divisella*).

It is a curious twist that I found *M. divisella* as a consequence of mis-identifying a moth on my kitchen window as that species. Apart from being on different plants there are differences in the galls. Those of *divisella* are in the main stem, whereas those of *M. bradleyi* are in side shoots. The larva of *M. divisella* makes an exit hole for emergence of the moth, through which a small part of the white cocoon protrudes. The larva of *M. bradleyi* chews a passage to the outside leaving a very thin layer of the stem over the exit. This often partially tears away, but the cocoon is completely within the gall and does not protrude. I encourage you to look for galls of these species and send me any records. The cloud of embarrassment in mis-identifying the moth in October 2011 and a visitor from Dorset finding a species new to Devon in my own garden certainly had a silver lining. If I had identified *M. bradleyi* correctly in the first place I very much doubt whether I would have ever found *M. divisella*.

Barry Henwood

Indoor Meeting Report: Autumn Meeting, Exeter Court Hotel, Kennford 25.10.2012

Moth-like butterflies from the Neotropics by Dr Malcolm Scoble, former Keeper of Entomology at the Natural History Museum in London.

This talk was a fascinating departure from the normal fare of Devon Moth Group indoor meetings. Starting by recounting his early days at the Natural History Museum (a career that lasted almost 25 years), Malcolm explained how, while looking through the fantastic Geometrid collection, his attention had been drawn an odd groups of c.40 species of delicate moths from

the Americas, called the Hedylidae. These specimens had moth-like characteristics (coupled wings, feathered antennae and nocturnal flight) but had other features which didn't seem to fit well with the Geometridae. After much study, Malcolm became convinced that the Hedylids were more like butterflies than moths. He accumulated a long list of butterfly-like characteristics of the adults moths (e.g. they stand on four legs, like Nymphalid butterflies, rather than six), and also of their pupae (which have a



Debbie Hall

silken girdle), larvae (which have a pair of 'horns' on their heads, similar to the caterpillar of the Purple Emperor butterfly) and eggs (which are elongated like those of *Pieris* butterflies).

In due course, Malcolm travelled to Costa Rica to conduct more work and was delighted to finally see live Hedyliids, flying by day (as well as at night) in the forest.

More recently, molecular studies have confirmed that Hedyliids are indeed butterflies and are most closely related to the skippers. Concluding the talk, Malcolm gave us a brief but thorough update on the incredible advances being made in understanding relationships between moth and butterfly families, using DNA and other molecular techniques. Not only do we have to accept that the nocturnal, feathery-antennae bearing Hedyliids are butterflies, but it has also become clear that all the butterflies are more closely related to some of the micro-moth families, and not closely related to the macros.

Although involving some highly technical details of moth/butterfly morphology and taxonomy, we are very grateful to Malcolm for a very interesting and informative evening and it is a shame that only 18 people were in attendance. I hope there will be many more at our AGM and Indoor meeting in January.

Richard Fox

Review: Butterflies and other Insects - My enduring Impressions by Phillip R. Ackery

A West London boy, born and bred, Phillip Ackery spent the first eighteen years of his life taking no interest in insects whatsoever. However, in 1965, to his own surprise, he was engaged as a Scientific Assistant in the Entomology Department of the Natural History Museum in South Kensington. So began forty-one years associated with the Museum's collections, primarily the butterfly collection.

To some extent, this volume reflects his areas of specialization - the Milkweed butterflies, the Passion-vine butterflies, the Apollo butterflies, and the Birdwing butterflies - together with other stories that imposed on his memory over four decades. As a new-comer to entomology in 1965, he became very aware of the absence of a collections-based introductory text, so to some extent this book addresses the needs of his eighteen-year-old self.

Brian Bewsher

For sale

Butterfly & moth books and numerous titles on Dartmoor and much else. Please enquire with Brian Bewsher - bewsher@longstones.plus.com

National Moth Recorders' Meeting

The National Moth Recorders' Meeting is on Saturday 26th January 2013 at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, central Birmingham. There is a great line-up of talks, from both amateur moth recorders and academic researchers, sales stands and plenty of time to chat with fellow moth enthusiasts. The programme will be available at www.mothscount.org shortly. Cost is only £5 per person, payable on the day, including refreshments and buffet lunch. Advanced booking essential; contact info@butterfly-conservation.org or telephone 01929 400209.

Welcome to New Members

Michael Pope, 12 Glebeland Way, Torquay, TQ2 7RP.

Telephone: 01803 616811. e-mail: mikeinvc3@blueyonder.co.uk

Darryl M. Rush, 40 The Gardens, Chudleigh, TQ13 0GE.

Telephone: 01626 859149. e-mail: darrylrush@btinternet.com

Forthcoming events

Saturday 15th December 2012, Devon Moth Group Christmas Dinner, Highwayman's Haunt, Chudleigh. Details and menu in next newsletter. Likely costs will be in region of £15 for two courses, £19 for three courses.

Saturday 26th January 2013, National Moth Recorders' Meeting at Birmingham & Midland Institute, Birmingham.

Thursday 31st January 2013, AGM and indoor meeting at the Kenn Centre, Kenn (www.kenncentre.co.uk).



Christmas Menu 2012

Two courses £15.45, three courses £19.95



- **Tomato and basil soup**
- **Scottish Smoked Salmon** with lemon and caper dressing
- **Button Mushrooms** in a creamy garlic sauce
- Butter crusted potted **Pate** with toasted ciabatta fingers

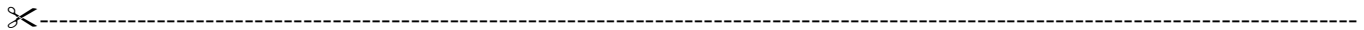


- **Traditional Roast Turkey** with cranberry stuffing and pigs in blankets
- **West Country Topside of Beef** with Yorkshire pudding
- **Baked Salmon Fillet** with a shellfish broth
- **Feta and roasted Vegetable Tart** with red onion dressing

All served with traditional vegetables



- **Christmas Pudding** with brandy sauce
- **Vanilla Creme Brule** with raspberries
- White and dark **Chocolate Mousse**
- **Lemon Tart** with raspberry sorbet



Christmas Event at the Highwayman's Haunt, Chudleigh, on Saturday 15th December 2012. 19.00 for 19.30 start

I would like to bookplaces @ £15.45 per head for 2 courses
places @ £19.95 per head for 3 courses in the names of:

Please give your choices of meal(s):

Please make cheques payable to Devon Moth Group. Please reply by 30th November 2012 to Roy McCormick, 36 Paradise Road, Teignmouth, TQ14 8NR