DEVON MOTH GROUP

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NEWSLETTER 2017 ISSUE 1 (January)

The festive period didn't bring quite the same mothing excitement as it did a year ago (when *Cornifrons ulceratalis* and *Syncopacma polychromella* were recorded new to Devon), but there were still some mild nights and unseasonal records of common migrants such as *Udea ferrugalis* and *Plutella xylostella*, as well as an unusually late (presumably second brood) *Apamea monoglypha* Dark Arches (on 16 December in Abbotskerswell). For such unusual occurrences, as well as for the native species that are on the wing at this time of year, it is well worth putting you trap out on milder winter nights. One to look out for is *Acleris umbrana* (see image below), which was formerly a scarce species but which seems to be increasing rapidly, and there have already been several Devon records in 2017. Identification requires care as it is a variable species and is similar to the much more common *A.hastiana*, which is also variable. If you think you have a likely candidate, please take a good image of it, or retain the moth, and seek confirmation from the County Recorder, Barry Henwood (barry.henwood@btinternet.com).

With the New Year comes a reminder that your subs are now due for Devon Moth Group membership. Many thanks to all those who have already paid by standing order at the start of the year – this is very much appreciated. Everyone else should please complete the form at the end of this newsletter and return it with payment as soon as possible. The other reminder is that the deadline for all your 2016 Devon moth records is approaching rapidly. If you want your records to appear in the 2016 Annual Report then they need to reach Barry Henwood by 20th January. Records submitted after this date will still be very welcome and will be incorporated into the DMG database, but will not appear in the Annual Report.
Richard Fox

Acleris umbrana (Phil Dean)

Notice of Devon Moth Group Annual General Meeting 26th January 2017

AGM Agenda

1. Minutes of the last AGM to be approved and signed
2. Chairman's Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Secretary's Report
5. County Moth Recorder's Report
6. Election of Officers of Council
7. Any other business

Under Rule 6 (a) of our Constitution the Officers, with the exception of The Chairman, will be elected each year at our AGM. The following Officers, Nicola Bacciu (Membership and Distribution), Phil Dean (Ordinary Member), Barry Henwood (Ordinary Member), Roy McCormick (Secretary/Treasurer) and Rob Wolton (Conservation) are all eligible to stand again for 2017. Under Rule 6 (c) of our Constitution, if anybody else has any nominations for posts of Council Officers they must notify the Group at least 24 hours before the meeting (via info@devonmoths.org.uk or to Richard Fox on 07711 657322). Except as may be necessary to fill vacancies, no further nominations can be made at the meeting itself.

Prays citri (Millière, 1873) – an adventive species new to Devon

Prays citri (Millière, 1873), a member of the Praydidae, was described from one moth reared from a larva from Corsica that was living within the rind of the fruit of Citron (*Citrus medica*). Subsequently it was discovered that the native range was Asia but the species spread to a number of European countries and has become a well-known *Citrus* pest in the Mediterranean region. This is because the larva feeds within the flowers and small fruits of several *Citrus* species (Rutaceae), mainly Lime (*Citrus* x *aurantifolia*) and Lemon *Citrus* x *limon*), and sometimes additionally on leaves and young shoots. It has also been reported to attack other species of Rutaceae as well as Sapotaceae and Oleaceae. The larva pupates within an open network cocoon.

The species was added to the British list as a result of one being taken at light by Martin Honey in the Natural History Museum Wildlife Garden on 9 May 2000. As far as we are aware, the only other British record prior to 2016 was of one at light at Chessington, Surrey on 12 October 2006, recorded by Jim Porter.

On 2 October 2016 Stella found 15 open network cocoons with exuviae and one dead moth attached to one of the exuviae (the moth macroscopically unidentifiable as this species but the cocoons are characteristic) on the underside of two Lime plants at a garden centre in Norfolk. But as there was no proof that the moths emerged in Norfolk it could not be truly counted as the next British record.

Prays citri pupa (Bob Heckford)

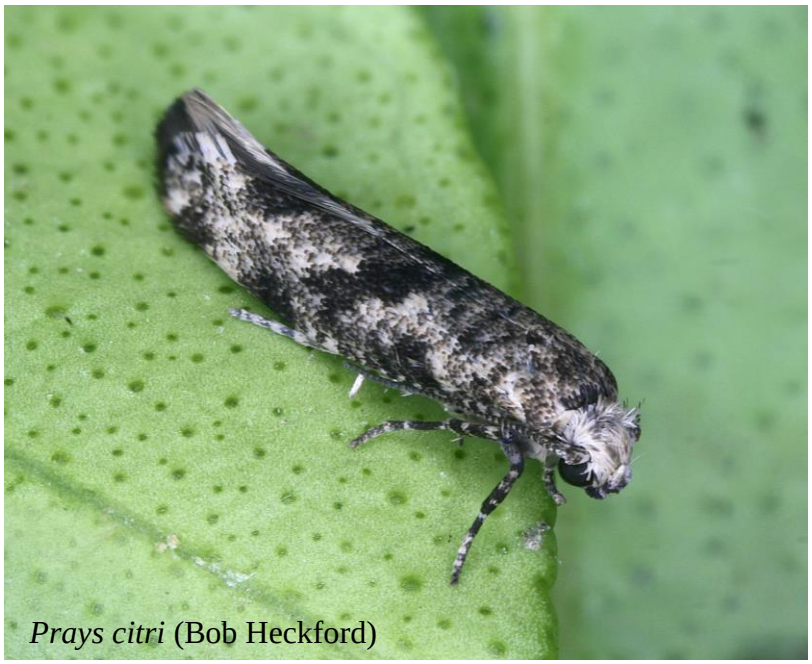
However, on a visit to a garden centre near Ivybridge on 2 November 2016 Bob found a pupa, within its open network cocoon, between two spun leaves of a Lime plant, whose stated origin was Sicily. A further visit two days later resulted in the discovery of several cocoons with exuviae but three with pupae. These were amongst the dead flowers of an Orange plant whose origin was not stated. Moths from all four pupae emerged between 4 and 13 November.

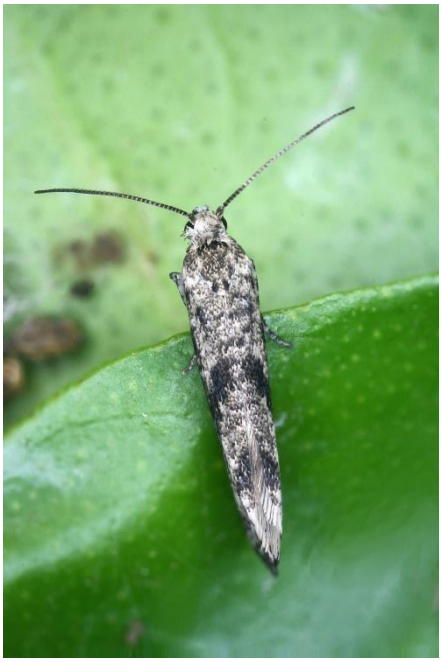
Following this we paid visits (some separately and some together) to several garden centres in both Devon vice-counties. At the time of writing this (5 December) only one other garden centre (near Bishopsteignton) had evidence of the species, and that was only of three exuviae. The moths might have emerged there, but equally might have emerged before the plant reached Devon or Britain.

Not only did the Lime plant at the garden centre near Ivybridge have a pupa of *Prays citri* but its leaves also had more than a dozen tenanted mines of *Phyllocnistis citrella* Stainton, 1856.

So, as can be seen, not only has this garden centre provided the first Devon record of *Prays citri* but also the third to sixth British records. It is the same garden centre that in the past has also provided the first Devon records of the adventives *Phyllocnistis citrella* and *Parapoynx diminutalis*.

Why not pay a visit to a garden centre near you? You may be pleasantly surprised by their entomological contents.
Stella Beavan & Bob Heckford





Prays citri (Bob Heckford)

Indoor Meeting Report: Autumn Meeting, the Kenn Centre, Kennford, 3.11.2016

Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project by Ed Parr Ferris, Devon Wildlife Trust

Ed gave a fascinating introduction to the ecology and biology of Greater Horseshoe Bats before describing the aims of this recently commenced project. The species is long-lived (up to 30 years) and is a slow breeder, females only producing young once every two years. It is a specialist predator on larger moths (especially Noctuids such as Heart & Dart, Dark Arches and Lesser Yellow Underwing), which constitute c. 40% of the diet, and large beetles (especially Cockchafers and dung beetles), which are either caught on the wing or by perch feeding. Other types of insects are taken during times of scarcity of these main prey items. The bats do not hibernate right through the winter, but awaken to feed, and dung beetles are particularly important prey at this time of year, although hibernating Lepidoptera such as Herald moths and Peacock butterflies will also be taken within roosts. The specialised diet leads to specific habitat requirements for the Greater Horseshoe Bat including pastures rich in dung beetles, woodland/hedgerows for larger moths and good grassland for Cockchafer beetles. In addition, cold and damp hibernation sites (usually caves) and warm, dry maternity roost sites (often buildings) are needed, presenting a complex set of requirements, but one that is fulfilled by traditional agricultural landscapes.

The intensification of agriculture has been a major factor in the c.90% decline of the Greater Horseshoe Bat across northern Europe. Devon holds one third of the UK population of the bat and the three largest roosts in northern Europe. In response to the general decline, and the ever-increasing importance of the remaining Devon populations, a five-year conservation project began in 2015 with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project involved a large consortium of partners led by Devon Wildlife Trust and is focussed on 11 key maternity roost areas, most of which are in the south of the county. A wide variety of actions are underway as part of the project, including working with farmers and landowners to improve foraging habitats for the bats and raising awareness with schools (through a Bat Buddies awards scheme) and the general public. Recording work is increasing too, to improve knowledge of Greater Horseshoe Bat distribution in Devon. Volunteers can borrow bat detectors to put out for a few nights to gather recordings of bat calls. There are also links between the project and research on the bat being carried out by Exeter University. More information at www.devonbatproject.org
Richard Fox

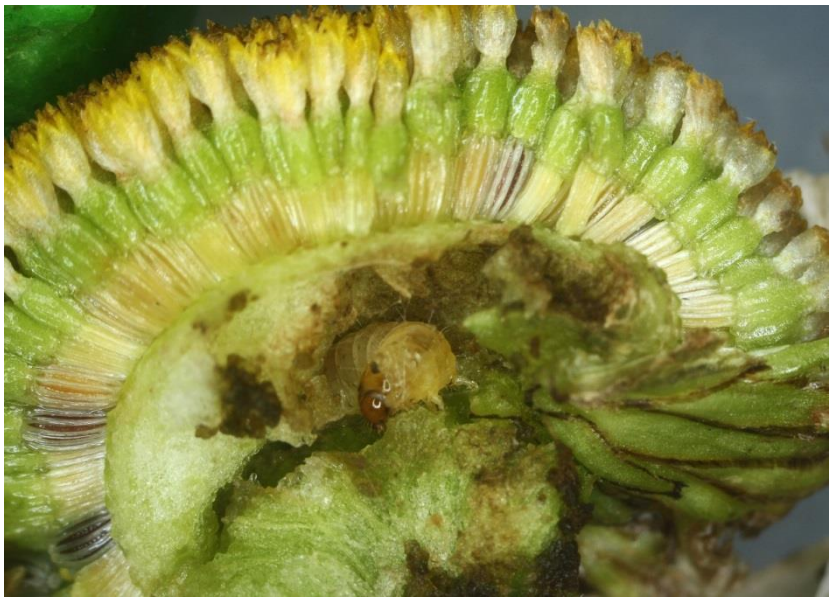
Dichrorampha acuminatana (Lienig & Zeller, 1846): discovery of a larva in the autumn, feeding within a flower-head of Oxeye Daisy

Dichrorampha acuminatana (Lienig & Zeller, 1846) is a member of the Tortricidae and is the only British species in that genus known to have two generations each year. In Devon it is locally common, especially on the coast.

In the British Isles the larva was first described in 1880 (Barrett, 1880. Notes on British Tortrices. *The Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* **16**: 238–244, at p. 238) as a result of larvae being found in February 1878 and again in July (possibly in the same year, although this is not stated). On the former occasion larvae were found in the lower stems of Oxeye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* and on the latter in dwarfed shoots of the same species.

Thereafter larvae of both generations have been observed in similar circumstances, apart from the summer of 1991 when Martin Corley found larvae feeding in the flower-heads of Oxeye Daisy (Corley, 1992. The summer brood of *Dichrorampha acuminatana* (Lienig & Zeller) (Lep.: Tortricidae). *The Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation* **104**: 159–160). Moths emerged from 7 August 1991.

As far as I am aware there has been no further record of larvae in the flower-heads until 21 October 2016, when I found a larva (identity unknown at that stage, except that I thought it was probably a Tortricoid) at Heybrook Bay on the south Devon coast (Plate 1). It was in the hollow part of the receptacle of the flower-head just above the stem. The larva fed both within that hollow part as well as down the stem for just over three cm, leaving frass within those areas and not ejecting it (Plate 2). The plant decayed and I was not sure if the larva had died. I decided to keep the container with the plant material indoors, rather than put it outside to overwinter. Much to my surprise the moth emerged on 25 November and proved to be *Dichrorampha acuminatana*.



Larva of *D. acuminatana* within receptacle of Oxeye Daisy (Bob Heckford)

This appears to be not only the second time that a larva of this species has been recorded in the flower-head but the first time that a larva of the autumn/winter generation has been observed in such a situation.

I am very grateful to Stella Beavan for enhancing my original images.
Bob Heckford

Feeding signs of *D. acuminatana* within the flower-head and stem of Oxeye Daisy (Bob Heckford)

Forthcoming events (see www.devonmoths.org.uk for more details)

Thursday 26 January 2017 Winter indoor meeting and AGM at the Kenn Centre, Kennford (www.kenncentre.co.uk) 19.30 for 20.00 start. Illustrated talk on *Wildlife Highlights 2016* by John Walters.

Thursday 30 March 2017 Spring indoor meeting at the Kenn Centre, Kennford (www.kenncentre.co.uk) 19.30 for 20.00 start. Illustrated talk on *The Natural History of Moths* by Barry Henwood.

Acleris literana recorded near Sampford Courtenay on 28th October 2016 (Paul Butter)

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2017 Membership subscription for Devon Moth Group

Membership subscriptions, **£8.00 for single and £12.00 for a family annual membership**, were due at the start of the year. Please send by the end of February or it is likely you'll be removed from the mailing list and miss out on future newsletters and the Annual Report.

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Email address:_____

Phone number:_____

In order that members can contact one another, Devon Moth Group would like your permission to publish (e.g. in our newsletters) your email address and the general area where you live (e.g. the name of a nearby town). Your full postal address and phone number would not be made public.

☐ **I give Devon Moth Group permission to publish my email address and the name of the town or area where I live to other members.**

Please return with a cheque payable to Devon Moth Group to: Roy McCormick, 36 Paradise Road, Teignmouth TQ14 8NR.