



# DEVON MOTH GROUP

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## NEWSLETTER 2018 ISSUE 5 (December)

First, the reminders. We always welcome your moth records at any time of year, but if you want them to be included in the Devon Moth Group Annual Report for 2018, then they need to reach Barry Henwood by 13 January 2019. The end of the year also means that your subscription to Devon Moth Group is due. Many members have sensibly set up standing orders so that their membership is renewed annually, but if you pay by cheque each year please remember to fill in the form at the end of this newsletter and send with your subs (£8.00 for a single member, £12.00 for a family membership) to Roy at the address above as soon as possible.

As is often the case during autumn, there have been some excellent records of scarce immigrant moths in Devon. The most notable sightings were of *Uresiphita gilvata*, a large (3cm wingspan) Pyralid with distinctive hindwing markings resembling those of the 'yellow underwing' macro-moths. Prior to this autumn, there was only one record of this migrant from southern Europe in the Devon Moth Group database (23rd September 2006 near Ottery St Mary). So, it was a great surprise when Phil Dean caught one (photo right) in his mercury vapour Skinner trap near South Brent on 17th September, which was then followed by one at Abbotskerswell on 15th October (Barry Henwood) and another near Noss Mayo on the same night (Phil Barden).



*Uresiphita gilvata* (Phil Dean)

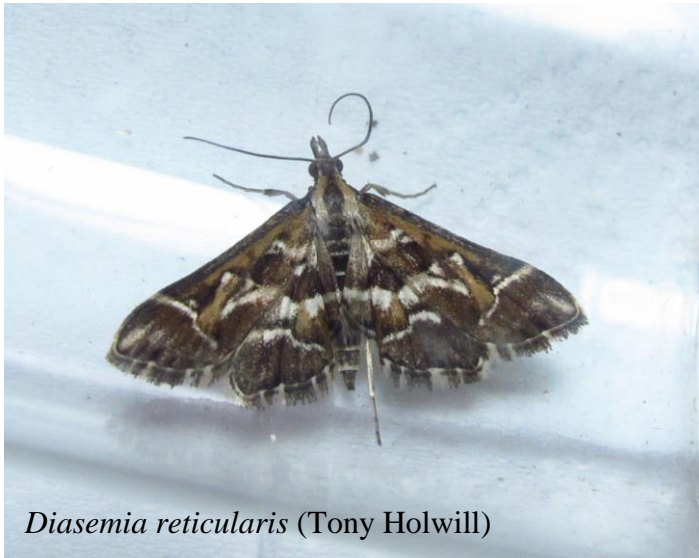
Liz Brotherstone was treated to a *Daphnis nerii* Oleander Hawk-moth at Tipton St John also on the night of 15th October (photo right). Phil Barden had a very successful autumn trapping near Noss Mayo. In addition to the *U. gilvata* mentioned already, he caught *Cirrhia ocellaris* Pale-lemon sallow, *Athetis hospes* Porter's Rustic and three *Ochropleura leucogaster* Radford's Flame Shoulder. Roy McCormick also trapped a Radford's Flame Shoulder at Holcombe near Teignmouth on 19th October.



Oleander Hawk-moth (Liz Brotherstone)

Members of Council: Nicola Bacciu (Membership & Distribution) Phil Dean (Ordinary member) Richard Fox (Chairman)  
Barry Henwood (Recorder) Roy McCormick (Secretary/Treasurer) Rob Price (Publicity) Rob Wolton (Conservation)

[www.devonmoths.org.uk](http://www.devonmoths.org.uk)



*Diasemia reticularis* (Tony Holwill)

In addition to the autumn immigrants, significant records from the summer have continued to arrive. Phil Dean recorded a male *Haplotinea insectella* in his house near South Brent on 13th June 2018, which was identified by dissection. It is only the second record for Devon and the first for South Devon (Vice-county 3); the previous one was by Rob Wolton in VC4 in 2007. This species feeds on stored vegetable products, as well as on fungus.

Tony Holwill trapped a *Diasemia reticularis* (photo left) on 12th July in an MV trap in his Croyde garden. This is a migratory Pyralid, mainly found in the tropics, but which occasionally reaches Britain. There have been 15 previous British records since the Second World War, and this is only the second for Devon in that time (after one at Bideford in 1999).

Finally, I would like to congratulate DMG member, Bob Heckford, who has had another species new to science named after him. The latest, his fifth to date, is *Megacraspedus heckfordi*, a Gelechiid moth collected by Bob in the Picos de Europa, northern Spain in 1999 but only formally named and published last month.

Best wishes for Christmas and a very Happy New Year!  
Richard Fox

## Indoor Meeting Report: Autumn meetings, the Kenn Centre, Kennford, 1.11.2018

*On the verge of success: how to manage roadside verges for butterflies and moths* by Dr Phil Sterling.

We were very grateful to Phil for travelling from Weymouth to deliver this talk. There was a fabulous turnout of members such that there were 43 people in the audience. We had invited people from various conservation organisations and several attended including Sarah Jennings, Devon County Ecologist.

Phil's career involved many years with Dorset County Council as the County Ecologist and subsequently manager of the Coast and Countryside Service. During this time, he had had various successes with road verge management. These included cut and collect regimes, which enabled wild flowers to flourish by reducing the nutrient content of the ground. This also saved the council money as the grass became less vigorous and needed cutting less often.

He also told us about his success with the Weymouth Relief Road. The steep, wide, chalk verges had been sprinkled with only a thin layer of top soil and wild flower seed sown. Fencing had been put up to allow for occasional grazing. The results were spectacular with an abundance of wildflowers such as Kidney Vetch, Horseshoe Vetch and Bird's Foot Trefoil. It did not take long for butterflies to find their way there and establish themselves. There is now a huge population of Small Blues, and Adonis Blues and Chalk Hill Blues have now moved in (the latter being in decline in Dorset).

With all these successes behind him, Phil moved to Butterfly Conservation this year to work on a project to roll out similar schemes elsewhere in the UK. He mentioned the proposed road that will tunnel under Stonehenge. The aboveground sections of this 8 mile stretch would provide 16 miles of verges which could be a wildlife haven.  
Barry Henwood

## Dotted Rustic *Rhyacia simulans* First confirmed record for Devon

The weather forecast for the night of Thursday 4th October looked promising for migrants, so I decided to visit my favourite coastal spot for trapping near Noss Mayo (where I have permission from the local farmer). After the not inconsiderable effort of putting the traps out below the cliff edge (two trips up and down the steep slopes with batteries etc), all was set.

Returning with anticipation the next morning (thankfully it had been mild with light southerly wind) I started to go through the first trap just as the sun was rising. There was a good selection of the coastal specialities such as Feathered Brindle *Aporophyla australis*, Beautiful Gothic *Leucochlaena oditis* and even a Black-banded *Polymixis*

*xanthomista*. There was also another Noctuid that I could not recognise so this was potted for later inspection. The only migrants were two Delicate *Mythimna vitelina* and a single Dark Sword-grass *Agrotis ipsilon*.

Later I identified the unfamiliar moth as Dotted Rustic *Rhyacia simulans*, which was later confirmed, from photographs, by Barry Henwood as the first confirmed record for Devon.

Although “The Moth of Devon” by Roy McCormick mentions two records for VC3 (Chudleigh Knighton Heath 1989-1992 and Kingskerswell 1998), there were no vouchers taken so were not confirmed. There is also a “queried” entry for VC4.

Phil Barden



### Tree-lichen Beauty in Devon

Having caught two Tree-lichen Beauty *Cryphia algae* moths (see photo below) on 2nd August this year at the Undercliff NNR on the south coast of Devon I was interested to find out what previous records for the county existed. Having drawn a blank casting through back issues of the Devon Moth Group annual reports, I contacted Barry Henwood who informed me of the previous records to date.

These were three individuals recorded from Torquay on 5th August 2006, followed by a further individual a few days later on 9th August. Another was recorded from Plymouth on 27th July 2007 and then nothing until one at Slapton on the same day this year as those recorded by me on the Undercliff.

It was expected that the original records from Torquay and Plymouth could have been the pre-cursors of colonisation of south Devon, but it has taken 11 years for the species to re-appear. Whether this is due to a lack of follow-up trapping in the first sites is uncertain, as the very close capture dates of all the records would have suggested residency rather than migration.

On 2nd August 2018 there were no migrants among the other species recorded apart from a single Silver Y *Autographa gamma*; Jersey Mocha *Cyclophora ruficiliaria* and Four-spotted Footman *Lithosia quadra* being residents at this location. The potentially short flight period may explain some lack of records from the earlier locations. I will try to return to the Undercliff between 27th July and 9th August in 2019 as none were seen on either 23rd July or 12th August, which were the other nearest dates I trapped in the same spot this year.

The Tree-lichen Beauty is a truly spectacular moth and must be one of the most cryptically camouflaged moths in the UK when resting on lichen covered trees. The two individuals recorded on the Undercliff were quite different and one had the left hand side wings a different colour to the right hand side as seen in this photograph. Whether this was



sexual gynandromorphy is uncertain as the specimens were released after a round of photography.

Thanks to Barry Henwood for the historic records and Chris Manley in whose trap one of the specimens was caught.

Paul Butter

### Camera equipment for sale

Malcolm Baldwin is offering the following camera equipment for sale:

SIGMA close up lens. 105mm F2.8 macro. Nikon fit. £130

NIKON 70-300 lens with UV filter. £115.

Seagull angle viewfinder; set of 3 Kenko extension tubes (Nikon fit); Macro positioning plate £70.

Please contact [malcbaldwin@gmail.com](mailto:malcbaldwin@gmail.com) 01803 762751.

### Forthcoming events (see [www.devonmoths.org.uk](http://www.devonmoths.org.uk) for more details)

Thursday 31 January 2019 AGM & Winter Meeting at the Kenn Centre, Kennford  
([www.kenncentre.co.uk](http://www.kenncentre.co.uk)) 19.30 for 20.00 start. Annual General Meeting followed by *Birds, Bugs and Beasts* talk by John Walters.



Purple Thorn (Patrick Clement)

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### **2019 Membership subscription for Devon Moth Group**

Membership subscriptions, **£8.00 for single and £12.00 for a family annual membership**, are due from 1st Jan.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

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