



# DEVON MOTH GROUP

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## NEWSLETTER 2013 ISSUE 2 (April)

It's been a strange and largely depressing year for moths so far. During a very mild spell right at the start of the year, moths were on the wing in some numbers. There were immigrants around too, borne in on warm southerly winds along with deposits of Saharan dust. The best of these was the rare migrant Pyralid moth, *Euchromius ocella* caught by Barry Henwood on 4th January in his Abbotskerswell garden. This moth, shown in the picture below, is only the fourth record of the species on the Devon Moth Group database.

Since the mild New Year spell, however, the weather has been very disappointing, with few suitable nights for moth trapping. Although we've not suffered from the long spells of settled snow and frozen ground that has affected much of Britain, it has been bitterly cold and moth sightings have been few and far between. Having just experienced the coldest Easter on record in Britain, we can only hope that spring will arrive eventually and with it a bumper emergence of delayed spring moths.

If you've not received it already, you should soon get your copy of the 2012 Annual Report, and with it the list of our field meetings for this summer. Hope to see you at these meetings and happy mothing!

Richard Fox



## Annual General Meeting on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013

The AGM was held at the Kenn Centre, Kennford and attended by around 30 members. Apologies were received from Brian Bewsher and George Williams. The minutes of the previous AGM were approved unanimously and signed by the Chairman. The reports of the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary followed (see below), as well as

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

some brief feedback from Barry Henwood, the County Moth Recorder. Copies of the accounts were distributed by email in advance of the AGM and made available to those present. No questions or issues were raised. The accounts were approved and signed by the Chairman.

Following major increases in outgoing costs, particularly of printing newsletter and annual reports and postage thereof, as well as our plans to obtain public liability insurance, Council had proposed a small increase in annual membership fees, from £6 to £8 for single membership, and £9 to £12 for joint membership. Membership fees have remained static for many years and the proposed change would not come into force until the beginning of 2014. As required by our constitution, any increase in membership fees must be approved by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at the AGM. Points were raised from the floor and there was some discussion. A vote was then held with an overwhelming majority voting in favour of the proposal, no-one voting against and five abstentions. The new membership fees will, therefore, come into effect at the beginning of 2014.

The election was then held for all Council members including the Chairman. All current incumbents were willing to stand again and, there being no other candidates, Nicola Bacciu, Richard Fox, Barry Henwood, Roy McCormick and Rob Wolton were re-elected unanimously.

### Chairman's AGM Report

The year 2012 got off to a good start, with a very warm March leading to early emergences and good numbers of spring moths. However, this all changed for the worse in April when the rains started and set in for much of the rest of the year. Most months had below average temperatures and above average rainfall, and 2012 turned out to be the wettest year on record in England. This certainly seemed to affect moths and moth recorders – with fewer opportunities to trap and lower numbers of moths even when it was possible.

Nevertheless, there were some very good records with the Pyralid *Agrotera nemoralis* and *Pseudeustrotia candidula* Shining Marbled both new to Devon. *Eublemma purpurina* Beautiful Marbled was new to North Devon (VC4), there was a rare sighting of *Conistra erythrocephala* Red-headed Chestnut and new locations discovered for *Zygaena loniceræ* Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet and *Sesia bembeciformis* Lunar Hornet Moth.

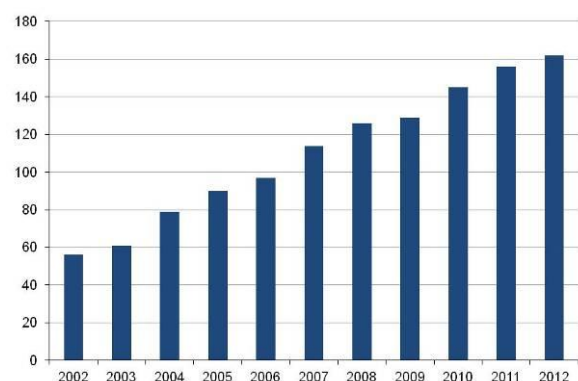
Personally, it was a disappointing year of trapping and I only added half a dozen new species to my garden moth list. None of these were unusual species and I've probably encountered them in the garden in previous years – the difference this year was that I was armed with the new *Field Guide to the Micro-moths of Great Britain and Ireland* by Phil Sterling and Mark Parsons. This is a fantastic book that I would heartily recommend, especially to those, like myself, who are still finding their way with the micros. It has encouraged me to have a go at identifying moths that I'd probably not have attempted a year ago – hence the additions to my garden list. However, as with any field guide and perhaps especially so with micro-moths, we must all strive to be disciplined and critical recorders and only record what we are certain of; if in doubt, leave it out! Even with the new Field Guide at your side, it will frequently be necessary to check specimens with the County Recorder or other experienced members before they can be confirmed.

On the subject of micros, Devon Moth Group ran two micro-moth workshops during 2012. These were well attended and I'm very grateful to Barry Henwood, Bob Heckford and Stella Beavan for organising them.

A significant step in the Group's development was the launch of our new website [www.devonmoths.org.uk](http://www.devonmoths.org.uk). As you would expect, the site has lots of info about the Group, events, moth recording and moth conservation, as well as all the latest news. It also contains a new list of all the micro-moth species ever recorded in VC3 or VC4 – a fantastic resource kindly provided by Stella Beavan and Bob Heckford. The website is proving popular; it is the first item found in a Google search for "Devon moths" and has already been visited by nearly 1300 different people since it went live in the spring.

Finally, as the Secretary will no doubt report, our membership has continued to grow. In fact there has been a steady, continuous growth in membership numbers every year. The graph (right) shows this for the period 2002-2012, with numbers growing from 56 at the start of 2002 to over 160 now. Let's hope this growth continues in the future, aided by increased awareness of the Group due to our new website.

Richard Fox



## Secretary's AGM Report

The Group is still gaining new Members with a membership of 163 at the beginning of 2013; we have 27 members who do not live in the county, with a high proportion of these living in Cornwall and one living in London. We have three Honorary Members and two who get free Membership, with one of these our Accountant. We have 38 Members who get their Newsletters by post with the remaining 125 receiving it by e-mail which makes a considerable saving on our expenses. However, the cost of printing the Newsletters for posting has gone up considerably with the last bill @ £47, and the cost of second class stamps @ 50P each makes a further £19 making a total of £66 for distribution of our last Newsletter.

We held two Indoor Meetings at the Ley Arms, the AGM and Spring events with the Autumn Meeting being held at the Exeter Court Hotel because the Ley Arms had become unreliable; this was a very expensive meeting costing £100 and we have now booked the Kenn Centre in Kennford at £25 a meeting. Our Christmas event at the Highwayman's Haunt Public House, Chudleigh, was reasonably well attended with 16 people coming; unfortunately Mavis and I could not attend because of illness. **We have booked for Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> December for this year. Please make a note in your diaries.** Most of our Meetings attract around 25+ Members. We had six field Meetings booked and these were led by Paul Butter, Barry Henwood and Rob Wolton; two of these had to be cancelled because of the appalling weather we had last year. Because I am now a full time carer for my wife Mavis, I could not lead any these and I heartily thank these Members who stepped in for me.

We will continue to hold our indoor meetings on Thursday evening with a starting time of 19.30 for 20.00, this to accommodate our North County Members who find it difficult to get there on time with the distance they have to travel. Our Annual Report will continue to be issued at the Spring Meeting, as many records do not come in until the beginning of the year; this creates a big rush to get it out on time and with the changes in this document, it has become impossible to issue this sooner. Richard has notified the Membership about this change in a previous Newsletter. Barry will give a short talk about the recording side of things after this report.

Your Council held four meetings during 2012 with the main topics of discussion: trying to find speakers for our indoor meetings, arranging Field Meetings, discussions about the Annual Report and getting funding for our new web site; we managed to obtain an OPAL grant for this and other purposes and this has now been spent and reports sent back to these authorities. DMG still remains a prominent partner in BAPs activities along with B.C. and the National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS).

I reiterate my thanks to the people who are helping to keep the group running taking on most of the work I used to be involved in before my wife had a stroke, with most of the work being taken over by Richard Fox; I certainly could not have been able to carry on without this valuable help. Thank you Richard  
Roy McCormick

### **AGM illustrated talk: *Buglife in the South-West* by Andrew Whitehouse, Buglife.**

Following the AGM, Andrew enthralled us by telling us what the charity Buglife is doing for invertebrate conservation in the South-West, with the help of excellent photos.

He started by taking us through some of the spectacular invertebrates we have, ranging from the blue ground beetle and Lundy cabbage flea beetle, through the narrow-headed ant (which occurs only in the Cairngorms and on Chudleigh Knighton Heath) to the freshwater pearl mussel and pink sea fan. The last even has its own pink sea fan anemone and pink sea fan sea slug! As Andrew pointed out, the presence of such awesome species reflects the diversity and quality of the amazing habitats we have here, both on land and under the sea.

Buglife is running a number of projects in the South-West. The oil beetle project is a national one being run from the SW office because we are a hot spot for these weird-looking creatures, with their bizarre triungulin larvae. Through encouraging people to send in records, the number of sound UK distribution records has doubled to some 2,400 – Citizen Science working at its best. A species believed extinct in the country has even been re-found, the Mediterranean oil beetle, and here in Devon! Research has shown that oil beetles need strong, diverse wild solitary bee populations, and Buglife has produced a guidance document on habitat management for them.

The white-clawed crayfish is the focus of another project. This native species is much threatened by the larger and more aggressive signal crayfish which also carries crayfish plague, a disease lethal to the white-clawed. The SW Crayfish Project aims to establish four so-called ark sites – isolated water bodies into which local white-claws are translocated, safe from aliens and their plagues. Two of these ark sites have been established already.

After hearing about the Dorset ladybird spider project – what an attractive mini-beast – we learnt about the horrid-ground weaver, a small hairy money spider, known across the globe from only three sites in Plymouth. Here it inhabits crevices in limestone rock faces and slopes, where it is exceedingly difficult to find.

Next a fly, the bog hoverfly, an impressive creature that is now known in the British Isles from just a few sites on Dartmoor. Despite a lot of patient effort, the fly has never been seen ovipositing or its larvae found, so neither its habitat requirements nor reason for disappearance are not yet understood. The research continues.

Finally Andrew introduced us to Plymouth's Buzzing. This project aims to create a staggering 5 ha of new flower-rich grassland for pollinators, all in central Plymouth. Not only will this be of benefit to bees and other pollinators like hoverflies, it is also bringing urban schools and communities in direct contact with wildlife. So everyone benefits, insects and people alike, and what's more it is cost neutral for Plymouth Council. Andrew now has roundabouts in his sights.

Our thanks to Andrew for an interesting and entertaining evening – Buglife will have gained many new friends.  
Rob Wolton

### Indoor Meeting Report: Spring Meeting, the Kenn Centre, Kennford, 28.3.2013

*Garden Moths*, a talk by Barry Henwood, Devon County Moth Recorder.

Barry treated the 25 or so members present to a whistle-stop tour of the huge variety of moths that can be found in gardens, illustrated with his own photographs. Taking different common garden plants in turn, Barry told us of the moths that can be found associated with them – from tiny leaf-mining Nepticulids to (relatively) huge caterpillars such as those of the Eyed Hawk-moth *Smerinthus ocellata* (see adult right) and Elephant Hawk-moth *Deilephila elpenor*. One apple leaf that he illustrated appeared to have three different micro-moth larval stages living on/in it!



Barry had also kindly brought along some clippings from his garden Pyracanthas and Azaleas which held mines and spinings of two common micro-moths, *Phyllonorycter leucographella* and *Caloptilia azaleella* respectively.

Gardens are well recorded for moths and some people run up very long species lists for their gardens (a few exceeding 1000 species). Barry showed that garden moths can not only be interesting and enjoyable but occasionally unexpected and very exciting, as illustrated by the second ever specimen of Patton's Tiger *Hyphoraia testudinaria*, which he caught in his garden a few years ago. Many thanks to Barry for an excellent talk.

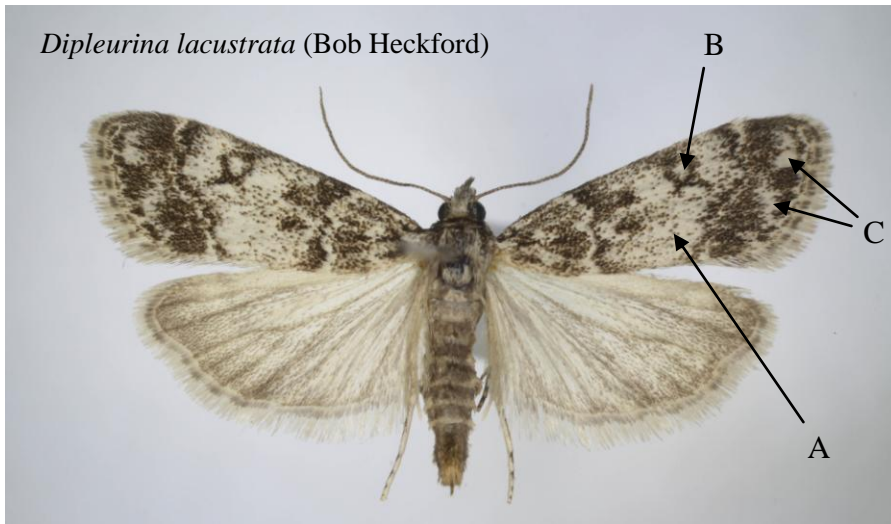
Richard Fox

### Difficult species: *Dipleurina lacustrata* and *Eudonia mercurella*

Because of the greater interest in Microlepidoptera, in part due to the *Field Guide to the Micromoths of Great Britain and Ireland* by Phil Sterling and Mark Parsons, more records of this group are being received, but many need careful checking. So we aim to produce an occasional note for the newsletter about some of the species that can be confused.

We start with two species in the Scopariine: *Dipleurina lacustrata* and *Eudonia mercurella* (note: the *Field Guide* uses the name *Eudonia lacustrata*). Both are fairly common and are frequent visitors to light traps and both rest in a similar position.

Although the two specimens illustrated (overleaf) look different, the forewing markings of both species vary and as a result we find it impossible to give a character or combination of characters that can be safely used to separate them. We are aware of characters given in the *Field Guide* and also in Beirne's 1954 *British Pyralid and Plume*



Having said that, usually the middle third of the forewing (A) between the two transverse lines of *D. lacustrata* is almost a uniform paler grey whereas that of *E. mercurella* has some pale grey areas but also a variable amount of dark blackish brown scales, and the almost 'X' discal mark (B) at about two-thirds of the wing from the thorax and near the costa is clearer in the former. Also the pale grey marks (C) in the outer forewing close to the termen are usually separate where they approach the outer transverse line in *D. lacustrata* but are usually united in *E. mercurella*.



Also, as stated in the *Field Guide*, *E. mercurella* never has any yellowish brown on the forewing, which *D. lacustrata* sometimes has.

Any moths, found as adults, that undoubtedly agree with the illustrations here can be safely recorded as the relevant species; otherwise we suggest you do not record them, unless you have dissected them or reared them.

Although the moths look very similar externally, the genitalia of both sexes of both species are sufficiently different, as shown on the excellent dissection website: <http://www.dissectiongroup.co.uk>

The larvae are strikingly different in colour, as shown by the illustrations below. Both feed under/amongst various species of moss growing on trunks of large bushes/trees or on walls. They can be found in the Spring and so now is a good time to look.

Stella Beavan & Bob Heckford



## Devon Moth Group in Europe

Over the last few years a lot of work has been done, most in mainland Europe, on revising the classification of Lepidoptera involving DNA technology. This was mentioned by Malcolm Scoble in his talk to us last year. We shall have to embrace these changes once the new British Checklist is published. In the meantime the *Revised Checklist of the Lepidoptera of Denmark* has recently been published. Its authors Ole Karsholt and Per Stadel Nielsen thank 28 people for their help in its production. Most of these people work in museums. Four are from Britain and half of those are members of Devon Moth Group. Well done to Bob Heckford and Stella Beavan for making such a contribution to European entomology! They checked each of over 3,000 entries and made comments on several, which resulted in changes being made. They looked at the spellings of scientific names, the authors of those names, the dates of publication of the names as well as checking brackets and also notes to various species.

I expect many readers will be unaware of the significance of the various brackets that appear around the authority and date for a species name. To be quoted in full a scientific name is followed by the author's name and the year of publication. The name and date appear in curved brackets () if the specific name was originally assigned to a different genus than the current one. Square brackets [] are also often used, but have a different meaning (although they were deliberately not used in the Danish Checklist). They appear around the author's name if it was not stated in the original publication, but only discovered by subsequent research. Square brackets appear around the date if the original publication was undated and the date only discovered by subsequent research.

Barry Henwood

## Welcome to New Members

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## Forthcoming events

Friday 17 May 2013, Hazelwood Farm, Sampford Courtenay nr Okehampton (full details given in the Annual Report or on website). Meet at 20.30 at the farm SX642997 (postcode EX20 2SH). Please phone Paul Butter (07876 524184) in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Friday 21 June 2013, National Trust Parke, Bovey Tracey (full details given in the Annual Report or on website). Meet at 21.30 at National Trust Parke car park SX805785. Please phone Barry Henwood (01626 364080) or Fred Hutt (01626 834748) in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.