



DEVON MOTH GROUP

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Well the wettest year on record has been followed by the coldest spring for 50 years – not conducive to moth recording, or to the moths themselves! There have been dark mutterings from moth recorders up and down the country about delayed emergences and, much more worryingly, very low abundances and this has certainly been my experience in the garden so far this year. A spell of much warmer, sunny weather in late May and early June lifted the spirits, but unfortunately also brought clear night-time skies and low temperatures for trapping. Things, as they say, can only get better!

I must also report the very sad news that Mavis McCormick, wife of our Secretary/Treasurer/Moth Group stalwart Roy, passed away on 15th March. Many of you will have known Mavis, who regularly accompanied Roy to Group meetings, and Devon Moth Group was well represented at her funeral in Teignmouth. She will be greatly missed.

Finally, advanced notice for all those members who pay their subscription by standing order. Please can you ensure that standing orders are amended to £9 for a single membership or £12 for a joint membership for next year and that all standing orders are paid on 1st January each year. It proves extremely difficult to keep track of subscriptions that come in by standing order on varied dates through the year.

Happy mothing!
Richard Fox

Field Meeting Reports

Hazelwood Farm, Sampford Courtenay nr Okehampton, 17.5.2013

The weather had been poor for over a week prior to the night of 17th May with wet and windy weather and low temperatures. This night was no exception and the six members who attended had to wait patiently in our conservatory chatting about their mothing experiences over tea and biscuits for the rain to stop before doing a round of the four 125 watt MV traps I had set up around the field. Fortunately the wind had died down and the cloud cover held temperatures to 8°C.

The first moth was a familiar Brimstone *Opisthagraptis luteolata* which is often an early flyer. There were the usual “Quaker” moths at this late stage of their flight period with both Common and Powdered Quakers and Hebrew Characters (*Orthosia cerasi*, *O. gracilis* and *O. gothica* respectively). A couple of Lunar Marbled Brown *Drymonis ruficornis* were popular arrivals and got photographed along with still pristine Brindled Beauty *Lycia hirtaria*. Brindled Beauties have proved to be commoner than usual here this year with an extended flight period as well.

Water Carpet *Lampropteryx suffumata* was a first for some of the group, again an April moth running a bit late as were the five Brindled Pugs *Eupithecia abbreviata*. We did record a couple of “micros”, a common enough *Agonopterix arenella* and a more exciting *Acleris literana* which apart from being a very pretty green flecked moth camouflaged for lichen, was also a site first for me. I also note that in this years' Devon Moth Group annual report that all the 2012 records of this species were from VC3.

**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

Swallow Prominent and Lesser Swallow Prominent (*Pheosia tremula* and *P. gnoma* respectively) were distinguished by the white wedge shaped marking on the lower terminal area of the forewings in *gnoma* compared with a much thinner white dash in *tremula* (see image, right). The remaining species were Flame Carpet *Xanthorhoe designata*, Flame Shoulder *Ochropleura plecta*, Pebble Prominent *Notodonta ziczac*, Angle Shades *Phlogophora meticulosa*, Shoulder Stripe *Anticlea badiata* and Dark Sword-grass *Agrotis ipsilon*. The latter caused some difficulty in identification as the first to arrive was badly worn, hardly showing the distinctive black “sword” marking and also rather smaller than usual. However when two more arrived, in slightly better condition, all was revealed. I have had quite a few Dark Sword-grass already this year and it transpired that others had also recorded this moth earlier in the year suggesting that there may have been some immigration at some point.



Swallow Prominent (right) and Lesser Swallow Prominent (left) (Chris Manley)

All in all it was a reasonable haul of species, but numbers were very low with five Brindled Pugs being the most numerous species. As well as the low numbers it was also obvious that many species usually on the wing by mid May were not recorded whilst many of the recorded species were flying at least two weeks later than usual. Thanks to all who came along and particularly to Tim Stripp who spotted the *Acleris literana*.

Paul Butter

A few interesting recent records

Even in an awful spring, there are always a few interesting records. Barry Henwood, for example, found a larva of *Chortodes morrisii* Morris's Wainscot at Haven Cliff, Axminster earlier this year. As well as being a rare species, this record is nearly 2km west of the currently known distribution of the species in Britain. Phil Barden recorded *Lampronia morosa* in VC4, which is a rarely recorded micro-moth in Devon, and also in VC4 (at Braunton Burrows) recently, Barry Henwood found an adult *Pyrrhia umbra* Bordered Sallow and 22 larvae of the much declined *Arctia caja* Garden Tiger (image, right).

Richard Fox



Garden Tiger larva (Dave Green)

Difficult species: *Caloptilia alchimiella* and *C. robustella*

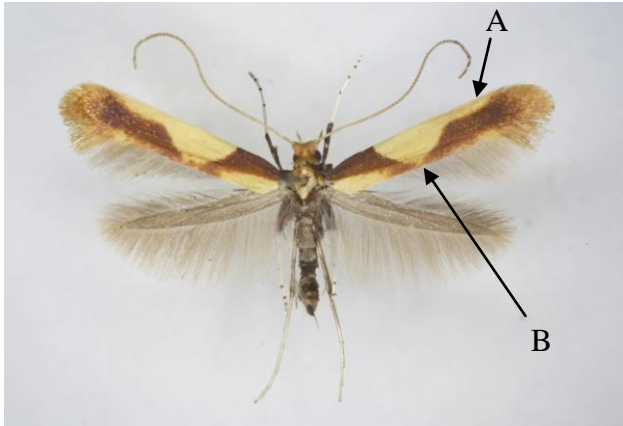
These two species in the Gracillariidae have similar wingspans, are adults at about the same time of year and their larvae both make ‘cones’ on the edges of oak leaves. They are also both comparatively common. The colour and pattern of the forewing is so similar that until 1972 it was believed that there was only one species that had such appearance: *Caloptilia alchimiella*. Then Jäckh showed that there were two species involved and named the ‘new’ one *C. robustella*.

The species can be separated by certain differences of markings on the forewings but, as is often the case, such markings can be slightly variable; in any event safe identification depends on moths in good condition. Although externally the moths look very similar, the genitalia of both sexes of both species are sufficiently different, as shown on the excellent dissection website: <http://www.dissectiongroup.co.uk>

Any moths that undoubtedly agree with the illustrations and comments here can be safely recorded as the relevant species; otherwise we suggest you do not record them, unless they have been dissected. Safe determination will probably involve a combination of all the following differences in the forewing markings.

Caloptilia alchimiella (images below)

- The outer edge of the pale yellow triangular spot in the middle of the forewing is produced along the costa (A) so that it nearly reaches the apex.
- The apex of this triangular spot (B) usually extends beyond the fairly conspicuous strong vein that runs from the base of the forewing to the tornus; often the apex reaches the dorsum.
- The pale yellow spot at the base of the forewing on the dorsum (C) is sharply defined and does not merge with the red-brown colour of the forewing; it usually does not cross the strong vein mentioned above.



Caloptilia robustella (images below)

- The outer edge of the pale yellow triangular spot in the middle of the forewing is usually not produced along the costa, but if it is then not to the extent of *C. alchimiella*.
- The apex of this triangular spot usually only reaches the fairly conspicuous strong vein that runs from the base of the forewing to the tornus, and never reaches the dorsum.
- The pale yellow spot at the base of the forewing on the dorsum is not sharply defined and merges with the red-brown colour of the forewing; it usually crosses the strong vein mentioned above.



All images (Bob Heckford)

Good luck!

Stella Beavan & Bob Heckford

Forthcoming events

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 Fred Hutt (01626 834748) in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Saturday 13 July 2013, Marsland DWT reserve, nr Bude (full details given in the Annual Report or on website). Meet at 21.00 at the reserve centre SS231171. Please phone Rob Wolton (01837 810416) or Gary Pilkington (01288 331266) well in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Moth Night 2013, Thursday 8 August – Saturday 10 August 2013
Tiger moths are among the brightest and most exciting moths in the UK and Moth Night 2013 is targeting tigers to learn more about the impacts of climate change. Organised by *Atropos* and Butterfly Conservation, with the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Moth Night runs over three days/nights on 8-10 August 2013 with numerous public events taking place, including two organised by Devon Moth Group.

Set up in 1999, Moth Night is the UK's annual celebration of moths and moth recording. This year's focus is on the rapidly declining Garden Tiger (92% decrease over 40 years) and the day-flying Jersey Tiger (image below), which is spreading in London and southern England. Climate change appears to be the cause of both patterns and records are needed to monitor the ongoing changes.

In addition to taking part in public events, everyone is encouraged to record all moth species during Moth Night and to submit sightings online at www.mothnight.info



MothNight 2013
Thursday 8 August – Saturday 10 August

Tiger Moths
Do you have tigers in your garden? Discover the wonder of moths and assist with their conservation by taking part in Moth Night 2013, the annual celebration of moths and moth recording.

Get involved in Moth Night 2013:

- record moths at the location of your choice during the day or night
- target Tiger Moths to increase knowledge of climate change impacts
- organise or attend a public moth event
- remember to send in your sightings
- get family and friends involved

www.mothnight.info

ATROPOS Butterfly Conservation
In association with the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology



Jersey Tiger (Chris Manley)