



DEVON MOTH GROUP

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This spring has certainly proved considerably better for moths than the long, cold start to 2013. We've experienced five consecutive months now with average temperatures above the long-term mean and moths have been appearing early and in good numbers. Hope you have had some interesting catches!

Eriogaster lanestris Small Eggar is a particularly prized spring moth in Devon. This century, there were only eight records of adults in the Devon Moth Group database until this spring, so it was amazing when Stella Beavan and Paul Butter both recorded the moth at light at separate sites in mid-Devon on 31 March (see article on p.2).

Records for 2013 still continue to arrive with Barry Henwood, the County Recorder. He has received some 4,000 additional records since the cut-off date for inclusion in the Annual Report, and these will all be processed and added to the DMG database in due course. It's never too late to send in your records!

You may be interested in a new section of the DMG website for scientific publications by members. This can be found under the 'About Us' tab on the homepage and already includes a number of interesting articles, previously published in national journals, in particular a provisional checklist of the moths of Lundy.

Finally, and with great sadness, we heard in late April of the death of John Randall, a staunch member of Devon Moth Group and a stalwart field naturalist and recorder. John will be greatly missed by many local and national wildlife organisations and a full obituary will appear in a future newsletter.

Richard Fox

Sloe Pug in Devon

Pasiphila chloerata Sloe Pug was a long overlooked resident moth in Britain until it was discovered by the late Mr E.C. "Teddy" Pelham-Clinton near Effingham, Surrey in 1971. Thereafter it was found to be present over much of England and parts of Wales and indeed specimens dated 1944 were found in a collection. Teddy himself retired from his job as Keeper of Entomology at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh somewhere around 1980 and moved to a rural location just outside Axminster and close to the Dorset border. He recorded an adult Sloe Pug in his garden there, which was the first Devon record. I don't have the exact date, but I remember him telling me of the capture. It would have been in the 1980s. The next record was when Roy McCormick found larvae near Lyme Regis, but just inside the Devon border. He reared moths from them.

On 21 June 1992, I trapped a moth at Orley Common, Ipplepen (near Newton Abbot) which at the time I recorded as Sloe Pug. This was interesting as this site is far into the county. I subsequently failed to find larvae there or anywhere else in the vicinity. I rather gave up looking and even began to doubt the record. That was until I netted another moth on 25 June 2013 that also looked like Sloe Pug. I retained it to study in detail subsequently. In the meantime Dave Wall at Exmouth had trapped a moth on 19 June 2013 which he thought was Sloe Pug. He retained it and dissected it, confirming his provisional determination. He was able to show me all the evidence. It inspired me to look at my moth from 25 June without further delay. It also proved to be Sloe Pug and further appraisal of the moth from 1992 allowed me to be confident that it was the same species too.

**Members of Council: Richard Fox (Chairman) Nicola Bacciu (Membership & Distribution) Bob Heckford (Ordinary Member)
Roy McCormick (Secretary/Treasurer) Rob Wolton (Conservation) Barry Henwood (County Moth Recorder)**

www.devonmoths.org.uk

The problem is that Sloe Pug is very similar to the much commoner *Pasiphila rectangularata* Green Pug. It is testimony to their similarity that Sloe Pug was not detected in Britain until 1971. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish them on external characters. Also, we now know it occurs at Exmouth and Ipplepen, so it is probably widespread in the county, but at low density. Further records accompanied by supporting evidence would be very welcome.

The adults of both species are green. When fresh, Green Pug is brighter green, but the colour does fade during the life of the moth. The first difference to notice is that the postmedian line of the Green Pug has two angulations pointing out towards the termen, whereas the same line on Sloe Pug is more of a gentle curve. Once you think you have a candidate for Sloe Pug, put it in a jar and look through the glass at the underside of the hindwing. There the post-median line forms an acute angle in Green Pug but an obtuse angle in Sloe Pug. Sloe Pug has brick-red areas on the first three abdominal tergites (that is dorsally at the base of the abdomen), which Green Pug does not have. Photos should be sufficient for me to confirm identification provided the quality is good and that upper-side and under-side (through glass) are shown.

Larvae also show differences. Sloe Pug larvae feed on blackthorn, whereas Green Pug larvae have a variety of different foodplants, including apple, pear, cherry, hawthorn and blackthorn. The larvae of both species feed on the buds and flowers of their foodplants. Larvae of both species are variable with a reddish dorsal line which tends to be broadly interrupted in the middle in Sloe Pug but continuous in Green Pug. The larva of Sloe Pug is greenish white whereas Green Pug is green. So, a greenish white larva with a broadly interrupted, reddish dorsal line on the flowers of blackthorn is a good candidate for Sloe Pug. Rearing through to the adult will enable confirmation.

Barry Henwood



Sloe Pug adult (left) and larva (right) (Barry Henwood)

Eriogaster lanestris Small Eggar in Vice-county 4

In the Devon Moth Group Report for 2013 there were two records of larval nests of this Nationally Scarce B moth, one at Ide, near Exeter and one at Cheriton Bishop, some 15km west. It was with great interest, therefore, that I had two adult moths in my MV trap on 31 March 2014. The two records from 2013 are both in VC3, whereas I live some 12km north-west of Cheriton Bishop, in the much more exclusive VC4.

Roy McCormick, in his book *The Moths of Devon* (2001) lists only three Small Eggar records from VC4 - in 1996 and 1998, some 8km and 5km from my current address, and in 1932 at Braunton. Since then the species has been recorded in VC4 on only three occasions, at Halberton, Sandford and Bideford. Halberton and Bideford are very distant but Sandford is only about 11km away. Whilst it may be that the middle of the county with its abundant *Crataegus monogyna* Hawthorn and *Prunus spinosa* Blackthorn provides particularly suitable habitat for the moth it may also be that, since it flies early in the year, there are fewer moth traps being run.

The moral of the story is to keep the trap going all year – you never know what you may get and you may be lucky enough to find this beautiful moth waiting in the morning and help us to solve the riddle of its distribution.

Stella Beavan



Geoff Wisdom & the assistant county recorder post

Geoff Wisdom, who has carried out fantastic work supporting the County Recorder, Barry Henwood, over the past few years is moving away from Devon. We would like to acknowledge the huge help he has provided, particularly in computerising hand-written moth records from members who do not possess a computer. With Geoff's imminent departure, we would be very keen to hear from any other members who might be able to take on this valuable work. If you are able to help, please contact Barry Henwood barry.henwood@btinternet.com to discuss the role.

Indoor Meeting Report: Spring Meeting, the Kenn Centre, Kennford, 27.3.2013

There and back again – the journey of a moth record, a talk by Ellie Knott, Devon Biodiversity Records Centre.

Ellie, who has worked in a variety of roles at the Records Centre since the year 2000, gave an interesting and informative talk about their work and what happens to our moth records once they reach the records centre. The Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC) is quite large by comparison with other county records centres, with seven full time staff. It is hosted by Devon Wildlife Trust, but is run independently as a not-for-profit organisation.

One of DBRC's main roles is to manage biological records for the county and to make these available to local authorities, government agencies, conservation organisations and recording groups to help inform decision making. The Centre currently holds over 3 million records, including c. 1 million botanical records and over ½ million moth records supplied by Devon Moth Group. The next largest contribution is bird records at c. ¼ million. However, it transpired during an interesting question and answer session that it is only information on legally protected species that is generally made available in response to planning enquiries. Furthermore, DBRC do not currently make any of the moth data available more widely, for example through the National Biodiversity Network Gateway website (although they might be able to do this in the future if requested by DMG).

In addition to their data management and provision role, DBRC also undertake and organise a lot of biological recording themselves. This is mainly botanical, but also includes some surveys of charismatic animals such as otters, whales and dolphins, swifts and amphibians and reptiles.

It was an enlightening talk and we are very grateful to Ellie for coming to speak to DMG.

Richard Fox

Help wanted – Paignton Zoo moth trapping

Paignton Zoo are planning to hold a BioBlitz on 19th and 20th September. This year it will be held in their nature reserve (Primley Park) over the road from the zoo, and they hope to include some moth trapping as part of this 24 hour event. Would any members be interested in running moth traps as part of this Bioblitz on the night of Friday 19th September, prior to the rest of the activities taking place on Saturday 20th? Overnight camping will be available for anyone who fancies it, and perhaps even a BBQ or similar for any keen participants.

Paignton Zoo are also planning some moth trapping for Moth Night 2014, on 3-5 July which will be more of an event for staff and volunteers. Again is anyone interested in helping?

If you are interested in helping at either of these events, please contact Barry Henwood in the first instance at barry.henwood@btinternet.com

Welcome to New Members

Ieuan Blackmore, 3 Marchwood Close, Brockhill, Redditch, B97 6TX
Telephone: 01527 63683. e-mail: i.blackmore@coventry.ac.uk

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

Friday 30 May 2014, Bovey Heath DWT reserve. Meet at 21.00 at entrance to the reserve at SX823765 / TQ12 6TU. Please phone Barry Henwood (01626 364080) in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Saturday 21 June 2014, Langaford Farm, North Bovey. Meet at 21.00 at the field barn at Langaford Farm at SX70308453. Please phone Richard Fox (07711 657322) in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Moth Night 2014 – we have two events organised for this year's Moth Night:

Thursday 3 July 2014, Halsdon DWT reserve. Meet at 21.00 at the car park at the north end of Halsdon Nature Reserve (Devon Wildlife Trust) at SS554133. Please phone Paul Butter (07807 680455) in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.

Saturday 5 July 2014, Becky (Becca) Falls. Meet at 21.00 at Becky Falls car park, SX758800. Please arrive on time as the car park will be locked after arrival and during the field meeting. Please phone Richard Fox (07711 657322) in advance, if the weather conditions appear unfavourable.



Archiearis parthenias Orange Underwing
nr Buckland Monachorum, March 2014
(Phil Barden)