

# LANCASHIRE MOTHS

Newsletter 25

November 2011



**Ni Moth** (Photo: Stephen Palmer)  
Preston 28/9/11



**Crimson Speckled** (Photo: Rod Hill)  
Formby Point 25/8/2011

## EDITORIAL:

Some of you will have been lucky enough to find the odd migrant or two in your traps in July and again in late September and early October. The arrival was not as large or as prolonged as in 2006 but included some interesting species. Unfortunately the only record of *Convolvulus Hawk* received was from just across the border in one of the Yorkshire Vice Counties and an exceptionally rare pyralid moth *Hymenia recurvalis* (in fact two of them!) skipped past us and were found near Kendal in Cumbria – well done Rob. More on the exciting migrants that did make it into Lancashire can be found in the Summary on page 14.

This edition contains articles covering a wide range of subjects, such as part two of Trevor Davenport's fascinating coverage on cryptic and warning colours in moths; a thought provoking discussion on sugaring and pheromones by Richard Walker as well as a write up on a relatively cheap camera for getting good close-up shots of micromoths.

Future newsletters will only be as interesting as the articles sent in for inclusion and it will be down to you to provide material to fill this space, so do get your thinking caps on. Perhaps you have a favourite location where you've had some memorable light trapping sessions which you wish to share with fellow moth enthusiasts. Short notes on your finds or experiences are always particularly welcome.

In Newsletter 24, I made a request for help with two issues of running the Moth Group. Richard Walker and Kevin McCabe have very kindly offered to coordinate the forthcoming National Moth Night in the county. Help with looking after those of you using Mapmate is still an area I'd be very keen to have assistance with – see request under Lancs Mapmate Coordinator in this issue.

## CRYPTIC CAMOUFLAGE AND WARNING COLORATION IN BRITISH MOTHS – PART 2

### WARNING COLORATION

TREVOR DAVENPORT



**Garden Tiger (*Arctia caja*)**

As discussed in Part 1, a large proportion of British moths rely for their safety on cryptic coloration and the ability to keep very still during daylight hours. However, there are a small number of moths that are brightly coloured and many of these are diurnal; in addition, some of them have rather weak flight and do not appear too concerned in making themselves hidden from potential predators. These are known as aposematic moths and are usually characterized by bright conspicuous markings which predators recognize as a warning of a distasteful or poisonous subject, which they avoid, either by instinct or by learning.

There are several good examples of this type of warning coloration: the Garden Tiger (*Arctia caja*) not only has bright black and white forewing markings but flashes an alarming orange and black signal if disturbed. In most cases this would frighten off a would-be predator without the moth being molested or damaged; but even if this warning behaviour failed the moth contains compounds that are both unpleasant and noxious when eaten. In the case of the Garden Tiger this chemical is a complex mixture of histamines and poisons. The caterpillar of the Garden Tiger is also very hairy, which is again a warning that it is potentially toxic. There are several moth caterpillars that have this hairy appearance and, in some cases, they can cause severe irritation and skin rashes in humans.

In other aposematic moths the chemicals are often derived from the food plant that is eaten whilst they are caterpillars. The Cinnabar Moth (*Tyrria jacobaeae*) has red and black warning colours in the adult form but derives its alkaloid poison from the Ragwort plant eaten voraciously by its caterpillars which are coloured a dramatic orange/yellow and black. Ragwort, a member of the genus *Senecio*, is known as a highly toxic plant in the countryside and is poisonous to horses, cattle and sheep. Interestingly, the Cinnabar caterpillars often consume all their host plant and then have to rely on cannibalism to enable a few to survive; they do not seem to be affected by eating their brothers and sisters.

One of the most frequently encountered day-flying moths, the Six-spot Burnet, also has strongly marked red and black forewings with bright red hind wings. It belongs to the burnet group of which there are ten species in Britain (some of them increasingly scarce) and includes the forester moths.



**Cinnabar moth caterpillars**

None of these moths fly at night and experiments have shown that the burnets contain traces of hydrogen cyanide – a poison so toxic it enables them to adopt their rather lazy day-flying behaviour without too much fear of them being predated. It is thought that these moths are able to manufacture this poison by a process of internal synthesis. It is interesting to speculate how these moths evolved such a potent deterrent. Hydrogen cyanide, even in small quantities, can quickly kill humans and has been used in both warfare and in execution chambers.



**Six-spot Burnet Moths**  
*(Zygaena filipendulae)*

Some of our moths employ cryptic colouration and warning colours as a means to their defence. These tend to be the larger moths such as Hawk-moths, which – presumably due to their size – are probably easier for searching predators to find. The Eyed Hawk-moth (*Smerinthus ocellata*) for example, flashes two bright ‘eyes’ very rapidly if disturbed. This can be quite alarming – even if it is expected; so to a would-be predator it would probably be sufficient to frighten it away. Poplar and Privet Hawk-moths flash coloured underwings in a similar way. The Elephant Hawk-moth caterpillar (*Deilephila elpenor*) has two ‘eyes’ near its head which, when disturbed, it rears up in a frightening posture. Other Hawk-moth caterpillars adopt a striking snake-like posture when disturbed too.

Flashing underwings are not confined to the Hawk-moths; there are several larger moths that have brightly coloured underwings that may be used as a scare tactic too. These belong to the sub family *Catocalinae* and include the Red and Rosy Underwing and the beautiful migrant Clifden Nonpareil (*Catocala fraxini*) which has blue striped underwings. No doubt these large moths would make a substantial snack for a bird or a mouse if they are discovered, but flashing bright colours is probably sufficient for them to be left well alone.

One of our most striking and beautiful day flying moths is the Emperor Moth (*Saturnia pavonia*). This moth also uses ‘eyes’ to good effect with a large ‘eye’ on each wing which, when the wings are flashed open are very conspicuous. It may be that I have a vivid imagination but when I look at any picture of an Emperor and then turn it upside down, I see the face of a cat. Perhaps this is taking the idea of mimicry a bit too far but other moths have also adopted mimicry as a means of defence: Hornet moths, and some of the other clearwings, look strikingly similar to the insects that they are attempting to mimic, in both shape and warning colouration.



**Red Underwing** (*Catocala nupta*)

Both cryptic and warning colouration is employed extensively in our moth fauna and the various means of adapting these defensive strategies makes for a fascinating study. How these strategies evolved, and will continue to evolve, is a matter for both conjecture and wonder; but long may they continue to do so. [All photos taken by the author].



**Female Emperor Moth** (*Saturnia pavonia*)

## SANDHILL RUSTIC SURVEY

This summer work started on a project to test and develop a computer model designed to predict the distribution of the Sandhill Rustic moth on the Sefton Coast. The project was led by Richard Burkmar of Merseyside Biobank and Graham Jones (County Macro Moth Recorder). It was funded by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), with Dan Flenley acting as the project Field Researcher over the summer months. The model was devised in 2008 by Dr Richard Burkmar as part of his MSc.

**Dan Flenley** reports on the survey:

In mid-September, we concluded a survey for the adult moth which started in early August. 17 people helped out, many of these members of the Lancashire Moth Group, spending a combined total of around 270 man-hours looking for the moth.

We sampled five main areas and a total of 450 adult Sandhill Rustics were recorded as detailed below (north to south).

<b>Southport 'Shell' Beach</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Ainsdale-Birkdale Green Beach</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>Ainsdale Beach to south of Shore Rd &amp; Discovery Centre</b>	<b>nil</b>
<b>Ravenmeols Dunes</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Crosby Beach</b>	<b>nil</b>



**Sandhill Rustic**  
(Photo: Trevor Davenport)  
Green Beach, Birkdale

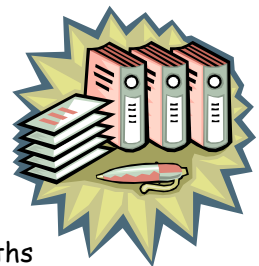
Two of our findings are particularly notable:

1. We found that the moth has already colonised the newest Green Beach at Ainsdale in the 3 years since it started to form.
2. We discovered a previously unknown colony at Ravenmeols. This colony was probably contiguous with the colony at Altcar, thought extinct in 2003. Although habitat at Altcar is not considered ideal for the species, the colony there may still exist, forming a single colony with the Sandhill Rustics found at Ravenmeols.

I am very grateful to all whose time and effort helped us achieve this and it is hoped that the results of the project will be formally published shortly.

## Where do my Moth Records go?

Records of the larger moths recorded in Lancashire are passed on to the National Moth Recording Scheme on an annual basis. Recently a request came through from Les Hill at Butterfly Conservation (BC) to send the data in a bit earlier than usual in order to make an upload deadline to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) - they provide the macromoth maps that appear on the UK Moths website. Consequently all the records received by the end of October 2011 have been submitted to Butterfly Conservation for entry and onward transmission to the NBN - they should appear on NBN generated maps from Feb 2012. The maps can also be viewed on the Moths Count website ([http://www.mothscount.org/maps/94/NBN\\_Maps.html](http://www.mothscount.org/maps/94/NBN_Maps.html)) which should display your 2011 macromoth records early next year.



Kevin McCabe and Steve Palmer plan to start work on collating and editing the c200,000 Lancashire micromoth records ready for onward transmission to the NBN and local Biological Records Centres. Further information will be posted via the Yahoo Group when the maps are available for viewing but this is unlikely to be completed this winter.

# MOTHS IN THE POST



Both County Recorders (Graham and Steve) are willing to assist with moth identification by receiving moth specimens for critical examination, preferably once the main recording season is over. Set specimens are much preferred as all of the relevant features can be seen under a microscope but we are happy to receive unset specimens in the post provided one or two precautions are taken. When posting it is essential they arrive in good condition to enable us to have a chance of identifying them. Please note though that badly worn specimens or those devoid of any scales should not be sent. The important issue is therefore to ensure those sent via the post are not damaged in transit due to insufficient protection.

The main problems that occur during the postal process relate to crushing by other post and the specimens bouncing around inside pots. The first point to bear in mind is that the container in which moths are placed should be rigid and robust. The best containers are old plastic 35mm film tubs but anything of that kind is suitable. Please ensure moths are packed above and below with cotton-wool or something similar to stop the specimen being bounced around – strips of tissue paper don't stop the mothing moving around in transit. Additionally if moths are from separate dates or locations they should be adequately and securely separated in the pot or better still placed in different pots. Whichever container is used, lids should be firmly taped in place as side pressure can pop the lids off. Glass or thin plastic containers are not recommended unless very well padded. Several recorders use empty pill cards with the recessed hole taped over with the moth inside. Although sometimes successful, more arrive flattened or damaged than intact.

Minimum details required with the moths are Recorders name, date of capture, location (including either postcode or OS grid ref to six figures). When subsequently sending in your records, please add a note – “specimen identified by XXX” so we can enter that in the determiner field of Mapmate.

Moths can be retained throughout a season in the freezer, removed to dry for a short while and then packaged as above. If you wish the specimen and container returned after examination, please enclose a stamped and addressed return package, otherwise the containers will be returned as the opportunity arises when we next meet up. Do also check the postal rate for packages as it is not unknown for the wrong stamp to be put on the packet and an excess charge and pick up from an office several miles away ensues.



## LANCS MAPMATE COORDINATOR



A volunteer is sought who is familiar with the regular operations of Mapmate and who would be willing to act as an initial contact point for anyone experiencing problems in carrying out the standard sync file process in Lancashire. A simple guide of what is needed has already been produced but some new and irregular users often need a friendly voice on the end of a phone to talk them through the process or to offer suggestions on how to remedy their problem. In the event that the problem is more complicated users should be referred to the Support facility at Mapmate.

If you are interested in helping with this then do please get in touch with Steve – [s.palmer12@bopenworld.com](mailto:s.palmer12@bopenworld.com) or phone 01772 861570 to discuss.

## OF PHEROMONES, ANTENNA AND ODOUR PLUMES

RICHARD B WALKER

The article on “sugaring” in the December 2010 issue gave rise to e-mails, written and ‘phone correspondence, all of which was much appreciated. Before the article was published it was obvious from discussions that, though historically accurate, there were many individuals who had experienced different results. Some people recording Red Underwing, Large Yellow Underwing in their hundreds and fifty plus Satellites during one night, though few with a large number of species.

From the August “sugar blitz” suggested by Eddie Langrish and offered to members via the August 2011 Newsletter results arrived from Andy Barker, Chris Halsal, Graham

Jones, Eddie Langrish (EL), Ron Moyes, Steve Palmer (SP), Steve Priestley, Dave Wilson, R Rhodes & R Walker (RW). A summary of the results follows: -



**Old Lady at sugar** (Photo: E Langrish)  
Euxton 10/08/11

Moths attracted to sugar from the ten recorders totalled 37 species, of which 7 were micros.

The following moths were recorded in each of the twelve localities sugared, Large Yellow Underwing, Lesser Yellow Underwing, Common Rustic agg, Copper Underwing agg, Dark Arches and Old Lady. The first five were also recorded on most nights at each locality. Of the rest about half were recorded only once, and 9 varied in numbers from two to seven. [Ed. - The abbreviation agg. is short for aggregate, used to denote that the records could relate to either of two different but similar looking species; for example Copper Underwing or Svensson’s Copper Underwing].

EL marked moths throughout the week with different colours and checked for their return with some interesting results:-

50% (4) of Copper Underwing aggs marked returned the second night and again 4 returned on the third night, though not returning again over the remaining 6 nights. Also two marked on the 10<sup>th</sup> returned eight days later. Other groups of the same moth with different coloured markings returned in similar percentages and in one instance made a 60% return. Large Yellow Underwings returned in similar quantities, also making a 60% return once. A single Old Lady marked on 10<sup>th</sup> Aug returned on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a second time on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Where people sugared on successive nights, numbers of the same species were generally attracted in ever increasing numbers. A few results will illustrate this:

Andy Barker, (Eyes Lane, Bretherton) - Large Yellow Underwing numbers for the 4 night between the 10<sup>th</sup> Aug and 16<sup>th</sup> Aug were 12, 21, 132 and 76. Copper Underwing agg. over 5 nights increased from 29, 46, 147, and 210 to 224.

Eddie Langrish, (German Lane) - Copper Underwing agg numbers over 11 nights were 7, 16, 33, 64, 89, 157, 143, 199, 114, 106 and 187. Common Rustic agg figures were 6, 8, 2, 9, 18, 15, 7 and 7.

For those of us who couldn't sugar on successive nights the numbers fluctuated, suggesting that a "blitz" had a remarkable effect, particular on three species. For other species, consecutive numbers were not so convincing.

EL will, in due course, post all the results on the LMG Yahoo site for those interested. I thank him for coordinating the results and for allowing his findings to be included within this article.



**Red Sword-grass at sugar**

(Photo: E Langrish)

Euxton, 29th October 2011

Following my previous article on sugaring some LMG members suggested that it would be interesting to look at moths recorded on Ivy blossom. To this end SP sent a computer filtered list from the Lancs records of moths within this category, dated between mid September and mid November, 1973 to 2009. The records were submitted by 12 individuals, four of whom participated in the above mentioned "sugaring experiment". Results from 951 individual entries show that 32 different species were recorded but ten or so only once. The most frequently encountered moths by numbers were:

<b>Angle Shades</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>Silver Y</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Brick</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>Green-brindled Crescent</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Chestnut</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>Red Sword-grass</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Yellow-line Quaker</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>Satellite</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Red-line Quaker</b>	<b>40</b>		

Moths recorded at the most places were:

<b>Angle Shades</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Silver Y</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chestnut</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Yellow-line Quaker</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Brick</b>	<b>13</b>	<b><i>Emmelina monodactyla</i></b>	<b>8</b>

Whilst Ivy blossom was the common denominator for this particular investigation it is clear that the blossoms of Sallow, Buddleia, Ragwort, Bramble, Campion, Rosebay Willow Herb, Aster and flowering grasses could also be included in a torch light search following the first two hours of darkness.

So far I've not mentioned "wine ropes" – an alternative to sugaring. Metre lengths of thick cord or rope (not new) can be draped over low branches, bushes or fences before dusk and later inspected as one would with other sugaring methods. Recipes tend to be simple and a bottle of heated cheap wine into which 1kg of sugar is stirred is all that's required. Soak the rope, drape, be patient and inspect later!

The underlying principal behind all sugaring methods is that a moth's antenna is an olfactory

organ, and key to the attraction between the moth and its food source. A pair of antenna, whose surface area is increased by a covering of hundreds of minute hairs, with receptor cells on each hair,



**Old Lady, Large Yellow Underwing and "copper underwing sp." at sugar**

(Photo: Eddie Langrish)

Fuxton 15.8.2011

substantially enhances their sensitivity. These pectinate antennae are most noticeable on species such as the male Emperor Moth, along with many other species. Antennae are also essential in assisting a male to find a female of its own species. Evidence suggests that the males of these three named species can recognise the females scent or pheromones, (loosely called “airborne hormones”) up to, and well beyond, a mile down wind. The female emits sex pheromones which are highly selective from specialised abdominal secretory glands using synthesised unsaturated fatty acids. Male antennae can pick up and differentiate small quantities of the correct pheromone molecules of either the females of the same species or a nectar source. The male of *Helicoverpa zea*, a North American moth, has been shown to distinguish the source of two different pheromones less than one millimetre apart.

Science Daily, March 2009 reported work in this field by Jeffery A. Riffell, et al: “How moths key into the scent of a flower”. The hawk moth *Manduca sexta* favoured nectar source is *Datura wrightii*, a white trumpet-shaped flower blooming only at night. To find food (nectar) the moth must track the scent upwind to the flower. Scent from the flower was captured, manufactured in the lab and put into a chromatograph. This then separated the different pheromones and released them into the face of a captured male moth. The moth was wired up in such a way as to allow its brain wave patterns to be recorded. Out of about sixty different pheromones which made up the flowers scent the moth reacted to nine only and then only in the correct ratios. To see how moths reacted towards these nine pheromones they were added to an artificial flower of white filter paper which was placed at the end of a wind tunnel with the moth at the other. The moths were indifferent to the chemical if presented one at a time. A *Datura* flower in the same wind tunnel caused the moths to fly to it and extend their proboscis into the trumpet and nectar. When the nine pheromones were added together in the correct ratios and put onto the paper flower, the moths behaved as if it were the real thing.

Observations show that a moth, downwind of a nectar source starts its flight with large lateral zigzags working out the breadth of the scent, reversing its course when the scent diminishes. As it progresses forwards towards the nectar source the zigzags become progressively less in width until the source is reached. If this flight were drawn it would produce a wedge shape, broad to start and narrowing to the point where the moth makes final contact with the nectar. This theoretical shape is known as a Wind Plume or in this case Odour Plume. Too much wind, especially blustery in nature dilutes the pheromones. Too little wind produces a pencil thin plume and it is not picked up by the moths, both situations producing disappointing results.

Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies ( [www.angleps.com/](http://www.angleps.com/) ) sells artificially produced pheromones which can be used to attract the males of six of our Clearwing species. The artificial production of one for Goat moth has so far failed to be a convincing lure, only the right combination will work. DEFRA and the RHS sell pheromones to commercial fruit growers for a range of moths. Codling Moth (*Cydia pomonella*) is one major pests for apple growers. Canada’s equivalent to DEFRA advises apple growers who have problems with Red-belted Clearwing to put grape juice in a yellow container into which they fly and drown.....like wasps into a jar of jam and water! Does any one fancy trying grape juice as a substitute for brambles in a sugaring mixture or Clearwing lure? Pheromones are available for many insects and are key to recognizing potential pests in the agricultural industry. Rentokil have one for “clothes moths”!

To sum up.....

1) Our Lancs records appear to show that a relatively small number of moth species were attracted to sugaring and to Ivy blossom, some of these may however arrive in large or very large numbers; others are recorded, but infrequently. However, 37 species recorded this year as a percentage of

the total number of species on the wing in October might represent a high percentage of those about.

One set of results (RW) looked at moth numbers attracted to sugar **or** light. By sugaring five trees which were within twenty five metres of an MV lamp in the same locality, but not visible to one another, the number of species recorded at light was almost always over three times as many as seen at sugar. The light was timer operated over five nights and the same time period as the sugaring experiment. Care needs to be exercised in drawing too strong a conclusion from these results as moth species have different feeding and flight times.

2) It would seem that many moths require the correct combination of selected pheromones to entice them to nectar. This suggests that rather than use the same ingredients for our sugaring we should experiment with the mixture and record other species which are enticed. The wine rope recipe for example was very much simpler. Autumn fruits which attract insects of many types are over ripe apples and pears, probably due to the fruits fermentation stage. This parallels the adding of a few drops of rum as suggested in older recipes.

3) Wind strength and its direction, cloud cover, time period, temperature and humidity also play their part. A few days of warm weather beforehand probably encourages the emergence process.

4) Some micros and the group including Swifts do not nectar, others are pollen grain feeders whilst some including Eyed Hawk do not feed at all, living on stored fats from their larval period.

5) A question.....what effect does repeated sugaring have on a moth population, (common or rare)? Emptying a moth trap repeatedly, for arguments sake, six days in a row in the same place does encourage sharp sighted birds, tits and robins in my experience to gather round in expectation of a free meal. I also see, sadly, bird droppings on my moth trap and assorted wings around the base. Would this regularity, if applied to sugaring give the same opportunity to birds and bats during the late evening and early dusk? Shades of Pavlov's moths perhaps!



## **ENTERING GRID REFERENCES ONTO MAPMATE**



For those who use Mapmate please could you consider entering a maximum of six figure grid refs (eg SD123456) onto the system. Larger (eight and ten digits) can cause some confusion on the system and when sorting data for submission to the NMRS. If you want a note of a more accurate grid reference please place this in the comments section.



## **FIELD STUDIES COUNCIL (FSC) COURSES**

The FSC will be running several moth courses during 2012. If you would like more details, do have a look at their website: <http://www.field-studies-council.org/individuals-and-families/natural-history/birds-and-other-animals/butterflies-and-moths.aspx> or telephone 0845 3454071.

## MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY FOR UNDER £50\*

PETE ALKER

\* see note at end of this article

Photographing moths is something I have played around with for as long as I have been trapping them. In many respects it is the modern form of collecting. A good photograph can be used to support a record and can be circulated easily to allow others to help with or confirm identification if required.

I have had a few digital cameras over the years including compacts and DSLRs'. I have always been able to get good results of macro moths with the standard lens on my Nikon DSLR and Fuji compact camera but neither really focused close enough for micros. I was considering buying a dedicated macro lens for my Nikon D90 but the lenses on my wish list were in the region of £300 to £600. Having recently spent much more money on a telephoto lens I was struggling to justify the additional outlay. There is also the hassle of swapping lenses about unless you have more than one camera body.

So I wanted to take pictures of micromoths when checking the trap in the morning. I didn't want to be messing about changing lenses and I didn't want to lay out too much cash. Having always kept an eye on camera developments and read camera reviews I decided to look at the current crop of compact cameras. Compacts have always had good close focus ability but now many can get as close as 1cm to the subject.

I trawled through quite a few reviews and the Canon A495 seemed to fit the bill – good macro performance and excellent image quality for the price. A search of price comparison sites revealed an excellent deal at Jessops with the camera selling at £49.95 which was about £80 off the selling price of the camera when it was first released. If it gave excellent image quality for the price at £130 it was a no-brainer at £49.95 so I bought one.

The camera can be used in **Auto mode** as a simple point and press. In **Auto mode** it automatically recognises that you are taking a macro shot as you focus on your subject and enlarges the central part of the LCD screen. I generally use it in **Programme mode** and select **Macro**. In **Programme mode** you can make quick adjustments to the exposure compensation which can be really useful.



My technique is to take photos of microths while they are settled on the egg box or vanes of the trap. They are usually quite co-operative then. I often try and hold the egg box and camera together. This reduces shake and allows me to move around to take advantage of the best light. I may then try and pose it on a leaf or a piece of wood but my priority is to get a good record shot on the egg box or resting on the trap first. If I thought I had caught something really unusual I would always pot it before trying to take a photograph.



If I have potted something I may go for a picture in the pot or on the lid after identification. I always take up to a dozen shots of each moth making slight adjustments for the light. This usually guarantees I have a few really good sharp shots. The only problem taking so many shots is deciding which to keep!

The two shots below illustrate how close you can get and how the centre of the screen enlarges when you part press the shutter release button to focus.



Results to date have generally been very good to excellent. The camera occasionally hunts for or fails to find focus but really expensive kit can suffer that too. The *Ypsolopha parenthesella* above on the LCD screen and right was only photographed for the purposes of this article, but the final result isn't too bad (see below).



### MORE SAMPLE SHOTS



This camera certainly offers outstanding value for money, is really easy to use and takes some great macro photos with very little fuss. It runs off two AA batteries and is about the size of a cigarette packet. Build quality seems quite good but it does feel a bit plastic.

My last tip comes from a famous photographer, the late Lord Litchfield. When asked about the art of being a good photographer and taking good photographs he said it was to never to show people your bad ones. That is probably the best advice of all.

\* Pete Alker adds:

As is common with special offers, the Canon Powershot A495 has gone back up in price to £97.99 only a couple of weeks back having been on this special offer all summer. However there are two other Canon cameras that are worth a look at and are capable of similar macro results. The Canon Powershot A800 is £49.99 and the Canon Powershot A1200 is £59.95. [Ed. Both were available from Jessops on-line at the time of going to press].

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## National Moth Night is back!

In **2012** this event will take place between **21st and 23rd June** inclusive (three days and three nights). The theme will be the moths of Brownfield habitats (e.g. old quarries, disused railway lines, gravel and clay workings etc) but the event is not exclusive to this type of habitat. It will also include both day and night time recording for the first time in several years. No specific events have so far been planned for Lancashire but if you intend running an event do please pass on the details so they can be advertised on the Lancashire Moth Group website.

The national organiser's intention for 2012 onwards is to ask everyone with access to the internet to put their records direct into a national online-recording system. No doubt we'll hear more about this in due course but we would also like you to send the results to the Lancashire Moth Group as well.

As a trial for 2012 we will be operating a Lancashire collection of results primarily to cater for those not on the internet but also to allow us to write up a summary of the results for the Newsletter. Kevin McCabe has very kindly offered to coordinate the collection and sorting of the results. Please send your electronic lists (preferably in excel) or paper copy to [mothmankev@btinternet.com](mailto:mothmankev@btinternet.com) or post to 29 Reigate Road, Flixton, Manchester M41 6PT as soon as possible after the event. **It is very important that you let Kevin know if you have also submitted them via the on-line scheme or not.**

Later in the year Richard Walker has kindly agreed to write up a summary and list of results for our Newsletter 26. In order for Richard to be able to do this, please make sure your data gets to Kevin no later than 31st July 2012.

You might also like to note that **NMN 2013** will be on **8th to 10th August 2013** and **3rd to 5th July 2014**.

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### E-MAIL GROUP

Graham Dixon and Graham Jones run the Yahoo Group for the Lancashire Moth Group  
<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/lancashiremoths/>.  
Anyone interested in joining should contact either of the Grahams by email. Graham Dixon at -  
[troubleatmill@btinternet.com](mailto:troubleatmill@btinternet.com) or Graham Jones at - [gra\\_ham\\_jones@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gra_ham_jones@yahoo.co.uk)

# JOYS OF MOTH TRAPPING ON THE BOWLAND FELLS

TERRY WHITAKER

A Friday evening phone call command: 'Weather's calm and cloudy bring your mercury vapour moth lamp and a sheet'. I arrive at Pete's well before the appointed time of 20:30. 'You're early' he complains. 'I tried to phone you, John's generator won't start; can we use yours?' Follows - my excuses: 'no petrol, it's heavy what about your bad back? too big for your car?' All to no avail, we drive back to my garage and squeeze in my generator. Since we are now using my big generator I also throw in my most powerful lamp, more cables and my large tripod. 'That's too big! use my spare'.

Perched on a variety of smelly rubbish (literally; Pete has forgotten to take it to the dump!), we are late and career down the narrow lanes as I criticise his Jeremy Clarkson style of driving. He slows after the cargo shifts and we both fear an early demise by burial in a mixture of household rubbish and electrical gear. It starts to rain steadily and is getting dark rather early. I tentatively reassure that the weather radar only showed a few small drizzly patches in Morecambe Bay. As we rendezvous at the Jubilee Tower with another four cars containing six fellow moth trappers, it is almost pitch black and absolutely pouring. We abandon one car and repack; Pete moans 'This is an absolute disaster!'

We drive through unlocked gates on the Duchy Estate up and up on an excellent graded track towards Ward's Stones, pausing only to deposit an actinic trap near a plantation. The midges are vicious perhaps objecting to the glowing purple alien presence that has appeared in their kingdom. Brian and I are dropped off near Grizedale Bridge amidst; 'Oh dear I've forgotten my spare tripod,' in a trackside chaos of generator, petrol cans, lamps, control gear, cables, sheets and specimen pots. The rain stops as Pete and the Manchester Lads head on up into the re-gathering darkness towards the summit and the rest head off to set up another generator. Brian puts out a second actinic trap as I run cables, set up lamps and prepare to start the generator. I relax in a haze of ferocious midges and take in the soothing iconic calls of curlew and oystercatcher. Where's my DEET spray? a sudden desperate need to discourage the biters. I spray cuffs, neck, and hair. The winds getting up, spray all over face, why have my lips gone numb?

Away from our fell-side lights it was pitch black except for a faint pallid glow indicating the sun's progress to the north and a dull red patch on the clouds indicating where Lancaster lies. It's now flat calm and mild, moths piling in - this is what we are here for. Mainly moorland specialists; True-Lovers' Knot, Light Knotgrass, Glaucous Shears and heavy bodied female Fox moths. Later the even bigger hairy female Northern Eggars arrive. These large Lasiocampids are so gravid their eggs are pouring out uncontrollably. A small pile of large brown seed-like eggs accumulate wherever they settle. The moth list increase to over 30 species.

Suddenly it's one o'clock and Pete and the Manchester lads are back from a windswept summit and join us, the clouds have gone and it turning very cold and moths and midges have gone. We stop the generator and pack up. In the sudden hush under a brilliant sweep of the Milky Way the moorland curlews and lapwings still call.

Home in time for daylight with another completed dot for the Lancashire moth map.

## A SUMMARY OF MOTHS FOUND IN VC59 & VC60

This summary covers all records of Lancashire's moths entered onto the Mapmate database between 1st July and 31st October 2011 but it is important to note it does not necessarily signify the record has been accepted by the relevant county recorder – a full assessment of all records take place at the end of the year. During the second half of 2011 well over 36,000 records were received from around 110 different recorders – another terrific effort by you all – many thanks. The two Lancashire Vice Counties cover from the River Mersey to the River Ribble (VC59) and from the Ribble to just south of Arnside (VC60). For those who send their records in towards the end of the year, do please ensure they are sent before Jan 5th 2012. I can't guarantee they will be used in the compilation of the Annual Report if received after that date.

Before starting this summary it is worthwhile mentioning three additional species, from earlier in the year, that were only recently identified. On the 5th May, a *Mompha* species, tentatively identified as either *M. bradleyi* or *M. divisella*, came to light in Flixton (K McCabe - KM). Subsequent microscopic examination (and confirmation of the record by Dr John Langmaid) led to *Mompha divisella* being added to the Lancashire list. It is of interest to note that several similar looking moths were also found in Great Sankey (J Mitchell-Lisle - JM) but, despite good quality photographs being available, it has not been possible to ascertain which species they referred to. *Epinotia nanana* was found new to VC59 on 3rd June (G Riley - GR) with a second one turning up about three weeks later at the same site. The final exciting and rather unexpected find was of *Coleophora frischella*, netted on 19th May (KM) at Upper Coldwell Reservoir, Lancs Wildlife Trust reserve and also new to Lancashire.

### July

The month kicked off with a record of one of our longest living moths, when a Herald came to light in Swinton (GR) on 2nd, only a matter of weeks since the last surviving Herald from the previous winter had been reported. One wonders if Geoff's moth will survive to appear in his trap again next Spring. Numbers of Blackneck reported so far show a slight decline after two good years but, despite this, it continued to appear at new sites in Egerton (D Lumb - DL) on 2nd and Yealand Redmayne on 6th (S Stokes - SS). Visits to Ainsdale in the south and Myers Allotment in the north (the new Butterfly Conservation reserve near Leighton Moss) on the 2nd produced some excellent results. At the former site Dwarf Cream Wave, 4 Satin Beauty and 10 Large Emerald came to light (J Clews – JC & C Daly – CD) while Myers produced 14 Brown Scallop, a V Moth and large counts of Light Emerald (68) and Mottled Beauty (92) - (A Barker - AB, E Langrish – EL, R Moyes – RM & S Priestley – SP). Also on the 2nd John Girdley (JG) followed up Terry Whitaker's (TW) multiple sightings of Red-necked Footman from late June and located 54 at Thrushgill, while TW was out finding Wood Tiger and Grey Mountain Carpet at Botton Crag. On the coast, Haworth's Pugs were doing well with 12 observed flying around old man's beard at dusk near Jenny Brown's Point (B Hancock – BH). Brian's nearby garden in Yealand Conyers was also doing well at this time, producing Brown Scallop and Golden Plusia; the latter species also being noted in Carnforth on 9th (J Rae - JR) and Morecambe on 13th (JG).

Migrants were already making themselves known throughout the county in early July - none more so than the day-flying Humming-bird Hawk Moth. During the period of this report nearly thirty were found at many scattered locations across Lancashire - over half of these in the first week of the month. Other migrants at this time included widespread reports of Diamond-back Moth, Rusty-dot Pearl, Rush Veneer, Dark Sword-grass and Small Mottled Willow, the latter at High Tatham (P Marsh – PM) and Hutton (AB), both on the 4th. However pride of place must go to the Small Marbled, the first of which was also found on 4th at Walmer Bridge (Graham Jones – GJ), the next in Crosby on 14th (C Fletcher - CF) and a third at Longsands, Preston on 31st (Z Hinchcliffe – ZH).



**Small Marbled** (Photo: Graham Jones)  
Walmer Bridge, 4th July 2011

With so much happening over the first few days of July it would be easy to overlook some of the smaller moths on the wing. It is an aspect of recording in the county that has blossomed considerably over the last few years or so and has allowed a much better idea of the distribution and status of many micromoths to be developed. New sites were found for several of the less common species, including *Stathmopoda pedella* in Swinton on 4th July (GR). This distinctive yellow and brown species has legs which stick out sideways when at rest (do have a look at it on UK Moths!). Other local species on show included *Piniphila bifasciana* in Wigan (G & B Wynn – G & BW), *Eudonia pallida*, at light in Dolphinholme (N Rogers – NR) and the nationally uncommon *Celypha rufana* at Gait Barrows (R Heckford and S Beavan). New 10km records were made for *Platyptilia pallidactyla* in St Annes on 6th (A Smith – AS), *Pandemis cinnamomeana* in Swinton (GR) and *Ebulea crocealis* in Inskip (H Barton, S Palmer – SMP) both on the 8th, Lesser Wax Moth (GJ) at Walmer Bridge on 9th and *Udea prunalis* in Norden on 12th (P Stevens - PS). *Ectoedemia decentella* (a very attractive but minute black and white micromoth) still appears to be a local species despite a gradual expansion of its range over the last decade. The only records during the second half of this year were on the 4th July in Billinge (C Darbyshire – CAD) and Swinton (GR).



*Celypha rufana* (Photo: Bob Heckford)  
Gait Barrows, 4th July 2011

The larger moths were not going to be outdone during this period either with Double Dart, rarely found away from its Heysham area stronghold, appearing in Formby (T Davenport – TD), Dingy Shell a new 10km record in Walmer Bridge (GJ), and an impressive count of 13 Suspected coming to light at Mere Sands Wood (I Kippax – IK and R Boydell - RB). Other highlights at this time included Beautiful Snout and Heart and Club at High Tatham (PM, Gary Jones – GJo & A Shaw – ASH) on the 5th and 6th respectively, Satin Wave at Ainsdale (JC, JD) on 8th and Grass Emerald at Sunderland Point on 9th (J Farraday).

Several species were appearing in peak numbers at this time including 36 Clay at St Annes (J Wardle – JW) on 9th, around 100 Straw Dot at Longworth (DL) and 22 Muslin Footman at Mill Houses (PM) both on 10th July. In Southport (RM) Heart and Club, a local species in the county, nearly reached the record number (18) reported from Formby a fortnight previously. Also of note was an Ash Pug at Walmer Bridge (GJ), a V Moth in Yealand Redmayne (SS), Scarce Footman in Flixton (KM) and Silver Hook in Birkdale (TD).

**Forester Moth** (Photo: T Davenport)  
Formby 3rd July 2011



We have long been aware that the Large Ear is the most regularly encountered of the “ears” in moorland areas and lowland raised bogs. Despite this the County Recorder has always insisted on dissection as the other three species could also occur at these sites. This proved a wise decision in 2011 when all of the three other ear species were located well inland as well. Saltern Ear was confirmed from Swinton on 10th July (GR), Ear Moth was located near Wray on 30th July (PM) and Crinan Ear came to light near one of the higher points in the county, at Leck Beck, in early October (TW). It does highlight the need to adopt a cautious approach to all our difficult to determine species and not to make assumptions on limited amounts of data.

I’m not sure how many of you were holding your breath and waiting for the promised update (in Newsletter 24) on how the Forester Moth fared after its teasing appearance at the end of June? Well, you have to wait no longer – over the first three weeks of July this national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species was located in six different one Km squares in the Formby and Ainsdale areas. The largest count came on the 11th when fourteen were found (GJ) at one site. But perhaps the most important part of this story comes from the hard work Richard Walker (RW) has put in discussing the finds with one of the main landowners (the National

Trust). Richard has ensured the NT are fully aware of this moth and its significance and they in turn have shown great interest in ensuring the colony is well looked after and that the habitat is managed in a sympathetic way for this rare moth.

A Bioblitz event at Harpurhey Ponds, Manchester on 15th/16th July produced over 75 species (KM), several of these being new 10km records, including the leaf mining *Eriocrania sparmannella* and *Bucculatrix thoracella* as well as an adult Slender Pug. Also on the 16th, a visit to Beacon Fell (AB, EL) produced several local moths such as Welsh Wave as well as quite a few new 10km records. Species new to the area included Dark Spinach, Purple Bar, Small Rivulet, Bordered White, Gold Spot, Spectacle and Pinion-streaked Snout highlighting the value of visiting under-recorded areas.

The Barred Carpet is a very local species in Lancashire restricted to the limestone areas of northern VC60. It was therefore really exciting to hear that this moth had been found in Formby on 16th July (CF, GJ) in what appears to be a first for VC59. Further records of note at this time included 30 Straw Underwing and *Hellinsia osteodactylus* at Heysham (Heysham Team - HT), *Phycitodes binaevella* in Rainford (S Williams – SW), *Depressaria sordidatella* (not recorded in Lancs since the 19th century) and *Cydia funebrana* in Flixton (KM) and five Blomer's Rivulet in Hynning Scout Wood (GJ). The Dingy



**Beautiful Hook-tip** (Photo: A Bunting)  
Martin Mere, 9th July 2011

Footman continued its remarkable population expansion with 21 coming to light in Ainsdale (JC, CD, RM) on 20th, while a migrant Scarce Bordered Straw was found at Sunderland Point (JG) on the same date, the first in the county since the large influx in 2006. This set things up nicely for the excitement on the 21st when Large Twin-spot Carpet, only the second county record, came to MV light in Flixton (KM). Also on the 21st attention shifted northwards to Mill Houses where a Beautiful Hook-tip was found in a garden light trap (TW). This species has been expanding its range slowly northwards through Lancashire for some time but previous sightings had not even reached the River Ribble. It was a considerable leap north (50km) to reach the Lune valley, bypassing all those in between who were looking forward to seeing this moth in their gardens! Earlier in the month, on the 9th, it had also been found new to Martin Mere (A Bunting – APB).

As July drew to a close, it became apparent that Fen Wainscot was appearing much more widely than usual. Locations, many of which were new for the moth, included Carnforth (JR), Dolphinholme (NR), Silverdale (BH), Mere Sands Wood (IK, RB), Sunderland Point (JG) and Hale (C Cockbain - CC). The last location also reported Crescent Striped, new to this well recorded site, on the 26th (CC). New 10km records were a bit of a feature at this time with Small Dusty Wave in Euxton (R Houlst – RH), *Coleophora saxicolella* and *C. salicorniae* at Sunderland Point (JG), and *Zeiraphera griseana* found at Botton Mill (TW). On the 28th attention shifted back to the migrants with Bedstraw Hawk Moth coming to light in Heysham (J Holding – JH) accompanied by a widespread influx of Dark Swordgrass over the next week or so. Other moths of note included Gold Spangle at Warton (M Elsworth – ME) on the 29th, one of only a handful during 2011, Brown-veined Wainscot at Billinge on the same date (CAD) and a late Silver-ground Carpet at Fulwood on



**Large Twin-spot Carpet**  
(Photo: K McCabe) Flixton 21st July 2011



**Brown-veined Wainscot**  
(Photo: C Darbyshire)  
Billinge, 29th July 2011

30th (A Powell – AP). The final day of July continued the theme of exciting finds with *Gypsonoma aceriana* in Morecambe (JG), Scarce Silver Y in Worsthorne (G Gavaghan – GG) and, best of all, a new county record of *Gelechia nigra* in Swinton (GR) - well beyond its known national range.

## August

Throughout much of the month common migrant species continued to be widely reported, but it was two presumed residents that made the early August headlines. On the 1st the county's second Chocolate-tip came to light in Orrell (P Alker – PA) closely followed by a Lyme Grass at Birkdale Green Beach on 2nd (GJ), the fourth coastal location for this moth in the county since its arrival in 2009. Further north,



**Chocolate-tip** (Photo: P Alker)  
Orrell, 1st August 2011

Since its discovery in Lancashire in 2007, *Morophaga choragella* has remained a very local species with records being restricted to the Astley Moss and Flixton areas. It was therefore of interest, and perhaps an indication of a further range expansion, that a record came in on 3rd from Swinton (GR), about 7km to the northeast of the other sites. The same recorder also came across Devon Carpet in his Swinton garden on 16th – a new species for VC59 and a dramatic southward movement from its previously known colonies in the county. Other significant finds included Hedge Rustic at Flixton on 13th (KM), around 100 *Crambus hamella* on Cadishead Moss LWT reserve (KM) and the county's second record of Black Arches



**Black Arches** (Photo: J Clews)  
Ainsdale, 22nd August 2011



**Gelechia nigra** (Photo: Geoff Riley)  
Swinton, 31st July 2011

on the 3rd, Striped Twin-spot Carpet came to light at Leck Fell (JG) and Beech-green Carpet was found at Mill Houses (PM). The following day *Aroga velocella* and *Oidaematophorus lithodactyla* were new to a very well recorded Dolphinholme garden (NR), the same site hosting a second brood Devon Carpet on the 7th. Gold Spangle was new for the Haslingden area on the 5th (I Smith - IS) as was an Old Lady at Lightfoot Green on 11th (SMP). Around this period there were unverified reports of Garden Dart from three sites - one of these has been retained and is awaiting confirmation.



**Crambus hamella** (Photo: K McCabe)  
Cadishead Moss, 18th August 2011

at Ainsdale on 22nd with two attracted to light (JC, CD, RM).

A Sandhill Rustic survey took place throughout August on the Sefton coast, with tremendous results. More detail can be found in a separate article on page four of this newsletter (D Flenley). As well as the more usual coastal locations in north Lancashire, *Agriphila selasella* was found at several new sites this year including Carleton on 1st (J Scragg - JS), Altcar on 18th (GJ) Southport on 26th (RM) and Great Sankey, near Warrington (JM). Joy is new to our group and in her first few months of sending in records has contributed thirty new 10km records from her home site.

These have included *Psychoides filicivora*, Bordered Beauty, Barred Sallow, Obscure Wainscot, Pale Pinion, Old Lady and Red Underwing – not bad at all for the first six months moth recording. Despite the above record, the Red Underwing appeared to be experiencing a poor season with less than half the number of usual records received to date. All records were of singles with the exception of five on 24th in Stanley Park, Blackpool (JS).

The end of August can often be a disappointing time for moths as the summer species begin to tail off and the autumn specialities have yet to appear. Not so this year. Rod Hill was walking near the coast at Formby Point on the 25th when he spotted an unusual looking moth sitting on the vegetation by the track. Fortunately he had his camera with him and was able to delight the County Recorder with the first confirmed record of the Crimson Speckled in the county since 1871. Elsewhere a Feathered Gothic was new to Hale on 28th (CC), a late White Ermine appeared in Fulwood (AP) on the 29th and a visit to Baines Cragg (JG) on the following day produced 15 Oak Lutestring, 6 Barred Chestnut and 5 Flounced Chestnut, the same recorder also coming up with Butterbur at High Tatham on the same date.



**Crimson Speckled** (Photo: Rod Hill)  
Formby Point 25th August 2011

## September

A couple of visits to a large rural garden site near Goosnargh (James Hide, SMP) with the kind permission and enthusiastic support of the owners John and Rosemary Owen, produced some fine results. Highlights included 15 each of Canary-shouldered Thorn and Centre-barred Sallow and, later on in the month, several Merveille du Jour. Further south, on the 2nd September, a visit to Brinscall (AB, GJ, EL) produced 53 Small Autumnal Moth, 35 Chevron, 30 Heath Rustic and 12 Haworth's Minor. On the same date but much further east, Anomalous came to light in Calderbrook, near Littleborough (Y Mynett & S Pinnington – YM & SPn). On 4th a small brown micro was found in the Heysham NR trap (JG) and passed to SMP for identification. The initial thought was that it was probably a Gelechiid moth, but on closer examination its hindwings were found to be the wrong shape for that family. The structure of the moth suggested it was a member of the Momphidae, usually a very well marked family with scales showing metallic silvers, oranges, whites and black – this moth had none of these. Following dissection a slide was made and it was provisionally identified as *Mompha jurassicella*. This was well outside the moth's known national range so expert confirmation was sought. On a recent trip to London the slide and moth were shown to Dr John Langmaid who commented the



**Netted Carpet** (Photo: Graham Jones)  
Hynning Wood 2011

moth was darker than he'd come across before but kindly confirmed it as *M. jurassicella*, new to Lancashire.

Also on the 4th, the annual check of the Netted Carpet larvae was carried out in the Hynning Wood area, producing a very healthy count of 396 caterpillars (Dr P Hatcher, J Houson, GJ, SMP and E Sarney). As well as the survey work, a plot on the Bee Keepers site to the east of the wood had seeds of Touch-me-not-Balsam spread on disturbed ground to increase the suitable area for this rare moth. Around this time several moths were being found at new sites – these included Grey Chi in Hale (CC), Ringed Chinmark in Walmer Bridge (GJ), Treble Bar in Euxton (RH), and *Oidaematophorus lithodactyla* and Brown-spot Pinion in Warton (ME). This last species has been

declining in the county and was the only record away from its Hale stronghold (CC) where the moth peaked at five on 15th September. On the same date a leaf-mining visit to Brinscall (KM, SMP) produced several new 10km records, most notably over 30 leaf mines of *Mompha locupletella*. This species has been on the increase in the county recently and was also found for the first time in Edenfield (IS) toward the month's end.

Green Carpet had a good season with second brood records from many locations. This coincided with a slow continued expansion in its range with new sites at Great Sankey, Warrington (JM) and Fulwood (AP) both on 9th September and Little Singleton on 11th (S Bedford - SB). At the same time it reached its peak numbers when 19 were found at Ainsdale on 8th (JC, CD, RM) and 20 at Freshfield Dune Heath on 9th (GJ). On the same date *Ectoedemia sericopeza* came to light in Preston (SMP), a new record for VC60 of this Norway Maple seed feeder. On the 22nd, the larval mines of *Stigmella plagicolella* were found in Bretherton (CAD) and a month later KM found the mines in Millgate, Didsbury. These are new 10km square records for a moth that has a very disjunct (well separated) distribution in the county. Most records come from the southern half of VC59 or the strong colonies on the Silverdale limestone. Despite extensive searches there are virtually no records in between these two areas. The Millgate visit by KM also produced a further 15 new 10km records showing the value of visiting under-recorded sites to look at leaf mines at this time of year.



**Northern Deep-brown Dart**  
(Photo: G Gavaghan)  
Worsthorne, 23rd September 2011

There are continuing concerns about the almost total lack of records of Deep Brown and Northern Deep-brown Dart in the county (there is also some doubt about the taxonomic status of this pair). Only two records have so far been received during 2011, both of which are believed to be of the latter species. They occurred in Worsthorne (GG) on 23rd and Hoghton on 29th (G Dixon – GD). At the opposite end of the spectrum, Barred Sallow is definitely increasing its numbers and range. It has been a regular in Hale just north of the Mersey for some years and this continued in 2011 with records from 6th September to 15th October (CC). Elsewhere it was recorded in Ince Woods (J Donnelly – JD, CF) on 26th September, Ainsdale on 27th (JC, CD, RM), Great Sankey on 29th (JM) and Formby on 1st October (RW). Other sallow species around at this time included Orange Sallow, new to Widnes, on 27th (P Hillyer) and, on the same date, Dusky Lemon Sallow at Walmer Bridge (GJ). A second Dusky Lemon Sallow came to light at Leighton Moss on 8th October (SMP).

As September drew to a close the winds swung to the south and thoughts not unexpectedly turned to migration. We'd had a decent season so far and perhaps it was too much to hope that this would continue. While we waited to see what would happen, a *single Tachystola acroxantha* was found in a garden light trap at the Crook o'Lune (SMP, A Sarney), yet another north Lancs site for this adventive resident. And then the flood gates opened!

## Migrants and October

Although common migrants had been around for most of the autumn, it was proving difficult to separate new arrivals from those which had been around for a while. The first proof of new arrivals came with a Scarce Bordered Straw in Heysham on 27th September (JH) followed by a Ni Moth at Lightfoot Green on 28th September amongst a large group of Silver Y. Next to arrive was *Palpita vitrealis* on 30th September in Southport (RM) closely followed by a Gem at Sunderland Point (JG) and incredibly a second and third Ni Moth at Yealand Redmayne (SS) on the 1st October and Yealand Conyers on 2nd (BH).



***Palpita vitrealis*** (Photo: B Hancock)  
Leighton Moss 2nd October 2011

Away from the excitement of the arriving migrants the continuing mild weather was also being kind to resident species and moth recorders alike. The species most moth enthusiasts would like to find in their traps at this time of the year is probably the Merveille du Jour. Two of these were therefore highly delighted to welcome this spectacular species for the first time - one at Little Singleton on 2nd (SB) and a few days later in Orrell (PA). A Streak in Calderbrook on 5th (YM & SPn) would also be on many a wish list, I suspect.



**Bordered Straw** (Photo: S Palmer)  
Lightfoot Green, 3rd October 2011

However it was not possible to take your eyes off the weather charts with southerlies blowing all the way from North Africa. Hitching a long distance ride on these winds was obviously catching on as both Bordered Straw and Scarce Bordered Straw arrived on the 3rd October in a Lightfoot Green trap (SMP). Further north on the same date Pearly Underwing was found in Morecambe (JG) and the same species occurred in Walmer Bridge on the 7th (GJ). Morecambe was also the host to the third *Palpita vitrealis* on the 7th (JG). The sharp-eyed amongst you will have noticed no reference has yet been made to the Vestal. During October at least 14 individuals were recorded at seven different sites (CC, JD, CF, GJ, Tony Middlehurst, SMP, AS) – the best migration season we've experienced since the bonanza in 2006.

As the mild October continued the opportunity was taken to run traps much later than perhaps had taken place in previous colder autumns. On the 14th an Autumn-green Carpet came to light in Oswaldtwistle (B Clegg) and a freshly emerged but confused Common Quaker was found on 23rd in Lightfoot Green, followed by a late V Pug on 29th (SMP). On the same date 38 Feathered Thorn came to light at Rindle Wood (I Walker) and the following evening a visit to Mere Sands Wood produced 14 Northern Winter Moth (GJ), surely an under-recorded species. Light trapping continued in Ainsdale with a large count of 50 Red-green Carpet on 30th while visits to look for leaf-mining larvae by KM were adding considerable numbers of new 10km records to the county database. Unusually for the last few days of October and early November, a wide variety of species were being reported on a nightly basis, some in very high numbers, particularly those at sugar (EL). Sharing the traps with our residents were occasional migrant moths, one night producing Winter Moth at one site and Vestal at another - what a topsy-turvy end to the season.



**Vestal** (Photo: T Davenport)  
Formby, 2011

Thanks to all of you for sending in your records on a regular basis and do please ensure you've sent any remaining 2011 records by the 5th January 2012 to ensure inclusion in the Annual Report.

## **PAPER COPIES OF THIS NEWSLETTER**

This Newsletter is available for downloading direct from the Moth Group website [www.lancashiremoths.co.uk](http://www.lancashiremoths.co.uk) but a few members have asked to receive paper copies. The intention longer term is to make this an internet only publication but for the time being those requesting a paper copy are asked to contribute towards printing and postage costs for each newsletter, which remains unchanged at £3. Cheques should be made payable to Mrs. C. A. Palmer and sent to 137 Lightfoot Lane, Fulwood, Preston, Lancs PR4 0AH.

# MOTH EVENTS 2012

The following events are open to all, unless stated otherwise. It is advisable to check that outdoor events are taking place with the organiser beforehand. Please check the Lancashire Moth Group website for any additional events, or changes to the published details below.

**Saturday, 28th January 2012**

**National Moth Recorders' Meeting**

Run by Butterfly Conservation's Moth's Count team, this annual event is held at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, central Birmingham and is always well worth attending. More details will be made available on the Moths Count Website events page [www.mothscount.org](http://www.mothscount.org) nearer the time. Bookings for the day are now being taken and a charge of £5 per head is being levied on the day.

**Friday, 23rd March  
7pm-10pm**

**Lancashire Moth Group Social,  
The Barn, Cuerden Valley Country Park**

The Lancashire Moth Group Social will be held on Friday evening from 7pm to 10pm – entry charge £2 per head to cover costs. Tea, Coffee, Soft drinks and Biscuits will be included. The event is held at Lancashire Wildlife Trust headquarters, The Barn, Cuerden Valley Country Park, near Bamber Bridge. Members and guests are invited to bring along books, displays, slides, Powerpoint presentations or CDs to show to the group. The main speaker is Dr. Charles Fletcher, who will give an illustrated talk on the **Moths of Yorkshire**.

Please make a special effort to bring along display material (specimens, live display, books etc.) and do get in touch with Steve Palmer well before the evening if you have any special requirements for space, power source and equipment.

Directions: To find The Barn, come off the M6 at J28 and take the B5256 eastbound, crossing the A49 at the traffic lights. After one mile (and just as you leave the houses) turn left at the top of the hill onto Shady Lane. Proceed for about a mile past Nell Lane on your left then take the next right down Berkeley Drive. The Barn is on your left after a couple of hundred yards with ample parking beyond.

**Sunday, 22nd April  
starting 10.30am**

**Belted Beauty Count, Potts Corner (SD413571)**

Annual survey of the Belted Beauty colony, meeting in the Potts Corner Car Park (SD413571) at 1030am. Be prepared for cold wet and windy conditions. Waterproof walking boots or wellies are advisable. On occasions a charge is levied for parking but is unlikely to exceed 50p. Organiser Steve Palmer – [s.palmer12@btopenworld.com](mailto:s.palmer12@btopenworld.com) 01772 861570

**Thursday, 21st to Saturday, 23rd June**

**NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT**

This nationally coordinated event will take place between 21st and 23rd June this year. For more details see the note on NMN in this newsletter. No specific events are planned for Lancashire but if you plan to run an event do please pass on the details so it can be advertised on the Lancashire Moth Group website. You might also like to note that NMN 2013 will be on 8th to 10th August 2013 and NMN 2014 will be 3rd to 5th July 2014.

**Saturday 14th Sunday & 15th July**

**RSPB Leighton Moss - Annual Moth Event & Moth Breakfast**

The event starts with a moth trapping demonstration on Saturday night at 10pm - traps are then run through the night. On Sunday morning (8am to 10 am) the RSPB have arranged their usual moth breakfast. Booking is essential for the breakfast which is followed by the opportunity to examine the moths caught overnight. Cost: Prices (to be confirmed) will include cooked breakfast. For further details and booking for the breakfast (essential) phone the RSPB on 01524 701601

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