

LANCASHIRE MOTHS

Newsletter 16

July 2007



Poplar Hawk Moth (Photo: M Elsworth)

EDITORIAL

The time has come to renew your subscription for Lancashire moths. A sheet has been included with this newsletter giving details of how to guarantee that the next two editions arrive through your letter box. Newsletter 17 will definitely be one you won't want to miss! An article (part one of two) by Brian Hancock on Lancashire's Pug moths will be the main feature and, I can assure you, it is well worth waiting for.

"Moths Count" is now upon us – this umbrella title, covering all the activities associated with the National Moth Recording Scheme, Moth identification training sessions, etc. will become a major feature of moth recording at a national and local level over the next few years and more news on events associated with this in our area will be published in Newsletter 17.

The moth group website has had a recent face-lift thanks to the hard work of Mark and Carolyn Palmer. It can still be found at www.lancashiremoths.co.uk. If you haven't looked at it before why not give it a try? It contains much more than just recent sightings. If you want to start studying moths or have only just started, try the "Getting Started" section. You can find out which rare species need help with survey work in Lancashire. The site also contains a complete and up-to-date matrix of all species recorded in the county, some with associated distribution maps.

NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT - SATURDAY, 11TH AUGUST 2007

This is an annual event where anyone who wishes to take part simply records any moths seen on the night of Saturday, 11th August 2007 and sends the details in to the scheme organisers. If you wish to take part please send your records to Steve Palmer via email s.palmer12@btopenworld.com or to the address at the end of this report including your name, the location (with 6 figure grid ref.), type of trap used, brief weather details and how long you trapped for. Don't forget it is on the Saturday night only. Make a note of the date now! If you intend organising an event for NMN do advertise it through the moth group by letting Steve know the details – tel. no., and email address on back page.

A SUMMARY OF MOTHS RECORDED UP TO 30TH JUNE 2007

The records below have been listed as received. Their inclusion in this newsletter does not necessarily mean they have been accepted by the appropriate county recorder, but in most instances this will be the case.

As one year ends, the next begins, merged almost seamlessly together. Gone are the days when the "winter break" gave time to sort out identifications, make sure all records were entered onto the record cards (what are they?), send off records to your local Recorder and national recording schemes, while occasionally having the chance to slump quietly in front of a roaring fire, toasting crumpets, totally free from emails, phone calls, website updates and global warming – dream on! The 12 month moth season is now well and truly upon us – even north of 53N.

The New Year was not even 24 hours old when the first moth fluttered to light (surely not a moth trap - well yes, but one that doubles up as a security light). **Acleris hastiana** had the honour of being that first moth; the location – where else but Flixton (KM - K McCabe). Showing a more sensible approach to early January, seven hibernating Herald were found in a shed in Golborne on 2nd (CAD - C Darbyshire). As the month progressed, more moths showed an interest in venturing out and about. Of note were an early **Early Moth** at Burrow Heights on the 4th (BCo - B Cockburn), **Hebrew Character** at Yealand Conyers (BH - B Hancock) on 9th and Flixton on 10th (KM) and **Spring Usher** at Millhouses on 12th (PM - P Marsh) as well as the more expected **Winter Moth, Mottled Umber, Chestnut** and **Satellite**. A joint "earliest ever" county date was set on the 29th, when **Oak Beauty** appeared at Meresands Wood (RBd - R Boydell and IK - I Kippax) and Flixton (KM). As January drew to a close, the scene was set for a somewhat hectic remainder to the winter season – **Light Brown Apple Moth** at Euxton (EL - E Langrish) and Leigh (JDW - D Wilson), **March Moth** at Flixton, together with a most unseasonable **Grey Birch** (KM); **Dotted Border** at Heysham (RN - R Neville et al), **Dark Chestnut** at Leighton Moss (JB - J Beattie et al) and **Small Brindled Beauty** at Higher Tatham (PM).

On 1st February, the old (over-winterers) were mixing it with the new when **Red Green Carpet** was recorded in Preston (SMP - S Palmer) and **Common Quaker** appeared in Euxton (EL). Even more unusual were reports of larvae feeding in early February – a **Brimstone Moth** caterpillar feeding on Blackthorn at Hoole (AB - A Barker) and a wandering **Drinker Moth larva** at Glasson (BD - B Dyson). Looking through the list of records received so far, there were only a couple of days in February when no moths were found – a few years ago this would have been unheard of, February often being the quietest month of the year. Mid month produced sightings of the **Twenty Plume Moth** at Silverdale (TR - T Riden), **Clouded Drab** at Flixton (KM) and **Engrailed** at Worsley (IW - I Walker). On the 24th **Red Sword-grass** came to light in Preston (SMP), the



first of only five this spring, the last being on 6th May at Lostock Hall, Preston (RH - R Hall). On the 25th an early **Double-striped Pug** came to actinic light in Silverdale (RG - R Griffiths). Fieldwork over the last few days of the month by CAD and KM produced plenty of good larval records of many micromoth species, greatly enhancing the distribution maps for south Lancashire. One species recorded at this time from a vacated mine, is steadily expanding its range. The distinctive mines or adults of **Acrocercops brongniardella** have been found in seven different locations during the first half of 2007 (G & D Atherton - G&DA, CAD, KM, ST - S Tomlinson).

It was suggested back in the autumn of 2006 that the large numbers of **Humming-bird Hawk-moth** around could possibly lead to successful over-wintering. Could the "hummer" seen at Lancaster University on 7th March (Lucy Blades) have been one such? Four further records of this exciting moth between the 1st and 13th April surely suggest this was the case.

Early March trapping by PM, **J Roberts (JR)**, **G Jones (GJ)** and **A Shaw (AS)**, amongst others, in the north-east of the county proved how good this part of Lancashire can be early in the season. For example, there were an amazing 190 moths of 16 species caught on 11th at Millhouses, Wray. Highlights included 3 **Small Brindled Beauty** (a new 1km record), 97 **Small Quaker**, 17 **Oak Beauty**, 9 **Yellow Horned** and a **Shoulder Stripe** (JR, PM). Small Brindled Beauty had been recorded much earlier in the year (31st Jan to 1st Feb) at two other adjacent sites (PM). In Carnforth the rather local plume moth **Amblyptilia punctidactyla** was recorded by **L Lyon (LL)** on the 16th. Much further south, in the Chorley area, EL was establishing a network of gardens and other various locations where permission had been obtained to run traps. This method, first adopted by PM in the north, has proved extremely useful in adding dots to the maps in this area over the first half of 2007.

Daytime searches can often pick up unusual species and such a visit to Astley Moss on the 26th produced the galls of **Lampronia fuscata** on birch (KM). March is also a time when overwintered pupae can be gently enticed to emerge early by being brought inside. **Ben Smart (BSm)**, KM and CAD have been putting a lot of effort into this type of recording in the last few years with excellent results. Those of us relying on light trapping had a hard time of it as the month came to an end. One group member (JDW) succinctly summed up March – “it came in like a lion and went out like a lamb. Common Quaker numbers ... rocketed to 119 but by the 28th they had declined to zero.” Despite this, one or two nice moths were still to be found. **Grey Shoulder-knot** came to light near Parbold (**JK – J Kilgour**) – (it also turned up for the first time at one or two locations in north Lancashire (PM), suggesting it was having a good season), **Early Tooth-striped** was found in Boothstown (IW) - (not many records from this part of the county) and over 100 **Belted Beauty** were found during a survey of the Potts Corner to Sunderland Point site (SMP). The season had started early for this local speciality when a female was found at the southern end of the site by **P & V Gilchrist** on 22nd March.

A feature many moth recorders look forward to in late March and early April are the daytime searches for **Orange Underwing**, flying around Birch or Sallow blossom, in sunny conditions. This year produced records from ten different locations, all south of the River Ribble, from eight different recorders. The first (fourteen seen flying around Birch trees) were at Bold Moss, St Helens (**RB – R Banks**) on 21st March and the last on the 8th April, nectaring on Sallow in Burnley (**GG – G Gavaghan**).



Barred Tooth-striped (Photo: R Griffiths)

April turned out to be a mixed month with some decent spells of weather producing interesting moths and some very barren periods. On 6th, **Oak Beauty** was a new species for **P Stevens (PS)** in Rochdale and on the same night the first of the years **Barred Tooth-striped** came to actinic light in Silverdale (RG). The final report of this Biodiversity Action Plan species came on 25th with reasonable numbers found in the interim, all in the Silverdale/Gait Barrows area (including 19 at Gait Barrows on 15th GJ, AS). Oak Beauty had its best year to date in the county with 68 reports received.



Pine Beauty (Photo: M Elsworth)

Waved Umber is a scarce moth away from the county's limestone areas. Therefore the records of two from Hale (10th and 20th) by **C Cockbain (CC)** and one in Leigh on 21st (JDW) may indicate signs of a range expansion into southern parts of the county. On 7th **Blossom Underwing** was trapped at Leighton Moss (**T Hutchinson, K Briggs et al**), a second being found at Gait Barrows on the 20th with two **Scorched Carpet** (**C Palmer, SMP**). Records of **Lunar Marbled Brown** tend to be fairly few and far between in most years. However 2007 proved the exception with reports received

in April from Dalton (VC59 – CAD), Fowley Common (JDW), Gait Barrows (CAP, SMP), Haydock – several (G&DA), Leighton Moss (JB et al), Parbold (JK), Rochdale (**D Winnard**), Silverdale (RG) and White Coppice (EL). **Pine Beauty** was also seen at many more locations than usual – not good news for the Forestry industry.

Earliest ever flight records are a regular feature of mothing these days. On 13th, **Cochylis atricapitana** was found at Heysham (**JH – J Holding**), on the 14th, **Poplar Grey** came to light in Preston (SMP) and on the 21st **Argyresthia trifasciata** occurred in Boothstown (IW). All are believed to be the earliest county records by at least a week or more. Other early species included **Yellow-barred Brindle** at Warton (**ME – M Elsworth**) on 14th, **Grey/Dark Dagger** at Bispham (**BB – B Brigden**) on 23rd, **Peach Blossom** at Flixton (KM) on 25th and **Nutmeg** (RBd) at Longton on 26th.

After traps full of Drabs and Quakers, it was the turn of the more spectacular or unusual moths to make fleeting appearances for the lucky few. The **Beautiful Carpet** was one such found by a fortunate recorder in Silverdale (RG) on 14th. The same day produced a record of 10 **Emperor Moths** on Trough Road (**P Morris**), one of several reports of this spectacular moth. Even more difficult to locate in Lancashire than any of the above, a single **Scarce Prominent** was seen at Gait Barrows (GJ, AS) on 15th – certainly an event to remember. More frequently encountered, in wooded areas, but still uncommon, the **Great Prominent** is a species rarely found visiting garden traps in Lancashire. The one at Yealand Redmayne on 21st (**SS – S Stokes**) was therefore of note. Whilst out walking on 27th **D Lumb (DL)** found **Water Carpet** by the Eagley Brook, an area with few records of this locally common species. The final day of the month produced **Lunar Thorn** at Yealand Conyers (BH) and the delightful **Pammene argyrana** on an oak trunk in Haydock (G&DA) – the latter only the second recent record in Lancashire.



Emperor Moth Photo: S Booth



Brindled Beauty (Photo: P Stevens)

May can be a very variable month for the moths and on the whole it seems to have got the thumbs down from many recorders in 2007. Despite this, there were moths of interest to be found. On 1st a **Brindled Beauty** came to light in Rochdale (PS), following an earlier one in Orrell on the 21st April (**PA – P Alker**), while on the 2nd, a new site for **Small Yellow Underwing** was found near the M55 at Woodplumpton (SMP). **Powdered Quaker**, a species that seems to have a patchy distribution in the county, was more obvious this year than previously. An example of this was one in a Billinge garden on the 3rd (CAD), his first since 1999. **Pale Tussock** also turned up at several more locations than usual including Boothstown – IW, Crosby – **J**

Donnelly (JD), Dalton – CAD and **R Charles (RC)**, Euxton – EL, Fowley Common – JDW, Hale – CC and Parbold – JK. An **Alder Moth** on 5th May at Yealand Conyers (BH) is believed to be the earliest county record, as was a **Common Wainscot** at Parbold on the 6th (JK). A rare spring record of **Eudonia angustea** occurred in Huyton (ST) on 7th. We certainly live in unusual times for moth recording. A **Large Yellow Underwing** in a Crosby trap (JD) on 8th May certainly backs that up! On the 9th, **Alder Kitten** came to light near Dolphinholme (**NR – N Rogers**). There were only two other records of this moth (Fowley Common – JDW and Longridge – DL) in the recording period.

Mid May arrived with a trick or two up its sleeve when within a couple of days of each other, two new species were added to the county list. **Argyresthia cupressella**, a species that has spread rapidly northwards in the last few years following its arrival in the UK in 1997, was found to be quite common in a Huyton garden (ST) on the 15th. The second new species, **Monochroa suffusella**, was found at Astley Moss (KM) on the 17th. In contrast to *A. cupressella*, this is almost certainly an over-looked resident. A few **Silver Y** and **Diamond-back** moths started appearing at locations across the county at this time, but one totally unexpected addition to a Preston garden list was **Silky Wainscot** on 17th May (SMP), well away from suitable habitat and extremely early in the year for this species. **Small Elephant Hawk-moth** was having one of its better seasons with records from eight different locations, while one of only three reported **Marbled Coronet** came to light at St Annes (JW - J Wardle) on 15th May.



Argyresthia cupressella
(Photo: S Tomlinson)



Cistus Forester (Photo: B Hancock)

Quite a few species appear to be increasing their range within the county in recent years, one such being **Lime Hawk-moth**, with a first garden record at Yealand Conyers (BH) on 18th. Another species apparently on the move is the **Barred Hook-tip** - this time found in a Royton (Oldham) garden by **R Hart (RH)**. It is also worth noting that after many years of residence in a restricted area of the county, **Tachystola acroxantha** is on the move - records having been received from seven different sites during 2007 in VC59, including new sites in Boothstown and Worsley (IW), Leigh (**PP - P Pugh**), Radcliffe (**DJ - D Johnson**) and Rochdale (PS). Damage to Delphiniums in **Alan Powell's (AP)** Fulwood garden at about this time was

tracked down to several **Golden Plusia** larvae. A few had already constructed their bright yellow cocoons and adults started emerging within a couple of weeks. The 21st produced the first record of **Cistus Forester** for the year at its only Lancashire site on Warton Crag (BH). Few subsequent records were received and this iridescent green moth must be one of the county's most threatened species, breeding in such a restricted area.



Golden Plusia cocoon (Photo: S M Palmer)



Golden Plusia (Photo: S Palmer)

The 23rd May will live long in the memory of our County Macro-moth Recorder. CAD found a small footman species in his Billinge trap on this date and, despite the scepticism of some of his fellow moth-ers, his initial determination of **Orange Footman** proved to be correct – a first for Lancashire. A visit to Churn Clough on the same date produced another record of **Barred Hook-tip** as well as **Dark Brocade**, **Small Elephant Hawk-moth** and **Fox Moth** amongst others (AB). Other unusual moths at this time included **Shaded Pug** in Heysham at the nature reserve, (where there were good numbers (RN)) and in the town (JH), five ***Pseudotelphusa paripunctella*** on Astley Moss (KM), two ***Olethreutes arcuella*** at Gait Barrows (BB, RPJ – R Petley-Jones), ***Cydia fagiglandana*** (fifth county record) at Huyton (ST), **Silver Hook** at Parbold (JK), **Marsh Pug** at Flixton (KM), **White Colon** at Crosby (JDo) and St Annes (JW), **Glaucous Shears** at Dolphinholme (NR) and **Red Twin-spot Carpet** at Leck (BHg – B Hugo).



On 28th May DL came across **Oblique Carpet** near Bromley Cross, Bolton. There are few records of this under-recorded moth from the higher parts of south Lancashire (VC59). Dave regularly records (and photographs) moths he encounters during his daytime walks and has added many "dots on maps" in the Bolton area. As the month came to a close, a hint of migration appeared when two **Rush Veneer** came to light in St Annes (A&DW – A and D Wright) followed by a couple of **Dark Sword-grass** shortly afterwards at two Preston sites (AP and SMP). But that was as far as it went and apart from a scattering of **Diamond-back Moths** a week or so later, it fell to one of those species few people encounter, a **Broad-barred White**, to provide the final highlight of May, on the 31st in Blackpool (D&IS – D and I Smith).



June started well enough when **Silver Hook** came to light at Royton (RH) on 1st and another at Longridge (DL) a short while after – both new sites for this local species. On the same date **Mullein Wave** came to actinic light in Silverdale (RGr). The careful study of micros in NR's Dolphinholme trap has produced several good records over the last few years. On the 2nd June, Nigel recorded ***Depressaria ultimella***, the second sighting of this species in Lancashire. A few days later ***Grapholita funebrana*** was positively identified, following a possible sighting in 2006 – the second county record and first since about 1890. Early June also turned out to be a good time for **Currant Clearwing** when

they were found in an allotment on the east side of Blackpool (AES – A Smith) and at Worsley (IW) in reasonable numbers.

Searches for larva are often a successful way of recording some species that are uncommon at light. Chris Darbyshire has been making a particular effort this year to look for **Chamomile Shark** larvae and ended finding 25 new sites for the moth in 2007. Several other recorders (**DM – D McGrath, F Middlehurst, KM, ST**) had likewise found the larva, posing the question as to whether the moth has always been that common and was just not being recorded at light traps. Only one adult record had been received, from Parbold (JK) earlier in the season. In Carnforth, a **Mullein Moth** larva on a garden Buddleia (DB) on the 4th was noteworthy as were the adult **Little Emeralds** at Yealand Redmayne (SS) on 2nd and Longridge (DL) on 7th. A stop by the canal at Ellel on 3rd (SMP) showed the value of searching for moths around a known larval foodplant. A stand of hemp agrimony eventually produced a single **Adaina microdactyla**, a very small plume moth as the name suggests. **Puss Moth** was found in Blackpool on 5th (D&IS), one of only five records of this apparently local and possibly declining species during 2007.



Chamomile Shark larva
Photo: C Darbyshire



Mullein Moth larva (Photo: D Bennett)

Brian Hancock has made it his aim in life (or at least his lepidopterous aim) to get to grips with the Pugs – brave man! On the 6th he recorded **Valerian Pug** in



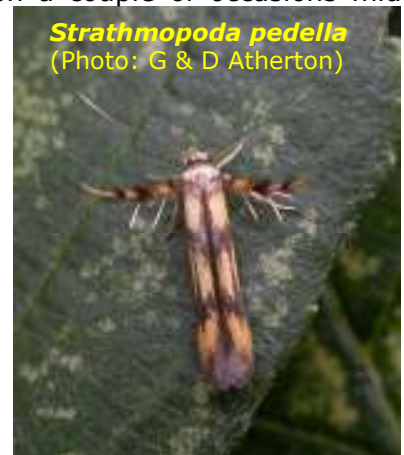
Poplar Kitten (Photo: D Jonston)

his Yealand Conyers garden trap and a day later successfully searched for **Sloe Pug** at Gait Barrows. The fruits of his labours on this tricky group will be shown in later newsletters. First records for well recorded sites (such as Brian's Valerian Pug), are always a welcome event. On the 8th **Alder Moth** was found at Heysham (JH) and, very unexpectedly, a wandering **Ancylis unguicella** came to light in a Preston garden (SMP). In complete contrast, the luck of the beginner struck when **Poplar Kitten**, a rare moth in Lancashire, was found in Prestwich (DJ) on the 9th.



Adela fibulella (Photo: L Sivell)

Searches for day-flying moths are always worth a try. A visit to Warton Crag on the 10th produced several **Adela fibulella** on germander speedwell flowers while a trip to Winmarleigh Moss a few days later (both SMP) allowed close views of a few **Purple-bordered Gold** and 17 **Grass Wave**. Also during the day, **Stathmopoda pedella** was found at three sites in the south of the county (G&DA, KM). Light trapping at Freshfield on a couple of occasions mid-month produced **Satin Wave**, **Small Blood Vein** and **Dwarf Cream Wave** (G&DA) while a Satin Wave was also recorded at St Annes (JW) a few days



Stathmopoda pedella
(Photo: G & D Atherton)

previously. Other unusual or local species seen at this time included the **Phoenix** at Bispham (DM), **Bordered Sallow** at St Annes (JW), **Bird's Wing** at Huyton (ST) and a totally unexpected **Beautiful Snout** at Meresands Wood (RBd, IK). A bit further south on the 11th, **Grass Rivulet** and **Scorched Wing** came to light at Dalton (CAD) while another of the latter came to a garden light trap in a different part of Dalton on the 17th (RC).



Satin Wave (Photo: P Marsh)



Small Blood Vein (Photo: G & D Atherton)

During a day visit to St Annes coastal dune nature reserve, **Anacamptis temerella** was found amongst the creeping willow by **Jeremy Steeden**, the first record of this moth since about 1940. On the 18th, **Spinach**, a moth with very few records in most years, was found at light in Dalton (RC). A similarly uncommon and declining species, the **Garden Tiger**, has only been seen at one site so far this year, on 22nd, at Dolphinholme (NR), continuing the worrying downward trend of records for this spectacular moth. **Double Dart** is showing a similar trend to the previous species with only one record so far, on 17th June, in Freshfield (G&DA). Finally, on this rather depressing note, a single **V Moth** was the only recorded so far in Lancashire this year, in Silverdale (RG) on 23rd.



It seems a shame to finish on a low note, but the weather during the second half of June to at least mid July (when this is being written) has been diabolical and moth numbers have been well down on the usual for this time of year. With all this bad news it is pleasing to report the continued spread of **Blackneck**. Locations for the moth in late June included Altcar (P Smith and S Cross), Atherton, where eight were found on one night (**K Brides**), Coppull (EL), Flixton (KM), Huyton (ST), Orrell (PA) and Rochdale (**D Winnard**), most of them new sites. A few other unusual species such as a **Marsh Oblique-barred** at Astley Moss (KM) on 22nd, six **Lunar**

Hornet Moth at Fleetwood (**P Weetman**) and **Scarce Silver-lines** at Huyton (ST), both on the 29th, brightened up a few moth recorders lists. However for most of us the summer has been a significant non-event so far. Let's hope for better in late July and August!



Blackneck (Photo: P Alker)

GETTING THE HANG OF IT IN HUTTON

ANDREW BARKER

I have been mothing for five years now and this last year I feel that I am just getting the hang of it! Back in the Spring of 2002, I took a loan of the Butterfly Conservation (Lancs Branch) moth trap. My first record reads "...Friday April 12th - Common Quaker 1, Twin-spotted Quaker 1. The trap was run again on the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 18th. It must have been raining on the 17th (those were the days when the only available BC trap was one without a bulb cover - Ed.). Once the summer arrived (and my own trap) there was no turning back with the likes of Lime Hawk Moth, Ruby Tiger, Swallow-tailed Moth, Peach Blossom, Swallow Prominent and Barred Yellow making me totally hooked.

As the year progressed all the new and exciting species were almost matched with a similar number of trips to Steve Palmer's for identification help. It's strange how you can spend ages looking through a book trying in vain to i/d something, then it is pointed out and you think "of course it is, why couldn't I see that?" And so the learning process went on - Dark Spectacle, Common Swift, Beautiful Golden Y Common Wave and Yellow-barred Brindle. Various notes are dotted throughout my book, some accompanied by small diagrams with the words *...dark hoops; white squiggles; dots and arrows; line forming a Y* - (Dusky Brocade, Small Clouded Brindle, White-line Dart and Willow Beauty respectively). The *brown spot leggy job* and the *purple yellow spot* (Brown China-mark and *Hypsopygia costalis*) and countless Oblique Carpets crossed out and replaced by Garden Pebble were soon sorted out following the purchase of Barry Goater's British Pyralid Moths.

One thing that hasn't changed much in the note book over the years is the word *Pug*, with the type being added at a later date. (You think Hell is all fire, brimstone and pitchforks? No, Hell is row upon row of grey-brown *Eupithecia* and worn ones at that!). Oh such joy upon seeing easily identified Pugs such as Lime-speck, Bordered, Narrow-winged and Foxglove - ok so I might have had a Toadflax at first but that's not the point.

The garden list of macros now stands at 210 - 211 if Chris lets me have Crescent. They range from the abundant Large Yellow Underwing (400), Lesser Common or Common Rustic (104), Heart and Dart (74), Setaceous Hebrew Character (62), Small Square Spot (43) and Common Footman (42) - the figures in brackets are the maximum in a trap on one night - to the single Scarce Silver-lines, Archer's Dart, Butterbur, Treble Lines, Champion and Sandy Carpet. But pride of place goes to the Bedstraw Hawk-moth attracted to my garden light trap in August 2003.

With new species in the garden getting a bit thin on the ground - Oak Beauty, Humming-bird Hawk-moth, Streamer and Sallow Kitten the only ones for 2006 - I am starting to spread, or should I say, sweep my net further afield in search of something new. A trip up to Gait Barrows in June 2006 was memorable for a couple of things. Firstly Beautiful Carpet, Scorched Carpet, Coronet and Grey Arches amongst others were all new to me. Secondly a tick on my stomach and a bite on my arm that came up the size of a pigeon's egg! Do you guys up there have some special armour-plated mothing attire?

Micros!! I'm trying my best to recognise a few of these little chaps and ever so slowly one or two names are beginning to sink in. Then there's the first tentative step towards dissection. I shouldn't really go down these roads - more time in my shed - more books to buy - probably expensive ones at that, but I can't help myself as I find it all so fascinating.

ARTICLES FOR INCLUSION IN NEWSLETTER

Please consider putting together a note or article for the Newsletter on your local patch, garden or mothing experiences. Space is available for small notes for Newsletter 17 but longer submissions for Newsletter 18 onwards would be particularly welcome. Material for inclusion should be sent to Steve Palmer (address on back of this Newsletter)

Regular readers of **LANCASHIRE MOTHS** will know from Issue 12 that my mothing interest went into second gear when in 1986 I bought and started running an actinic moth trap in my back garden. I did this on and off until 21/7/04 when I started trapping in a friends garden in an adjacent tetrad in the village of Singleton, Grid Reference - SD378382.

At that time I had recorded 135 macro-moths in my garden over a period of 18 ¼ years so imagine my surprise when by the end of October 2006 I had already recorded 136 macros in under 2 ¼ years in my friends garden. Forty three of these species are absent from my own garden list while 21 are absent from the tetrad (2km X 2KM) that I live in. I know of 4 other people who have run a trap in the same tetrad that I live in and there are a handful of records of moths prior to my starting up in 1986, some of which are mine. So the question arises why does a garden approx 2 km away from my own have 21 moths recorded from it that are absent from an adjacent tetrad.

Well, after due consideration there are several environmental reasons why this is the case:

- 1) Singleton is in a rural area set amongst farmland and parkland, rather than suburban where I live in Poulton-le-Fylde.
- 2) A look at an ordnance survey map also shows that it is surrounded by pockets of woodland habitat which is rare in the Fylde
- 3) The garden in which I run the moth trap is more 'open' than mine, is in the vicinity of many mature trees of different species, has hedgerows and a good range of herbaceous plants.

Looking deeper, further supporting reasons become apparent. Six of the 'missing' species feed exclusively on deciduous trees and are chiefly on the wing outside the main trapping period of May to September. They are Pale Brindled Beauty, Mottled Umber, Small Quaker, Twin-spotted Quaker, Satellite, and Dark Chestnut. Furthermore both the Pale Brindled Beauty and the Mottled Umber both have wingless females.

Four other species also rely fully or partly on deciduous trees at the larval stage. The May Highflyer feeds on Alder but is on the wing from May to July and the Merveille du Jour feeds on Oak and flies in the autumn months of September and October. Both the Beaded Chestnut and the Old Lady larvae tend turn to feed on broadleaved trees and Hawthorn as they grow larger, the former being an autumn flier while the Old Lady flies in the summer months.

Another late flyer the Figure of Eight is on the wing in October and November and its food plants include Hawthorn as well as Blackthorn and fruit trees, common enough around Singleton. The Short-cloaked Moth also feeds on these and can be caught during the summer months of June and July. So, all in all 12 species rely on deciduous woodland and various shrubs which are widespread in Singleton parish.

One species, the Pinion-streaked Snout - food plant unknown, may be overlooked as it resembles members of the Pyralid family of micro moths. Another species, the Rivulet feeds solely on Red Campion, a common woodland plant around which the species can be found flying from dusk.

Less understandable is why 6 of the remaining 7 missing species are absent from Poulton-le-Fylde all of which are on the wing in the summer months and feed on a wide variety of wild and cultivated herbaceous plants. They are the Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet, Lime-speck Pug, Muslin, Purple Clay, Dark Sword-grass and the Pearly Underwing. The latter two are of course migrants and can be found throughout the year. Maybe it's just a matter of time.

Last but not least is the Dark Spectacle which feeds on Nettle. The despised Nettle is no doubt discouraged from most urban gardens but thankfully can be found in scattered locations around the village. Interestingly Docks and Dandelions, two other much maligned wild flowers, each provide food for 5 out of 6 of the species that rely on herbaceous plants. Other plants are also taken as food but it makes you wonder how populations would be affected if the humble Dandelion and Docks were to become scarce. It doesn't pay to be foodplant specific if you are a caterpillar.

So, now I have some idea of the reasons behind their absence from Poulton, I find it even more motivating to know what else I might be missing from other nearby tetrads and wonder whose garden I might next find myself in. With this in mind, I would recommend you do the same if we are to fill in the gaps in our coverage and if you like seeing new species. Friends and relatives are just waiting to be contacted. Trust me on this!

OBITUARY – STAN WARD

I was sad to hear of the death of Stan Ward on 16th February 2007. Stan had been a very active and valued contributor of moth records from his home in Newton-Le-Willows, Merseyside since mid 2003. His enthusiasm for the moths had come late in life when his nephew, Colin Davies together with Ray Banks and Dave Owen formed the St Helens area Wildlife Recording Group. During those four years, he contributed over 7000 moth records including such locally uncommon species as Barred Rivulet, Netted Pug, Vestal and Streak. However of all the moths he recorded, the one he considered gave him the greatest satisfaction and pleasure was the Bedstraw Hawk-moth in August 2003. Our sympathies go out to his family and friends.

Steve Palmer

MOTH RECORDS

Thanks go to all who have sent in details of their records so far for 2007, including all new recorders. A full list of contributors will be published, as usual, in the Annual Report. Any records, historic or recent, common or rare, would be most welcome. Thanks also go to Kevin McCabe who has entered a large proportion of the incoming records onto Mapmate. Please continue to send Mapmate files to Steve (CUK is 1b8). If recorders would like a written reply acknowledging receipt of their records or other correspondence, both Chris and Steve would appreciate a stamped self-addressed envelope – be aware of the new size pricing introduced recently by the PO. Please send your records to either of the addresses below. If possible the six figure grid reference, location, full date and number of each species noted is requested. To ensure your records are included in the next Annual Report please submit them by 5th January 2008 at the latest – earlier receipt or monthly submission is very much appreciated.

WHY NOT BORROW A MOTH TRAP?

If you haven't tried moth trapping before, or, if you have but don't have a trap, look no further. Butterfly Conservation, Lancashire Branch, have two traps available for loan and have recently added the latest UK Moths website CD and a copy of Townsend, Waring and Lewington's concise identification guide to the loan package to assist with identifications.

If you would like to know more please contact Steve Palmer at the address on the back of this Newsletter. There is a very bright mercury vapour light-trap and a much less obvious battery-run actinic light-trap, the latter suitable for over-looked gardens or where an easily accessed electrical socket is not available.

E-MAIL GROUP

The Lancashire Moth Group has an informal email chat group where questions, Mapmate, general information and identification problems are discussed. If you would like your email address added to this list please contact Steve at the address at the end of this Newsletter

MOTH EVENTS 2007

FRIDAY, 27th July

GAIT BARROWS NNR

An evening of moth trapping – please bring your trap along. Meet at the Barn.

FRIDAY, 3rd AUGUST – “The Twilight Zone”

PICKERINGS PASTURE LNR

Join a team of experts to discover the nocturnal world of the Bats and Moths that inhabit the night sky. An illustrated talk followed by a walk around the reserve looking at these fascinating creatures and what has been caught in the moth traps. For further information call 0151 4254706.

SATURDAY 4th AUGUST - “Moths and Butterflies Exposed”

PICKERINGS PASTURE LNR

(1pm- 4pm) - Take a look at some of the amazing Moths caught in the traps last night and a chance to talk to the experts who caught them. Then wander around the exhibition and discover some great facts about these fascinating creatures. We will also be taking a walk around the reserve looking for their daytime cousins - the Butterflies. For further information call 01514254706.

SAT 4th, WED, 8th and SAT, 11th AUGUST

ROUDSEA WOOD and MOSSES

Several workshops have been organized to survey for the adult Rosy Marsh Moth at its only known English site (all 9.30pm onwards). For further details please contact Rob Petley-Jones on 01539 531604.

SATURDAY, 11th AUGUST - NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT

**SATURDAY, 11th AUGUST (National Moth Night) 8pm
BLACKPOOL**

STANLEY PARK, SEEDS RD,

Meet at Visitors Centre. Contact Dave McGrath 01253 445678 home, 01253 478020 work, 07796994916 mobile; or Head Ranger, Lisa Kersey 01253 478167 work.

SECOND HALF OF AUGUST

SANDHILL RUSTIC MOTH SEARCHES

Dates & details awaited. If you would like to participate, contact Steve Palmer to register an interest.

SATURDAY 18th AUGUST (8.30pm)

WOODLANDS GARDENS, BLACKPOOL

Meet at entrance to Zoo Car Park. Organiser: Dave McGrath - see 11 August for contact details.

TUESDAY 4th SEPTEMBER

The Netted Carpet survey for larvae in the Lake District. Contact Sam Ellis in advance if you are interested in helping out. Tel: 0870 7706148 or 0191 3789216 or email: sellis@butterfly-conservation.org

SATURDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER (7.00pm)

WATSON RD PARK, BLACKPOOL

Meet at the central pavilion. Contact Dave McGrath 01253 445678 home, 01253 478020 wk.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR/COUNTY MICRO RECORDER

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