

LANCASHIRE MOTHS

Newsletter 17

November 2007



COMMON PUG (Photo: A Storey)

EDITORIAL

Despite the poor season for moths generally, this newsletter is a bit of a bumper pre-Christmas edition. Over the last few years, Brian Hancock has been quietly working away on the Pug Moths, a group of insects many of us dread finding in our traps! In two parts, Brian has put together a superb identification article to help sort out this problem group. Part two, the less common species occurring in Lancashire, will be in a later newsletter. Chris Darbyshire is looking forward to the increased number of records of this sometimes exasperating group of moths during 2008!

Work on monitoring some of the county's rarer moths continued during 2007. The Belted Beauty population at Sunderland Point looks very healthy in stark contrast with worrying reports from England's only other population of this moth (in Cheshire), which suggests that drastic action is needed to keep the colony going. It demonstrates that we should not take this strong colony in Lancashire for granted and that continued monitoring is vital in order to identify any developing problems as early as possible. Further south, searches for the Sandhill Rustic have had mixed results and are reported on by Richard Burkmar later in this newsletter.

After only two decent spells of weather for National Moth Night in the nine previous events, surely 2007 was going to be a good one based on the law of averages. Read how one member of our group fared when he decided to spend the night out at one of his favourite spots in the Fylde.

Please could all recorders send in their 2007 records by the 5th January 2008 at the latest to ensure inclusion in the Annual Report. The next few months or so will also see Lancashire submitting records to the brand new **"Moths Count"** national recording scheme. Make sure your records get included on the national distribution maps that will result from this exciting project.

THE SANDHILL RUSTIC - A NEW SITE IN LANCASHIRE

DR RICHARD BURKMAR

Until 2007, the Sandhill Rustic Moth was a bit of a mystery to me. As the BAP co-ordinator for North Merseyside, I knew that it was a priority species on the plan that hadn't been seen in Lancashire since 2003, but I knew little else about it. Moth Group member Graham Jones wanted to make a concerted effort to record the moth in 2007 so we planned to check the MOD site, Altcar Rifle Range - the only recent area on the Sefton Coast where it had been recorded - and a potential new site at Birkdale Green Beach.

We were most optimistic about re-finding the moth at Altcar Rifle Range and with the generous permission of Major Bill Hunter, Graham and I checked the frontal dunes twice during August and September. Despite extensive and careful searching of Sand Couch close to the strandline under good conditions, we found no sign of the moth.

But our disappointment at Altcar was tempered by the fact that Peter Gahan - a Sefton Coast Ranger - chanced upon a noctuid on Birkdale Green Beach whilst out looking for Natterjack toadlets. Having heard of our plans to search the beach, he photographed the moth and it was confirmed as a Sandhill Rustic! Subsequent searches at Birkdale Green Beach, variously carried out by Pete, Graham, Donna & Geoff Atherton and myself, over the latter half of August and the first half of September, produced a total of 16 records.

Birkdale Green Beach is a relatively new feature on the coast, expanding from an area of 2 hectares in 1989, to over 60 today. The occurrence of such an apparently vigorous population of Sandhill Rustics here is evidence in support of the idea that the moth does well on accreting sections of coastline and, furthermore. It is adept at colonising these areas as and when they develop.



Sandhill Rustic (Photo: G Atherton)

The *Epirrita* group – “november moth types”

Thanks to all the people who have critically examined specimens of the *Epirrita* group (November/Pale November/Autumnal Moth) by dissection this autumn. The majority turned out to be November Moth, with Pale November Moth found at a site east of Garstang and widely in north-east Lancs. Autumnal Moth appeared in Preston and White Coppice, east of Chorley. This has greatly increased our knowledge of the known distribution of confirmed species in the county. Moths of this genus which have not been examined critically should continue to be submitted as November Moth agg.

NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT 2007

A NIGHT TO FORGET?

MONTY MYERSCOUGH

I had great expectations for a really good mothing session right up to when it began to get dark. Overcast sky, calm conditions and a temperature bordering on mild. My enthusiasm was short lived though as at about quarter to ten it started to rain, light at first but getting steadily heavier. As the temperature dropped a few degrees and the rain continued I attempted to protect the electrics and moth trap as best I could.

Beech Grove was my chosen venue, near junction two of the M55, a site I had trapped a couple of times before with good results. A large clearing in the wood, large garden and even larger farm house gave excellent shelter on all sides and I didn't even have to take my own generator, just a long extension lead - electrics being kindly provided by the owners.

As midnight approached it stopped raining, but by the look of the sky that wouldn't be for too long. A few moths took advantage of the lull. Eight Large Yellow Underwing and the odd Common Rustic, Marbled Beauty and Flame Shoulder were all I managed to record during the brief spell without rain. At a quarter to two the rain returned with a vengeance, putting a stop to any chance of getting out of the car and walking round with the moth net. My back-up plan of getting some kip was also proving impossible with the thunderous sound of rain-drops the size of golf balls rattling the car roof. The close up views of bats almost entering the moth-trap in pursuit of their quarry provided a marvellous spectacle and helped pass the time. By half-past five, I was praying for a break in the weather so that I could at least pack up the trap and depart.

Eventually the rain eased to a steady downpour just long enough to empty the trap of what few moths had been foolish enough to venture out on such a night. These included Riband Wave, Mother of Pearl, Angle shades, Shuttle-shaped Dart and Canary-shouldered Thorn. A total of twelve species in the second week of August is a really dismal tally for a night's moth-trapping! All I wanted to do now was get home, dry off, snatch an hour or so's nap and try to forget the whole experience. The only consolation was that I didn't have pots full of moths to try and identify and photograph. Who'd be a lepidopterist in 2007?

WHY NOT BORROW A MOTH TRAP?

Butterfly Conservation, Lancashire Branch, have two traps available for loan and have recently added the UK Moths website CD and a copy of Waring and Lewington's pocket sized identification guide to the loan package to assist with identifications.

If you would like to know more please contact Steve Palmer at the address at the end 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 easy 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

INTRODUCTION

Anyone developing an interest in moths will soon learn to recognise the distinctive appearance of the group of moths called "the pugs". They are often first picked up by their distinctive outline resting on a lighted window. For some they promote panic, others a passion and there are potentially so many possibilities - here in lies the attraction. It is hoped this gentle introduction will help those troubled to overcome their fear and come to love this fascinating group.



A "pug" on a window pane

Many come to gardens. I identified 14 species when living in South Manchester and now, living in Yealand Conyers in the Silverdale area I have had 25 species to date. This may seem alarming to the beginner but there are only four or five that are regular and several of mine have only occurred once or twice in six years. Even in this dreadful summer I have added three new species to the garden list. Once you are familiar with the regular ones it's not difficult to recognise something new.

Yes, some Pugs can be very difficult to identify but more than half the battle is knowing what to expect in your area at a particular time of year. A major tip - don't struggle with the faded and worn specimens and accept that about 10% are going to be difficult even for some experts. Many of the fresh specimens are however quite distinctive and very beautiful. Leave the problem ones to an expert who may need to resort to a genitalia dissection. This is time consuming and also requires experience and skill. There is no need to identify every pug to get enjoyment or contribute to our knowledge of the status of pugs in Lancashire.

This introduction will concentrate on the pugs that are generally distributed in Lancashire and a later second part will deal with the more local and rare pugs. Waring, Townsend and Lewington's book on the moths of GB and Ireland has an excellent section on pugs, the illustrations and the text are much clearer than the older book on British moths by Bernard Skinner. The enthusiast should have Adrian Riley's book British and Irish Pug Moths. The information cannot be faulted but I do find the illustrations and photographs disappointingly small in scale. Ian Kimber's UK Moths website (www.ukmoths.org.uk) is a very valuable resource with brilliant photos of the pugs.

Pugs are attracted to actinic lights as much as MV lamps and the former are easier to set up away from home. Always look outside the trap last thing at night if possible. Several rest outside and will be gone in the morning.

An enjoyable way to find pugs is to net them at dusk; they are slow flying and quite easy to catch. A walk round your garden or local patch will often produce one or two from May till August. Some pugs have very specific food plants and I have had considerable success netting at dusk for the local species. Do wear a good head torch so both hands are free for netting and potting the specimen.

Rearing pugs from larvae found in the wild is very rewarding and of course produces pristine examples. Riley's book gives information for each species if you want to try this. I have not had the time or patience to do this yet.

In Lancashire (including VC59 and 60) 34 out of the 51 British species have been recorded in recent years. Ten can be considered widespread and common and in approximate order of appearance through the year are:

Brindled
Double-striped
V-pug
Common

Mottled
Foxglove
Green Pug
Lime speck

Currant
Tawny-speckled

Another eleven are widespread but less common, again listed in approximate order of appearance

Oak-tree	White-spotted	Bordered
Golden-rod	Narrow-winged	Toadflax
Ochreous	Wormwood	Juniper
Freyer's	Slender	

There are five more which have been recorded occasionally in widely separated areas.

Plain	Dwarf	Ash
Larch	Netted	

Finally there are eight which appear confined to very restricted areas. These may well be found to be more widespread by more searches in suitable habitat.

Haworth's	Marsh	Shaded	Sloe
Valerian	Bleached	Thyme	Satyr

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION

To assist the beginner the 21 widespread and reasonably common pugs will be considered in order of appearance through the year.

Recording of size (wingspan in mm) is very helpful for identification. Though there is individual variation in size within species the Common Pug can act as a yardstick being medium in size (20-22mm). In comparison some are distinctively smaller (16-19mm) and other obviously larger (23-26mm) Photographs of pugs for identification purposes should always include a note of the wingspan in mm. Mention is made in the text of the **discal spot** – this black spot (more of a comma) can be seen clearly in the Wormwood Pug below just over half-way along the wing and just below the leading edge of the forewing.



Recording size is very important.

Distinctly small:

Double-striped (but variable in size), Slender and Haworth's Pug

Distinctly large:

Freyer's, Wormwood, Mottled, Bleached, Bordered, and Tawny Speckled.

In Lancashire there are only three pugs which regularly have spring and later summer brood.

The Double-striped, the V-pug and the Golden-rod pug.

Four of our pugs can appear as melanic (dark) forms making identification difficult, the season of appearance helps, e.g. a melanic pug in April should be a Brindled but in May or June could be Common, Grey or Golden-rod. In August it would probably be second brood Golden-rod.

PUGS - A MONTH BY MONTH GUIDE

April



Size small

The **Double-striped Pug** is usually the first to appear in the year. It is quite distinctive with white and dark reddish-brown cross lines. The outline and resting position is quite distinctive. The leading edges are often held in a straight line, the wing tips are pointed and the head seems to project more than in other pugs. The most likely confusion is with Oak-tree Pug (see below).



A well marked specimen on the left and a darker example on the right.

Size medium

The **Brindled Pug** appears from mid-March to mid-May but is most frequent in April. It is usually associated with oak woodland but its larva also feed on Hawthorn, so the moth can turn up anywhere. Its longish wings, dart-like markings and early appearance aid identification. The dark form is common.



Size medium

The larva of the **Oak-tree Pug** is also an oak and hawthorn feeder, but the moth is not as frequently encountered as the Brindled Pug. It emerges a little later – its main flight period being from mid-April to the end of May. The easiest diagnostic feature is the pale area just beyond the discal spot. It otherwise resembles a small, more round-winged, bright and well marked Brindled Pug.



Size medium

The first brood of the distinctive **V-pug** may be seen in April. In fresh specimens the green colour and the dark V shaped mark on the forewing make this one easy to identify.

May



Common Pug (*Eupithecia vulgata*)



Size medium

The **Common Pug** is by far the most widespread pug in the county, appearing in May and extending into June. It is quite variable in markings and size so it is as well to become familiar with the extent of variation. The discal spot is usually absent and there is a pale wavy line parallel to the outer edge of the forewing ending in a distinct white spot (the **tornal spot**). There is usually a background of reddish brown coloration with variable cross bands. See also Golden-rod Pug under late Jul/Aug.



Mottled Pug (*Eupithecia exiguata*)

Noticeably large

The **Mottled Pug** appears from mid-May for a month or so. The distinctive features in fresh specimens are the three dark dashes beyond the small discal spot and two pale bands extending to the outer wing edge. These are well seen in the photographs but care should be taken as late Brindled Pug do have rather similar dashes.

Size medium-small

Though its larval foodplant is Scots Pine, the **Ochreous Pug** is recorded rather infrequently. Its smaller size, uniform pale colouring and rather pointed wings held in a slightly swept back position are distinctive. The discal spot is obvious and a little elongated.



Ochreous Pug (*Eupithecia indigata*)

June/early July



Foxglove Pug (*Eupithecia pulchellata*)

Size medium

This attractive moth, the **Foxglove Pug**, is common in most gardens and is quite easy to recognise. Note the sharp elbow at the top of the outer edge of the dark cross band. This is gently curved in Toadflax Pug.

Size small

The **Toadflax Pug** is quite similar to the Foxglove pug but is a little smaller with a plainer neater pattern. It is out rather later extending into August. It is quite widespread in Lancashire but not seen nearly as often as the Foxglove. It can be expected wherever Toadflax is established. A regular site is Heysham Nature Reserve.



Toadflax Pug (*Eupithecia linariata*)



Grey Pug (*Eupithecia subfuscata*)



Size medium

One of the more common pugs, the **Grey Pug** occurs regularly in a melanic form. Rather non-descript with a grey brown background, fine cross lines, no tornal spot but with a definite discal spot. The larva feed on the flowers and leaves of many species of tree and herbaceous plant.



Green Pug (*Pasiphila rectangularata*)



The Green, V and Sloe pug (and the Double-striped) all belong to a different genera (*Pasiphila*) to the rest of the pugs. They have a distinctive wing shape with a broader and shorter forewing, although they are still very recognisable as pugs in outline. The **Green Pug** is common, being one of the four most likely to be encountered by a beginner at home, with Common, Foxglove and Double-striped. The green colour fades rapidly from the wings. Note the dark band across the upper abdomen. The larva feed on the flowers of Blackthorn, Apple, Pear and Hawthorn. This moth is separated from the Sloe Pug by the W shape mark one third in from the wing tip. In Sloe Pug this line is gently curved and will be covered in a later article.



White-spotted Pug (*Eupithecia tripunctaria*)

Size medium

Provided the specimen is not too worn the **White-spotted Pug** is easy to recognise by the plain markings and row of white spots near the outer wing margins. A white spot on the thorax is also distinctive.

The larva feed on Elder.



Freyer's Pug (*Eupithecia intricata*)

Size large

When fresh, this large pug is quite distinctive with a grey background and strong dark cross bands plus a prominent discal spot. The larva of **Freyer's Pug** feeds on *Cupressus* trees and, not surprisingly, it has become quite common and widespread in the county.

Late June /July



Narrow-winged Pug (*Eupithecia nanata*)

Size medium

The narrow, pointed and strongly marked wings make the **Narrow-winged Pug** easy to recognise. The larva feed on Heather and the moth is common on moorland, but can often turn up in gardens throughout Lancashire.



Slender Pug (*Eupithecia tenuiata*)

Size small

The **Slender Pug** is a little moth that seems to be quite widespread in Lancashire, though it is rarely recorded from the Silverdale area. The smaller size, rounded wings and fairly prominent discal spot should help in identifying this one. Its larval food plant is Sallow.

(Photo by Kane Brides)



Curren Pug (*Eupithecia assimilata*)

Size Medium

The **Curren Pug** is reasonably common and associated with Curren bushes. It is quite easy to recognise with its plain brown colour, elongated discal spot, prominent white ternal spot and, in comparison to Wormwood Pug, much shorter rounder wings.



Wormwood Pug (*Eupithecia absinthiata*)

Size Large

The **Wormwood Pug** is relatively common and widespread. It resembles a large curren pug but has a less obvious white ternal spot and wider forewings. The larva feed on the flowers of many wayside and woodland *Compositae*. In upland areas a smaller and paler form of this species can be found and is known as the Ling Pug – the larva being associated with Heather. If you encounter a pale grey-brown version of this moth on the limestone of north Lancs, it is likely to be the Bleached Pug – more on this moth in a later article.



Lime-speck Pug (*Eupithecia centaureata*)

Size medium

This bird dropping look-alike is very distinctive and easy to recognise with its almost all white wings and dark patch on the forewing leading edge. The **Lime-speck Pug** is generally distributed but more common near the coast of Lancashire. It is uncommon in the Preston and Silverdale area. Its larva utilise a wide variety of plants including ragwort.

Late July/August



**Bordered Pug
(*Eupithecia succenturiata*)**

Size large

The **Bordered Pug** is a very distinctive grey and white pug. The moth occurs quite widely in small numbers in many lowland parts of Lancashire. Its appearance can be sporadic as its larval food plant, Mugwort, occurs on newly cleared or waste ground. Several were seen in my Manchester garden in 1976, but never again.

Photo by Kevin McCabe



Size medium

The **Golden-rod Pug** is usually double-brooded in Lancashire being seen in late April/May, but more often in July and August. A small third brood can occur in late September/early October. This is one of the less common and trickier pugs to identify. I find it most resembles a Grey Pug for colouring and markings but the discal spot is usually larger and a pale spot is often seen on the thorax. This does not occur in the Grey Pug. The melanic form is quite common. If worn, Grey and Golden-rod Pug can only be separated by genitalia dissection.



Juniper Pug (*Eupithecia pusillata*)

Size medium

The **Juniper Pug** is strongly associated with its larval food plant Juniper (both wild and garden varieties) and is quite widespread throughout Lancashire. The dark bands passing across the forewings help to identify this species. Also the area just outside the small discal spot is pale.

Late August/September

The **Tawny-speckled Pug** is the last of the singled brooded pugs to emerge. During September the only pugs to be regularly encountered are the second brood of V-pug and Double-striped pug



Size large

This is an attractive pug easily recognised by the orange central area of the forewing. I used to consider this a common pug and often netted it in my garden but judging by the current Lancashire Mapmate records it seem to be less often seen in recent years. The larva feeds on Yarrow flowers.

Tawny-speckled Pug (*Eupithecia icterata*)

The remaining 13 scarce or very local pugs will be described in a second part which should be out in late July 2008. My thanks to Steve Palmer for his encouragement and help in confirming many of my identifications by dissection. All Pug photos are by Brian Hancock unless stated otherwise.

MOTH EVENTS 2008

Saturday, 2nd February

LIVERPOOL MUSEUM

A BENHS/LCES/LMG joint, all day meeting with Butterfly Conservation (BC) at the World Museum, Liverpool. Organiser: Guy Knight, World Museum Liverpool, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EN (work telephone: 0151 478 4369; E-mail: guy.knight@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk). The theme will be the *Moths Count* project led by BC, with varied talks and informal discussions on local and national moth recording. Details (with times) will be advertised on the BENHS web site (www.benhs.org.uk) or contact Guy Knight.

Thursday, 13th March 7pm-9.15pm

LANCASHIRE MOTH GROUP SOCIAL

The Moth Group Social will be held on Thursday, 13th March from 1900 to 2115hrs – entry charge £2 per head to cover hire costs. The Lancashire Wildlife Trust has, once again, allowed us to use their facilities at The Barn, Cuerden Valley Country Park, near Leyland. Members are invited to bring along books, displays, slides, Powerpoint presentation or CDs with pictures on to show to the group. Steve Palmer will be giving an illustrated talk on the Changing Moth Fauna of Lancashire. To find The Barn, come off the M6 at J28 and take the B5256 eastbound, crossing the A49 at a set of 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. I look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it. Please do make a special effort to bring along slides, photographs or other display material – it would be useful if those with material to present got in touch with Steve before the evening to enable assessment of the space and equipment requirements. Tea, Coffee and Biscuits will be available free of charge.

Saturday, 7th June 2008

NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT

To participate, simply record any moths seen during the **day and following night of Saturday, 7th June 2008** and send details in to the scheme organisers. If you do take part in Lancashire 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. Make a note of the date now! If you intend organising an event for NMN, do advertise it through the moth group website by letting Steve know the details. For further information visit www.nationalmothnight.info



***Anania funebris* – a daytime target for NMN/08**

Saturday, 21st June to 6th July

GARDEN MOTHS COUNT

Garden Moths Count is an exciting nationwide survey, in which everyone can take part, to discover which amazing moths live in our gardens. The event will run again from 21 June to 6 July in 2008. For more details go to www.mothcount.brc.ac.uk/

Saturday, 5th - Sunday, 6th July

LOWER BURGH MEADOWS

This is an evening light-trapping and morning public event. Meet Saturday 8pm at the Yarrow Valley Visitor Centre, Map Ref SD571154. On Sunday at 9.30AM traps will be emptied at the Visitor Centre. Directions: - Along A49, turning onto B5251, through Coppull, after heading straight on at two mini roundabouts, the road dips down with a tree-lined route. Take the next turning on the right, sign-posted Birkacre Garden Centre, 400 yards down there is a 90 degree bend - carry straight on through gates & park up. For more details contact Eddie Langrish on (01257) 232100 or email edwin.langrish@btconnect.com

Saturday 19th – Sunday 20th July

RSPB LEIGHTON MOSS - MOTH BREAKFAST

This very popular event is held in the reserve grounds courtesy of the RSPB. Previous years have always turned up something interesting or unusual and hopefully 2008 will be no different. A demonstration of light trapping takes place on the Saturday evening from dusk (about 9pm) until well into the early hours (weather permitting). The following morning traps will be emptied giving the opportunity to examine a wide variety of species in daylight conditions. As usual, the famous Moth Breakfast (pre-booking required) will be available on Sunday morning at 8.30am. For further details and booking for the breakfast (essential as numbers are limited) please phone the RSPB on 01524 701601.

A SUMMARY OF MOTHS RECORDED FROM JULY TO THE END OF OCTOBER 2007

There is no doubt that it has been a poor second half to the moth season, though the reason for this is less clear. Was it down to the poor weather conditions throughout much of the summer or was there a knock-on effect from the hot and dry periods in 2006? Reports have been received from many sites of reduced numbers and missing species but at Heysham Nature Reserve, a constant effort site (i.e. run every night in exactly the same position with the same bulb type) several species have shown a dramatic decline in numbers. Significantly lower numbers of Broom Moth, Clay, Clouded-bordered Brindle, Dark Arches, Flounced Rustic, Lunar Underwing, Small Square-spot and Smoky Wainscot, amongst other common species, were reported. Burnished Brass was completely absent. This clearly demonstrates that it is not down to variable trapping effort in poor weather conditions that has led to the dramatic drop in recorded numbers. Thanks to P Marsh – PM and R Neville – RN for this data.

Early **July** definitely belonged to the micromoths. On the 3rd *Dichrorampha vancouverana* occurred at Flixton (K McCabe – KM), only the third county record, and on 5th, *Argyresthia sorbiella* was found at Gait Barrows NNR by Brian Hugo (per J Holding – JH) and was new to VC60. A day later *Eidophasia messingiella*, a local species, came to light at Birkacre (E Langrish – EL) and *Ectoedemia sericopeza* occurred in Flixton (KM), the latter only the second county record.



On the 7th, a leaf mine of *Cameraria ohridella* (horse chestnut leaf-miner) was found in Chorlton by Ben Smart, a species new to Lancashire. The adult moth emerged on 23rd July.

***Cameraria ohridella* mine and adult**
(Photos: B Smart)



Marbled White-spot
(Photo: J Donnelly)

After a week of notable micros, the larger moths decided enough was enough and decided to pull rank. On 6th July a Dark Sword-grass was found in Euxton (R Hoult), Broad-barred White and Bordered Sallow at Lytham (J Wardle), and Phoenix at Torrisholme (A Draper), while a Marbled White-spot made its fourth county appearance in Crosby on the 8th (J Donnelly), the site of the first record. Currant Clearwing occurred at Hope Carr Lane Allotments (Dave Wilson – DW) on the 14th while a Haworth's Pug at Jack Scout (B Hancock – BH) confirmed this species continued presence in the area. On the 16th, Humming Bird Hawk Moth was seen in Longton (J Park) and seven Heart and Club came to light in Southport (A Forrest) - its only known regular site in Lancashire. Ray Banks (RB) from St Helens found an unusual geometrid moth in his garden light trap on 19th July 2007. It has since been confirmed as the first record for Lancashire of the Large Twin-spot Carpet. This followed a record from Cheshire in 2006.

Tachystola acroxantha continued its break out from the limited distribution it had maintained for many years, with new sites in Boothstown (I Walker – IW) and Prestwich (D Johnston - DJ). Hopes of a migration bonanza were boosted around this time when a few Diamond-back Moth appeared at various sites and a single Rusty-dot Pearl was at Silverdale (T Riden - TR). A couple of Rush Veneer at Lytham (A & D Wright) coincided with Humming-bird Hawk-moth at Bare, Morecambe (E Bayton per PM), Dark Sword-grass in Wray (G Jones and A Shaw – GJ&AS) and a Bedstraw Hawk-moth at Heysham (JH). On the same day Chris Darbyshire (CD) recorded 186 moths of 60 species including Slender Pug and Scallop Shell in his garden trap in Billinge and it seemed that summer was here at last. However it was a case of blink and you missed it – a bit like the only record of Clouded Magpie in 2007 – found at Challon Hall by Ched George on 22nd.



Bedstraw Hawk moth
(Photo: J Holding)

After many years with a very small apparently sedentary population in Lancashire, Blackneck continued its rapid range expansion, being found at Poulton Le Fylde by Anne Smith on 22nd July. On the same date *Cochylidia implicitana* came to light in Bispham (B Brigden – BB), the second record of this micro for VC60. A Dingy Footman at Heysham (RN et al) on 23rd was notable, as was a Brown-line Bright-eye at Flixton (KM) on 24th. Even in bad summers, Gait Barrows rarely fails to impress. On the 28th the list of moths seen included Annulet, Satin Beauty, *Monopis cytisella* (new to VC60), *Ancylis apicella*, Barred Rivulet, Dark UMBER, Buff Footman, Common Lutestring, Beech Green Carpet (new to the site) and Bleached Pug (KM, SMP et al). A Satin Wave at Marton, Blackpool on 30th (P Barnes – PB) was a nice find. Less representative of mid-season was a Canary-shouldered Thorn on the last day of July at Dalton (R Charles), the recorder commenting that “autumn is now here”.

August can be a variable month for the moths and this one was no exception. A visit to Formby on the 1st (G and D Atherton – G&DA) produced Archer’s Dart, Four-spotted Footman, Rosy Minor and Small Blood-vein amongst other species, while at the same recorders’ home site in Haydock on 3rd they had three Old Lady to sugar. A possible *Yponomeuta rorella* (willow ermine) at Hutton (A Barker – AB) is awaiting further checks as to its identity. Other species/site records of note during this period included White Satin in Radcliffe (DJ), Grass Emerald at Hale (C Cockbain – CC) and Garden Dart at Urmston (M Dockery per KM) – the latter a rare moth in Lancashire these days. Another Four-spotted Footman came to light at Millhouses, near Wray on 4th (PM) and on the 5th Barred Hook-tip was a new species (N Rogers – NR) at Bay Horse. A visit to the banks of the River Wyre near Out Rawcliffe (J Steeden – JS) on the same date produced many *Gynnidomorpha vectisana*, the first record in Lancashire since the nineteenth century. Clothes moths (there are actually very few of these micromoths that are pest species) are generally a lot less common than in the past. As a result the record of *Tineola bisselliella* (common clothes moth) in Bickerstaffe on 17th July (CD) and Fulwood (A Powell – AP) on the 4th August were perhaps more welcome than would be expected. There have only been seven records of this moth in Lancashire since 1950.



Brown-line Bright-eye (Photo: K McCabe)

National Moth Night on the 11th was a night of mixed fortunes for many. A trap run in a garden in Inskip (SMP) was full of moths just before dawn but the torrential downpour of rain meant checking the contents whilst trying to balance an umbrella overhead at the same time proved very tricky - quite a few moths escaped. A summary of the full results from the whole of the county can be seen in the table below.

	VC59	VC60	TOTAL
Recorders	22	37	59
Micro species	90	75	118
Macro species	122	134	171
TOTAL SPECIES	212	209	289

Particular highlights included *Apotomis capreana* at Meresands Wood (I Kippax & R Boydell – RBy), Barred Rivulet at Lower Burgh Meadows (EL) and Prestwich (DJ), *Batia unitella* at Moss House Farm, Glazebury – only the fourth county record (DW), *Oidaematophorus lithodactyla* at Inskip (H Barton) and Waved Black in Flixton (KM). A pyralid moth, *Endotricha flammealis*, at St Annes (JS) was a new species for Lancashire and a totally unexpected addition to the county list. Elsewhere, five Striped Twin-spot Carpet were recorded at Warton Crag (RN), Grey Mountain Carpet, four Pale Eggar, three Confused, Ling Pug and Red Carpet were found on Leck Fell (PM), Blomer's Rivulet at Yealand Redmayne (S Stokes) and a Vapourer at Atherton (K Brides).



Blomer's Rivulet (Photo: R Griffiths)

On the 12th August, Grey Chi came to light at St Michaels (G Mortimore – GM). This was the first record of this moth from the Fylde since the 1960s. The migrants made another brief and spectacular showing when on the 17th a White-speck was recorded in Haydock (G&DA). The following night Convolvulus Hawk Moth was found at Bay Horse together with a Rush Veneer (NR). Although further migrants were around, their

thunder was briefly stolen by a new county record which appeared on the 21st – *Morophaga choragella* came to light at Flixton (KM).



Great Brocade
(Photo: G Mortimore)

As has been the case in recent years, a period of easterly winds at this time of year seems to be a cue for the arrival of Great Brocades. 2007 did not disappoint with sightings between the 22nd and 25th at Billinge (CD), Dolphinholme, at least three separate moths (NR), Hale (CC), St Michaels (GM) and Silverdale (TR). On the 24th a Barred Hook-tip was a notable new species for Dennis Lambert at his Longridge site. On the same day five Vapourer moths flying in sunshine were being pursued by Migrant Hawker dragonflies at Gait Barrows (R Petley-Jones) while a visit to Altcar produced Grass Eggar, Feathered Gothic, Archers Dart, Portland Moth and *Monopis imella* amongst other interesting species (SMP, Graham Jones and Richard Burkmar). A new site for the Treble-bar was found in Preston when one came to light on 25th (D Rumley).

For the first time in many years **September** records of significant migrant species could be counted on the fingers of one hand. However a big hand was needed for one - a Death's-head Hawk-moth found in a Longridge chimney, hissing as it emerged (per Will Ashton). This excitement aside, records of unusual resident species were hard to come by. On the 1st, Hedge Rustic and Grey Chi came to light at Freshfield (G&DA) while the 2nd produced a real county rarity, The Mallow, found by Graham Jones at Altcar. Further north in Hornby, a Confused came to actinic light (M Broomfield). Not to be outdone, an August Thorn at Bay Horse on the 5th (NR) was the first record of this county rarity for several years. The same date produced a single Oak Lutestring at Botton (PM, SMP). An unusually marked Feathered Gothic caused much consternation at Morecambe (J Girdley – JG) on the 7th, the same night also producing this year's only Small Autumnal Moth at Sabden (AB).



August Thorn (Photo: P Greenhalgh)



Hedge Rustic
(Photo: G Atherton)

On the 11th a Vine's Rustic at Freshfield (D&GA) was the first confirmed record for VC59. Another unconfirmed record of this species came from Heysham NR (PM) four days later but unfortunately the moth escaped. Four *Cedestis subfasciella* at Freshfield (D&GA) were well outside their published flight period but this habit has been noted in southern England in recent years. A species showing an apparent decline in numbers and reduction of range in Lancashire, the Brown-spot Pinion, was a pleasing find on the 15th at Top O'Th Slate (B Yorke). On the 19th a late Marbled Beauty was recorded in Longton (RBy) and on the following day a very dark Feathered Ranunculus came to light at Marton (PB). A second August Thorn on 20th, this time at Hutton (AB), was a great surprise – is this moth beginning to make a comeback in Lancashire? The superb recording efforts over much of the season of EL, on this occasion with AB, came up trumps on the 28th when at least ten Orange Sallow came to light traps set at Bretherton. As September slipped away and autumn eased gently in, the Silver Y started making a more regular appearance in moth traps throughout the county such as in Bispham (D McGrath),

Little Singleton (S Bedford – SB), Poulton Le Fylde (A Storey), Preston (AP), Prestwich (DJ), Silverdale (R Griffiths), Sunderland Point (the Morbey-Ganly family) and Warton (M Elsworth - ME).

With the arrival of **October**, what had been a slow summer turned into an awesome autumn. Migrants were still very few and far between, with the exception of the now steady supply of Silver Y. However what was lacking in migration numbers was certainly made up for in excellent mothing conditions and loads of latest date records – totally unexpected after the weather we had experienced earlier on. The ball started rolling on 2nd with late records of Bordered Pug and *Pseudargyrotoza conwagana* at Flixton (KM) followed rapidly by Green Carpet at Carnforth (D Bennett - DB) – the latest date for this species in Lancs. On the 4th, Flounced Chestnut appeared in a Silverdale trap (TR) presumably a wanderer from the hills to the east – another of this species was found in Preston two days later by AP. Continuing the theme of "late arrivals at the Moth Ball", a Clouded Border came to light at Flixton (KM) on the 5th with the same



Vines Rustic
(Photo: G Atherton)

recorder having a purple patch as he added another new species to the VC59 list – a leaf-mine found on birch in Flixton turned out to be *Stigmella sakhalinella*.

The Pine Carpet is a bit of a local rarity in Lancashire, so the one on the Fylde at Little Singleton on 6th October (SB) was notable. In Rochdale on the 7th, a late Rosy Rustic was mixing it with Red-green Carpet and Red-line Quaker (P Stevens) while further north a fresh looking *Epinotia ramella* appeared in a Warton light trap (ME), making it the latest date in Lancashire for this species. An exciting migrant on 12th, *Palpita vitrealis*, at Bispham (BB) raised hopes of a possible migration fall. Although this was only the fourth county record for this rare migrant it apparently arrived on its own with no other supporting cast reported. Flixton featured again for a latest date when Single-dotted Wave was found in KM's light trap, also on 12th. Despite the steadily accumulating list of "latest dates", KM was determined not to rest on his laurels. On the following day, during a visit to Highfield Moss, he found a new species for the county when two larval cases of *Coleophora ibipennella* were located on an oak leaf.



Coleophora ibipennella
(photo: K McCabe)

Dusk time searches and light trapping in Hutton on the 13th produced new species for AB's garden when Pale Pinion was found on ivy-blossom and Merveille du Jour came to light. Very late records of Pinion-streaked Snout occurred at Lower Burgh Meadows (EL) on 13th and Pennington (DW) and Flixton (KM) on 14th – the latter two the county's latest dates. On the 14th a late but pristine Straw Dot was found in Warton (ME) and V-pug at Scotforth (B Cockburn). The same day produced a few migrant Dark Sword-grass, one at Broughton (Z Hinchcliffe) and one at Bispham (BB).

A species that is continuing its northward march through the county is *Acrolepia autumnitella*. The larvae of this moth make obvious mines on bittersweet, but in this instance it was the rather small and dark adult that was found by JG at Heysham on 14th – our most northerly record in Lancs to date. Searches of ivy-blossom at various sites produced records of Pale Pinion, one of 32 moths of 7 species found at White Coppice (EL). The mid month moth bonanza continued when a Muslin Moth male came to light at Fowley Common (DW) – the latest date in Lancs by over three weeks.

Signalling what some thought might be the end of the season, a single Winter Moth held hands with four September Thorn at Lower Burgh Meadows on the 19th (EL). However the moths had other plans, with mild conditions prevailing. *Eudonia mercurella* put in its second latest date in the county at Worsley (IW) on 25th. At the same time Tawny Pinion came to light at Bay Horse (NR), Sprawler at Wray (GJ&AS) and *Crociosema plebejana* at Carnforth (DB), the latter for only its fifth county record. Amazingly, another followed at Bay Horse on 30th (NR) accompanied by the first December Moth of the year. At this time good numbers of the micro *Exapete congelatella* were recorded at various sites including Bay Horse (NR), Billinge (CD), Boothstown (IW), Botton Mill (PM), Flixton (KM) and Hutton (AB). As the month ended the long-awaited fall of migrants appeared – too little, too late was the call! Rusty-dot Pearl was found at two sites in the first few days of November. The mild conditions on the 1st allowed a late sheet and light session in Dalton (VC60) where several Pale November Moth were located together with a Figure of Eight and *Diurnea lipsiella* (C Palmer & SMP). As the newsletter was about to go to print, news was received of a late Large Yellow Underwing in Preston (AP) on 1st **November**, a Grey Shoulder-knot at Hale (CC) on 2nd, a migrant White-speck at Heysham on 3rd (JH) and a Gem at Orrell on 5th (P Alker). As always, thanks to the many recorders sending in their records.



White speck (Photo: J Holding)

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