

LANCASHIRE MOTHS

Newsletter 18

July 2008



Netted Pug (Photo: I Kimber)

EDITORIAL

For the second year running many parts of the UK, including Lancashire have experienced a real mixed bag of weather in the period up to the end of July 2008. So how have the moths coped with this?

There was little doubt that in 2007 numbers of moths visiting moth traps were down and some species were conspicuous by their absence. January and February 2008 however produced unprecedented numbers of Spring Usher and several other early-emerging and over-wintering species. So a good late winter for the moths? Looking at this in more detail, one recorder went out regularly and checked what was around in the wider countryside rather than just recording in gardens, as the majority of us do. Moth traps in gardens, particularly Actinics, performed poorly during the same period. But when moth trap catches are low, we automatically assume it is a poor year – is this an accurate assumption?

The many different trap types we are using, the habitats we are recording in and the regularity of trapping vary considerably across the county and from year to year and week to week. The only way to assess population stability and changes is to record in a regular and standard fashion, results can then be compared from season to season at the particular site. This is the real value of sites such as Flixton where Kevin McCabe runs his trap nightly and examines it just before dawn. Similarly at Heysham the team operating the "toilet trap" record in exactly the same way each night. Data from these "constant effort" sites can be used to give a more accurate feel as to what is happening out there in Lancashire. Additionally we now have the new National Moth Recording Scheme, which all our records are being submitted to, allowing the distribution of species of larger moth, their declines and increases to be given a national context. Results at the end of 2008 will show how the moths have fared.

In this Newsletter will be found a note on one recorder's first eighteen months of mothing and Part Two of Brian Hancock's ground-breaking Pug article – with exciting last minute additions right up to deadline day.

A SUMMARY OF MOTHS RECORDED FROM JANUARY TO THE END OF JULY 2008

The first seven months of the year have flashed past and despite many reporting poor catches, a good range of moths have been found. During this period nearly 27,000 records have been sent in by 126 recorders involving 781 species (410 micros and 371 macros) and this summary is based upon those records sent to the county recorders up to the end of July 2008. Informal notes for inclusion on the website, phone calls and emails to the discussion group have not been included in this summary – please make sure you submit these records through a Mapmate sync file, paper lists or emailed site lists by the end of 2008. Thanks to you all for the the records you've sent in and the accompanying photos, some of which are shown below.

There were obviously some members of the moth group who were around late on New Years Eve as records of four species from four different recorders on the 1st January heralded the arrival of another bumper period of moth recording in mid winter. By the end of January, 112 records had been received of 17 species, including early records of **Hebrew Character** from Euxton (**E Langrish- EL**), Parbold (**J Kilgour – JK**), Fulwood (**A Powell – AP**) and Orrell (**P Alker – PA**). Equally interesting were good numbers (with the first sightings in brackets) of **Spring Usher** (Euxton on 1st, **EL**), **Mottled Umber** (Higher Tatham on 1st, **P Marsh – PM**), **Satellite** (Euxton on 4th – **EL**), **Pale Brindled Beauty** (Silverdale on 6th, **T Riden – TR**) and **Tortricoides alternella**, **Early Moth** and **Chestnut** (Euxton on 12th, **EL**), all tempted out during the unseasonal mild spells. Amongst this list was a count of 49 **Spring Usher** at German Lane, Euxton (**EL**) on the 19th January – this must be some kind of record for the county.

I can certainly recall that not so many years ago I used to consider February to be the quietest time of the year for moths. Not so in 2008 as 26 recorders, including many of our new moth enthusiasts, welcomed the new season with illuminated traps. Excluding leaf mines and bred moths emerging early, the month produced records of 30 species and by the 29th, records had been received of most of the usual early spring species. These included **Dotted Border** at Worsley (**I Walker – IW**) on the 3rd, **Engrailed** at Ashton-in-Makerfield (**PA**) on 5th, **Early Grey** at Euxton (**EL**) on the 6th. On the 7th, **Brindled Pug** and **Small Brindled Beauty** were at Wray (**PM and S Palmer – SP**), **March Moth** at Silverdale (**R Griffiths – RG**), **Oak Beauty** at Parbold (**JK**), **Common Quaker** at Euxton and **Clouded Drab** at Adlington (**EL**). As part of this mixed up period Chris Darbyshire (**CD**) found an active **Angle Shades** larva at Billinge on 3rd, but on the 7th an adult of the same species came to light at Boothstown (**IW**). The rush of over-wintering and newly emerged species persisted through much of February but it wasn't until the last week of the month that more new species for the year appeared when **Shoulder Stripe** was found in Euxton (**EL**) on 22nd and **Double-striped Pug** in Morecambe (**J Girdley – JG**) on the 26th.

The first week of March produced little in the way of freshly emerged species but by the 7th a visit to Brinscall (**EL**) proved very worthwhile with **Yellow Horned**, **Mottled Grey**, **Pine Beauty** and **Red Chestnut** all making their first appearances of the year. Once again temperatures dipped and the moths were few and far between. A major resurgence started on the 14th with **Amblyptilia acanthadactyla** found at Warton, near Carnforth (**M Elsworth – ME**) and **Early Thorn** and an **Oak Nycteoline** at Leyland (**EL**). On the same day **Oak Beauty** came to light in Wigan (**G&B Wynn – G&BW**) and **Pale Pinion** in Flixton (**K McCabe – KM**) and Preston (**SP**). On the 15th **Early Tooth-striped** was recorded in Silverdale (**EL**) and the same location and but a different recorder (**TR**) produced **Grey Shoulder-knot**. A day later the first **Belted Beauty** of the year was found at Sunderland Point (**P&A Gilchrist**). **Twin-spotted Quaker** was present in Longton (**R Boydell – RB**) on the 19th and a daytime visit to Astley Moss by **KM** and **B Smart (BS)** on the 24th was rewarded with **Amphisbatis incongruella**, a very small blackish micro found amongst heather early in the year, and larval spinings of **Glyphipterix haworthana**, a beautiful black and silver moth, on cotton grass. Ben has been rearing quite a few species this year including **Scallop Shell** and **Ectoedemia subbimaculella** (see photos below). Numbers of moths peaked again towards the end of the month with three **Blossom Underwing** found at Gait Barrows (**R Petley-Jones – RPJ**), **Water Carpet** at Silverdale (**TR**), seven **Orange Underwing** and the larva of **Northern Eggar** at Winmarleigh (**SP**) and a **Purple Thorn** at Wray (**PM**), all on the 31st.



Ectoedemia subbimaculella and **Scallop Shell** (both Photos: B Smart)

Grey Birch (Photo: C Barnes)

As is usually the case with April, the *Orthosia* species (**Common Quaker**, **Clouded Drab**, **Hebrew Character** etc) dominated most light traps although numbers were quite low again at some sites. Searches for larvae at this time of year can be quite productive and a check of some Blackcurrant bushes in Hutton (**A Barker – AB**) produced two larva of the **Spinach**, a species rarely seen these days. Targeted searches for Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species reach a peak in Lancashire during April with checks on the **Belted Beauty** at Potts Corner (numbers peaking at 22 on the 30th) and **Barred Tooth-striped** (singletons recorded on four dates between the 17th and 24th) in the Silverdale area (**JG, RG, SP**).

The main emergence of the common spring geometrid species took place from the third week of April although **Streamer** had previously appeared in a Silverdale garden on four occasions between the 2nd and 20th (**RG**). **Oak-tree Pug** came to light in Fulwood on the 21st (**AP**), followed swiftly by **Flame Carpet** in Silverdale on the 22nd (**TR**), the same date that a spectacular **Chamomile Shark** was found in Parbold (**JK**). Over the next few days **Small Phoenix** came to light in Flixton (**KM**), **Common Carpet** in Heysham (**R Neville and the team – RN et al**), **Garden Carpet** in Marton, Blackpool (**P Barnes – PB**) and **Grey Birch** in Dalton (**R Charles – RC**). Between the 26th and 28th there was a small migration into the county of **Diamond-back Moth** at Hoole on the 26th (**AB**) and Heysham on the 28th (**J Holding – JH**) while **Dark Sword-grass** were reported from Wray on 26th (**PM**) and Little Singleton on 27th (**S Bedford – SB**). Nice finds at the end of the month included **Scarce Prominent** at Silverdale Moss on 27th (**JG**) and **Puss Moth** at Hough Green on 28th (**P Hillyer – PH**).



Square Spot
(Photo: C Barnes)



Chamomile Shark
(Photo: J Kilgour)

With the arrival of May, came exciting news from the north of the county. Firstly an evening visit to Warton Crag on 2nd (**B Hancock – BH**) produced the larvae of **Sloe Pug** while **JG** and **PM** made a visit to Lord's Lot Wood on the 3rd and came across some strangely marked Engrailed. Further examination proved the moths to be **Square Spot**, a species with no previously confirmed records for the county as far as we are aware. Having said that **P Pugh (PP)** reported one at Gait Barrows and **Keith Briggs (KB)** at Leighton Moss about five years ago but unfortunately at the time no specimens were retained. Unbeknown to the county recorder, a photo had been taken of the Leighton Moss moth, which looks good for Square Spot. The species was subsequently found at four other north Lancashire sites during April and May 2008. Gait Barrows, one of those sites, also produced records of *Eriopsela quadrana* on the 3rd (**BH, SP**), a moth not recorded in Lancashire since the 1990s. On the 9th, a late **Red Sword-grass** came to light at Heysham (**RN et al**), **Miller** was present in Lostock Hall (**R Hall – RH**) and **Marbled Coronet** was found at Sunderland Point (**JG, H & T Morbey-Ganly – H&TM**), the same site producing the first of several **Tawny Shears** the following day. On the 10th a freshly emerged **Alder Kitten** was found at Botton Mill (**JG, PM**) and a **Mullein Moth** at Carnforth on the 11th (**D Bennett – DB**). **Dark Sword-grass** at four sites from the 6th to 26th hinted at some migration with **Silver Y** also present later in the month at eight scattered localities. The pick of the migrants was a **Bordered Straw** at Wray on the 23rd (**G Jones and A Shaw – GJ & AS**).



Mullein
(Photo: D Bennett)



Lobesia reliquana
(Photo: C Barnes)

Mid-May saw a **Phoenix** appear at Leighton Moss (**J Beattie – JB**), quite a local species these days. A few days later, on the 19th, **Silver Hook** occurred at Highfield Moss (**C Felton – CF**), the first of several sightings during 2008 of this spectacular little moth, the others being in June at Flixton (new to the site – **KM**) and White Moss, Yealand Conyers (**BH**). A visit to Gait Barrows by **C Barnes (CB)** and **SP** on the 21st to record the BAP species *Anania funebris* produced a count of at least thirty-one present on the reserve. Also found on that day were a few small larvae in cases feeding on blackthorn. Following rearing and critical examination, they turned out to be *Coleophora prunifoliae*, a species new to Lancashire. Other highlights of that day included *Lobesia reliquana* and *Olethreutes arcuella*. On the 23rd the first **Broom Moth** of

the year appeared in Wray (**GJ & AS**) followed by **Alder Moth** on the 26th at Longton (**RB**) and **Dog's-tooth** at several scattered localities, including a new site at Little Singleton (**S Bedford – SB**). **Beautiful Snout** was a nice find (the first of a few) at Lord's Lot Wood on the 27th (**JG, PM**) while an early **Mottled Rustic** came to light at Martin Mere (**A Bunting – APB**), a **Dusky Brocade** in Lancaster (**A Draper – AD**) and **Lesser Cream Wave** at Gait Barrows (**RPJ**), all on the 29th. The final two days of the month produced **Small Elephant Hawk-moth** at St Annes (**A & D Wright**) and **Dark Brocade** at White Coppice (**EL**). Also of note at this time was only the second recent VC59 record of **Epinotia tedella** in Billinge (**CD**). One of the more unexpected finds of the spring was a single **Ancylis myrtillana** at Heysham (**JH**) on the 31st. This moth feeds on Bilberry and was well away from the nearest known colony of this plant. The moth also turned up as a new garden record in Preston (**SP**) and at Bay Horse (**N Rogers – NR**) a few days later and had obviously been wandering down from the hills.



Saxon
(Photo: A & P Palmer)



Devon Carpet
(Photo: J Girdley)

Picking the bones out of 20,000 June and July records will leave many significant records lying on the cutting room floor and I hope I have not disappointed too many of you by missing out your main highlight of the first half of the year. June is often the most productive month for exciting finds in the county and 2008 did not disappoint. Before even 24 hours had passed a new species for the county, **Devon Carpet**, had been located at Lord's Lot Wood (**JG, PM**). This moth is known to occur in Cumbria, at Roudsea Wood, but it was an unexpected addition to the Lancashire list.

It is amazing how long some over-wintering moths hang around and the **Red-green Carpet** (accompanied by a freshly emerged **Lime Hawk-moth**) at Wigan on the 1st (**G&BW**) must be something of a record. On the 2nd **Red Twin-spot Carpet** was found at Bay Horse (**NR**) and **Sloe Pug** at Leigh (**D Wilson – JDW**). Once again, I missed out on doing any searches for Clearwings as poor weather or time away coincided with the peak flight periods for these moths. However **IW** found **Currant Clearwing** at Worsley Garden Centre on the 5th June. This date will also live long in the memory of a couple recently starting moth-trapping. A borrowed actinic had been under-performing in a magnificent garden site near Haweswater, (**A & P Palmer – A&PP**) attracting few moths for much of the spring. Quality over quantity was the appropriate phrase when a **Saxon** was found and photographed – much to the amazement of the author, when the picture appeared in his email tray the next day! On the 6th, **Gold Swift** came to light at Lower Burgh Meadows, near Chorley (**EL**) and **White-pinion Spotted** was new to a garden site in Rochdale (**P Stevens – PS**).

Silver Hook (Photo: C Barnes)



Red-necked Footman was a nice find on Warton Crag (**J Newton – JN**) on the 9th June but otherwise things went very quiet for a while. **Apodia bifractella**, only the second record for VC60, emerged from over-wintered heads of Fleabane found at Heysham in 2007 (**KM**) but it was not until the 19th that things started perking up again. **Blood-vein** came to light on that date in Silverdale (**TR**) – a rare moth in VC60. **Archer's Dart** is a local coastal species in the county and so far this year has only been reported from St Annes (**J Wardle – JW**), on the 20th. On the 23rd **TR** continued his rapid addition of new species to his garden in Silverdale by adding **Stenoptilia millieridactyla** to the list – there

was more to come within a week or so! Moth recording at Leighton Moss has been stepped up a gear in 2008 with a mid-week trapping session being added to the regular visits by other recorders. This paid dividends on the 24th with **Netted Pug**, **Dingy Shell**, **Grey Arches**, **Obscure Wainscot** and **Epinotia signatana** (**KB, SP**) all putting in an appearance, the last at its only known site in Lancashire. On the same date **Beautiful Carpet** was recorded at Gait Barrows (**RPJ**), an unexpected **Ash Pug** at Yealand Conyers (**BH**), **Phycitodes maritima** at Bay Horse (**NR**) and **Humming-bird Hawk-moth** in Atherton (**KB**). As the month came to a close, **Blotched Emerald** was found in Leyland (**AB, EL**) and **Spinach** in Atherton (**KB**) on the 27th. **Lime Hawk-moth** was new to the garden in Hale (**C Cockbain – CC**) on the 28th and coincided with five **Elephant Hawk-moths** – an impressive sight. The same date produced a new site for **Blackneck** in Philips Park, Manchester (**G Jones – GJo**). On the 29th **Heart and club** was found in Carnforth (**DB**) and the final day of June saw **Mullein Wave** in Euxton (**EL**), a significant inland extension of this moth's range, and **Pretty Chalk Carpet** and **Haworth's Pug** at Jack Scout (**BH**).

Small Ranunculus (Photo: J Clarke)



Preston city centre underpass is probably not near the top of most people's lists of good mothing sites. However on the 1st July both **AP** and **J Beattie (JB)** found large numbers of **White Satin** moths had been attracted to the underpass lights. This was not as unexpected as it would first seem as there was a plague of caterpillars of this species in the city during 2007. **Epiblema foenella** was a new garden species for **JDW** in Leigh on the 4th as was a superb **Cloaked Pug** in Silverdale (**TR**) on the same date – another different one turning up a few days later at the same site. At the opposite end of the county in VC59, the **Small Ranunculus** seems to be continuing its slow spread with one found in Wavertree on the 5th (**C Daly per J Clarke – JC**). Another was subsequently found in West Derby, Liverpool on the 26th (**L Threadgold per APB**). On the 6th another **Humming-bird Hawk** was seen briefly in Audenshaw (**D Johnston – DJ**) while at Lord's Lot Wood, the uncommon resident tortricid, **Olindia schumacherana** (no relation to the racing driver) was found by **JG** and **PM**. On the 10th **Bactra furfurana** came to light at the Bactra hotspot in the county, Bay Horse (**NR**), where Nigel has previously recorded two of the other species in this genus – a feat not achieved anywhere else in the county. As mid month approached it was time, apparently, for everyone to concentrate on larval searches. A **Puss Moth** larva was found in Bispham (**C Raby – CR**), Vapourer larvae in Prestwich (**DJ**) and a mine of **Cameraria ohridella**, the horse chestnut leaf-miner, was located at Penwortham (**SP**), continuing its erratic progress north. How long before it makes the leap north of the River Ribble?



Blackneck (Photo: C Darbyshire)



Blotched Emerald (Photo: E Langrish)



Sitochroa palealis (Photo: J Clarke)

On the 12th July, a rather non-descript tortricid found in Preston (**SP**) turned out to be a new species for the garden – **Cydia funebrana**. A visit to Astley Moss on the 14th (**KM**) proved very productive with **Plain Wave**, **Marsh Oblique-barred** and the **Suspected** being found, the latter species also turning up on the 19th in Euxton (**RH**). The same date produced **Sitochroa palealis** at Gateworth, near Warrington (**JC**) and two **Barred Carpet** at Gait Barrows (**SP**). **Crescent Striped** have been thin on the ground this year, but one was found in Little Singleton on the 17th (**SB**) while another local rarity, the **V Moth** was found in Silverdale (**RG**) on the 20th – the only other 2008 record being from Leighton Moss on the 7th July (**KB**). **Triple-spotted Clay** is also very local in the county and can be the subject of misidentification, but the one from Herring Head Wood (**PM, T Whitaker – TW**) on the 17th fulfilled all the identification criteria. The annual Moth Breakfast event at Leighton Moss coincided, once again, with cold, clear and windy conditions and a near full moon. The views over the Moss as the moon rose were stunning but the moths were less so. Fortunately the number of lights deployed (11) saved the night, producing plenty of moths for the visitors such as Satin Beauty and Small Dotted Buff. New moth recorder Ben Dickinson started well with a good selection of species on the 22nd and 23rd including **Old Lady moth**, **Batia unitella** and **Cydia fagiglandana** in Mossley Hill, Liverpool. Further north **Phoenix** was recorded by **W Aspin (WA)** in Feniscowles and the even more local **Dark Spinach** came to light at Middleton (**JG**) – the only other record being from Flixton on 28th (**KM**). A visit to Brinscall on the 24th produced a fresh **Welsh Wave (EL)** but the wires were really buzzing by the 25th. On that date, two **Least Carpet** came to a moth trap in Hale (**CC**) – a new species to Lancashire and continuing its northward push in the UK.



Welsh Wave
(Photo: E Langrish)

Four-spotted Foorman
(Photo: T Riden)



There first signs of approaching autumn came on the 26th when **September Thorn** came to light at Higher Tatham (**PM**) followed by a **Square-spot Rustic** at Bay Horse (**NR**) on the 27th. The 26th also produced

Phtheochroa inopiana, a local Fleabane feeder at Heysham (RN et al), while on the 27th a **Four-spotted Footman** came to light in Silverdale (TR). Two more of these rather gaudy footmen turned up near Wray (JG, PM) on the next day and a **Scarce Silver-lines**, an uncommon species north of the River Ribble, was found in Fulwood (AP). The latter site also produced **Barred Hook-tip** on the 30th. As July came to a close, a few migrants were picked up, notably **Rush Veneer** in Flixton (KM) and a **Small Mottled Willow** in Feniscowles (WA). However with perfect timing for the enclosed Pug article, the first confirmed record for Lancashire of **Triple-spotted Pug** was made in Preston (SP) on the 30th and on 31st a **Confused** was found in Wray (JG, PM). July will be remembered by many for the continued expansion in range and numbers of **Buff Footman** and **Dingy Footman**, but more worrying is the continued decline of **Garden Tiger** and **Double Dart**. The latter species was only recorded at two sites in 2008; Heysham nature reserve (RN et al) where it was regular and a singleton at Morecambe (JG).

NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT (NMN) - 7th JUNE 2008

Almost all the results for NMN 2008 have now been received and once again the event was very well supported by moth recorders in Lancashire. At least 71 people participated in a mixture of day and night-time recording producing records of 244 different types of moth (96 micros and 158 macros) – a fantastic effort across many parts of the two vice counties. One of the national target species was *Anania funebris* – thanks to Jennifer Newton, Tony Riden and Rob Petley-Jones for organizing daytime searches for this moth. Good numbers were found at both Gait Barrows and Warton Crag but a search of some limestone areas further east failed to locate any new colonies of the moth.

Other highlights of NMN 2008 included Clay Triple-lines in Dalton (thanks to the Greenings for permission to run a trap in their garden), Grass Rivulet and Marsh Pug at Lower Burgh Meadows, near Chorley, Lunar Thorn and Square Spot at Lord's Lot Wood, Alder Kitten at Longridge and Mother Shipton on Middleton Industrial Estate. A visit to Astley Moss (KM) produced Marbled White Spot and *Elachista kilmunella*. A grand total of five different hawk-moths were found with Poplar and Elephant being the most widespread. Eyed Hawk was found at four sites, Small Elephant at two and a single Lime Hawk at Hutton. The most frequently recorded species were Silver-ground Carpet, Common Marbled Carpet, Common Pug, Brimstone Moth, White Ermine, Buff Ermine, Heart and Dart, Flame Shoulder, Ingrailed Clay, Small Square-spot and Clouded-bordered Brindle. The most abundant moth at a single site was a complete surprise, Dark Brocade, of which 54 were found at Leck Fell. The same site also produced Brown House moth in a new 10km square, which apparently excited one north Lancashire recorder!

Clay triple-lines
(Photo: S Palmer)



THE *EPIRRITA* GROUP – “NOVEMBER MOTH” TYPES

With another autumn fast approaching we will soon be into the arrival of members of the *Epirrita* group (November/Pale November/Autumnal Moth). A request for specimens for dissection in 2007 found the majority to be November Moth, with smaller numbers of Pale November Moth and Autumnal Moth. This has increased our knowledge of the known distribution of confirmed species in the county. Roy Leverton is writing an article for Newsletter 19 on these fascinating moths and to allow distribution maps of each species to accompany this article, the editor would be keen to receive specimens for dissection, particularly from areas not previously covered. Please send the specimens to Steve Palmer at the address at the end of this newsletter. Those submitting records of these moths which have not been examined critically should enter them as November Moth agg. (short for aggregate).

A PASSION FOR PUGS: PART TWO

BRIAN HANCOCK with assistance from STEVE PALMER

In Lancashire (consisting of VC59 and 60), **37** out of the **51** British species have been recorded in recent years. This list updates and corrects that in Newsletter 17.

The most common and widespread Pug species in Lancashire

Brindled	Foxglove	Mottled
Common	Grey	Tawny-speckled
Currant	Green	V
Double-striped	Lime-speck	

Locally common to uncommon Pug species in Lancashire

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

Those Pugs recorded occasionally in widely separated areas in the county

Ash	Dwarf	Netted
Cloaked	Larch	Plain

Those Pugs confined to very restricted areas

Bleached	Satyr	Thyme
Haworth's	Shaded	Triple-spotted
Marsh	Sloe	Valerian

Some may well be found to be more widespread following searches in suitable habitat. Details of species considered long extinct or of doubtful provenance can be found at the end of this article.

In Newsletter 17, "*A passion for Pugs, Part One*", twenty two reasonably common and widespread species of Pug found in Lancashire were detailed. In Part Two, I discuss the 15 that are either very local or rarely encountered. Reference to such wing features as discal and tornal spots are used again in this article. These are explained in the Newsletter 17 Pug article.

2008 has been a poor season so far for pugs but take heart, Kevin McCabe has recorded pugs in his Flixton garden since 1994 and has found a 20 fold difference in the highest and lowest counts for some species and peaks were not in the same years, so low counts may be due to many factors.

This group of 15 Pug moths present an interesting challenge as some can be found by targeted searching as I have done with the Sloe, Haworth's and Thyme Pug around their food plant, while others may turn up by chance in anyone's garden. Provided they are fresh specimens they are not difficult to identify. Even in the poor year of 2007 and after six years of trapping, three new and uncommon Pugs came to my garden Robinson MV trap: Dwarf, Valerian and Larch Pug. It is really important to become familiar with the common pug species so that one has an eye for something new but don't worry too much about worn specimens - they can be impossible to identify without dissection.

As in the previous article I have listed the species in order of occurrence during the season. The marker bar of 20 mm on most of the photographs is the average size of the Common Pug. Size is very important in identifying this group. Unless otherwise stated, the photos used have been taken by Brian Hancock.

Larch Pug *Eupithecia lariciata* (Frey.)

Larch Pug - Italian Dolomites



Larch Pug - Yealand Conyers



This is probably more widespread than current records indicate and should be found in numbers in any substantial Larch plantation - for example, the twenty attracted to light at Thrusgill near the top of Hindburndale in late May 2004 by Pete Marsh. There are several scattered records mostly from VC 59, but my first record in the Silverdale area came on July 10th 2007. It is illustrated here to show how even worn pugs can sometimes be recognised by a single diagnostic feature; in this case the white thoracic spot. Only the White-spotted Pug has a substantially similar spot. The peak flight season is the first and second week of June with extremes of 10th May to 2nd August.

Marsh Pug *Eupithecia pygmaea* (Hb.)

Marsh Pug, Flixton

(Photo: K McCabe & B Smart)



This is the only regular day-flying pug in the county. Its larval food plant is field mouse-ear though it seems unlikely it is just confined to this species of *Cerastium* as this species does not occur at the two main sites for this moth. In Lancashire and nationally it is an elusive and local species. It is distinctly small with a brownish colouration and few markings with the exception of a small pale trailing corner spot. There are a few widely scattered old records but presently it is only found regularly at three sites. I have netted it at Heysham Nature reserve from where it was first recorded by Steve Palmer. It is regularly found at Flixton by Kevin McCabe on Ash Hill and Chris Darbyshire has found it on sunny days at White Moss tip, Skelmersdale. There are records for Gait Barrows but I have failed to find it during

several searches of suitable habitat. Meadows and waste places containing *Cerastium* plants should produce further records such as the recent find by Eddie Langrish who netted one at Lower Burgh Meadows near Chorley this year. Flight dates in Lancashire range from 7th May to 20th June, with a peak in late May.

Dwarf Pug *Eupithecia tantillaria* (Boisd.)

Dwarf Pug - Roudsea NNR, Cumbria



This is quite a distinctive medium-sized pug with strong fascia (cross lines/bands) and a prominent elongated discal spot. The fascia beyond the spot is distinctly wavy and curved. Its resting position is distinctive with its forewings held a little below horizontal. The larva feed on spruce and other conifers. It occurs widely nationally but there are very few records for Lancashire and these come from diverse places. I have encountered it twice, once in my former garden in South Manchester and once in Yealand Conyers. The peak appearance is the second half of May with records extending from 6th May to 18th June.

I have netted several at Roudsea NNR in Cumbria, so it may be locally common in other undiscovered places in Lancashire. This is borne out by the light trapping of 40 specimens at Lowgill by Pete Marsh and John Girdley and 10 from Silverdale by Tony Riden in May 2008.

Ash Pug (Angle-barred Pug) *Eupithecia innotata* (Hufn.)

Ash Pug - Banffshire (Photo R Leverton)



Ash Pug - Yealand Conyers



Recent continental thinking on the status of this species (The Geometrid Moths of Europe Vol. 4 by V Mironov) is that *innotata* and *fraxinata* are the same species and that the correct name is *innotata*. Larval foodplants are Sea Buckthorn and Ash. There are a few scattered records throughout Lancashire including one very recently from the Silverdale area (confirmed) although not all of these have been critically examined. It is a large dull greyish pug with few marking and could be overlooked. The large size and narrow pointed forewing prove useful in identifying this species. Larvae were recorded on Sea Buckthorn at Lytham St Annes LNR in 1979. The few confirmed Lancashire records range from 11th May -21st July, the latter date indicating probable double-brooding.

JUNE

Valerian Pug *Eupithecia valerianata* (Hb.)



Valerian Pug - Yealand Conyers

This is a widespread but local pug in Britain. In size it is just a little smaller than the Common Pug. The moth is rather weakly marked without a discal spot but has a wavy subterminal line ending in an elongated tornal spot. There are old records from Formby, Pilling and the Warrington area, but since 1948 it has only been recorded from three sites, Rochdale (Ian Kimber), my garden in Yealand Conyers and Martin Mere. Here Andy Bunting has had them at light and bred them from larvae. Valerian is quite a local plant but targeted searches should turn up more records. I first encountered this species a fraction north of the VC60 border at Hale Moss where I had noted Valerian in a

damp meadow. This area had been light trapped in June without success but netting at dusk produced a worn specimen on 2nd July 2005. All the recent VC 59 and 60 records have been in the first week of June.

Satyr Pug *Eupithecia satyrata* (Hb.)



Satyr Pug - Narborough, Norfolk
(Photo: Shane Farrell)

This species occurs over much of Britain but is local and uncommon on downland and in a few open damp woods in the south. In northern Britain it is widespread and often very common on moorland in Scotland where it flies freely in the sunshine. Despite this there seem to be few if any historic records from the Lancashire moors. It has a wide variety of food plants including heather, meadowsweet, ragwort and knapweeds. The moth is rather undistinguished with a fairly straight leading edge and a small distinct discal spot. In fresh specimens the veins are alternately spotted light and dark - well shown in the Norfolk photo. The Woodvale specimen (detailed below) has slightly more pointed wings than the moth depicted above and a greyer suffusion to the wing colour. There are some historic records

from Ainsdale and Silverdale but in the last 100 years it has only been recorded once in our area, on 4th June 2004 at Freshfield (SD 2909) on the lowland heath area by Graham Jones and Kevin McCabe. It would be best searched for flying in the sunshine over moorland and lowland mosses in mid June.

Shaded Pug *Eupithecia subumbrata* ([D.&S.]



Shaded Pug - Heysham

rod and field scabious. It could possibly be re-found in other coastal areas in Lancashire. At Heysham the flight period extends from May 24th to June 17th.

This is a locally common species in southern England where I associate it with chalk downland. It has a straight leading edge and pointed tips to the forewings and a greyish white background, crossed with several paler bands. The strong contrast between the outer band and inner paler areas are strong and well defined. There are single records in the 1960's and 70's from Formby, Ainsdale and Southport as well as one from Leighton Moss and Bolton le Sands. The only regular recent sightings come from Heysham Nature Reserve, where it is well established. Foodplants include common ragwort, golden

Netted Pug *Eupithecia venosata* (Fabr.)

Netted Pug - Yealand Conyers



This must be everyone's favourite pug; it is so pretty and distinctive. It is all the more special because it will turn up occasionally in widely separated areas in garden traps. With the exception of one record from Littleborough by Ian Kimber and another recent one from Blackrod (Paul Pugh), it is confined to lowland Lancashire. Its foodplant, Bladder Champion is quite local. I had it once in South Manchester and twice at Yealand. The first time it was basking on the outside of the trap (the best things are often missed if you don't look outside the trap last thing at night) and the second one was attracted by an outside house light. The first two weeks of June are the peak period with records extending from 24th May to 29th June.

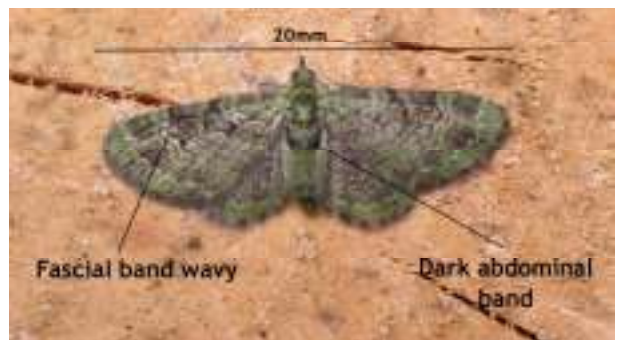
Sloe Pug *Pasiphila chloerata* Mab.

It is perhaps surprising that this species was not recognised in Britain until 1971. It is certainly very close to the Green Pug, but there are sufficient differences in fresh specimens to allow a positive visual identification.

Sloe Pug - Gait Barrows NNR



Green Pug - Gait Barrows NNR



Sloe Pug:

Only greenish when very fresh.
Lacks prominent dark band below thorax.
Inner edge of median fascia gently curved towards forewing leading edge.
Fascial band straight near leading edge.
Upper outer margin of forewing straight.

Green Pug:

Bright green when fresh.
Prominent dark band below thorax.
Inner edge of median fascia strongly angled towards the forewing leading edge.
Fascial band wavy near leading edge.
Outer edge of forewing gently curved.

The white grub-like larvae have been beaten from Blackthorn blossom in the extremes of our two vice counties at Gait Barrows in the north and Chorlton in the south.



Sloe pug larvae on sloe blossom



Green pug larvae on sloe blossom

In spite of much light trapping at Gait Barrows it was not recognised as an imago until I found one rather worn specimen on 30th June 2006. I have beaten Sloe at blossom time and placed a Heath trap under the best blackthorn bushes I could find in Gait Barrows and Warton Crag without success. It was only when I did some targeted netting at dusk in the same locations on June 7th and 17th 2007 that I caught Green and Sloe Pugs flying together at both sites. Both species were flying close to the bushes quite high up and did not appear until it was getting dark. In 2008 I did find both Sloe and Green Pug larvae at Warton Crag but only after several beating sessions in late April and early May. The moth was first recorded in Lancashire by Alan Creaser in 1977 at White Moss, Yealand Redmayne and recent searches in the Silverdale area have proved it to be present on a regular basis. It will no doubt be found widely in Lancashire judging from the few scattered record including Billinge, Broughton, Chorlton and recently Leigh. There are now records from most Vice Counties in Britain. Our few Lancashire records fall between 6th and 30th June.

LATE JUNE/EARLY JULY

Thyme Pug *Eupithecia distinctaria* H.-S.



Thyme Pug - two specimens from Dalton Crags

This is an extremely local pug throughout Great Britain and, as its name suggests, occurs where wild thyme grows. In our area it has just been recorded from Gait Barrows and a site above Plain Quarry, Dalton (modern Cumbria, but VC60) on the edge of the limestone pavement. My two specimens were resting on the veins of a Heath trap after midnight. One of the smaller pugs (18mm), the distinguishing features are an overall grey background, quite strong fasciae (cross bands) prominent at the leading edge and an elongated discal spot. Both specimens are illustrated and it is interesting that one appears to have more pointed forewings than the other. This may be a genuine difference or due to the position from which the photographs were taken. North Lancashire (VC60) dates range from June 17th to July 15th.

Cloaked Pug *Eupithecia abietaria* (Goeze)

Cloaked Pug - Silverdale (Photo T Riden)



Until 2008, it was assumed that the three previous records of this moth from East Didsbury (1982), Pennington (1998) and Briercliffe (2001) related to migrant moths, particularly as the Briercliffe moth came at a time that the Cloaked Pug had turned up elsewhere at a few scattered locations in the UK. However in 2008, Tony Riden found two different moths over a two week period in his Silverdale trap, indicating its possible resident status in that area. The species is large, round-winged and with its contrasting grey and brown markings cannot be confused with any other Pug but there is a non-British moth (in the Ennominae: Geometridae) called *Alcis jubata* which is very similar. See Riley and Prior (2003) page 43 for the differences. The

larva of Cloaked Pug feed mainly on Norway Spruce. All our records of this moth are in early to mid July.

Haworth's Pug *Eupithecia haworthiata* Doubl.

Haworth's Pug - Jenny Brown's Point, Silverdale



This small pug (16mm) is strongly associated with its foodplant Traveller's Joy which is common at Jenny Brown's Point near Silverdale. Though light traps had been regularly run in this area, it was not recorded in the county until I did some netting at dusk in 2005. The moth flies quite high, but close to the bushes and only when it is getting quite dark. The first VC 60 record came from one attracted to a Heath trap in my garden at Yealand Conyers where there is no native clematis nearby. It has since been recorded in Silverdale and Gait Barrows. There is just one recent confirmed record from VC59 at Billinge by Chris Darbyshire, but reliable reports of another in 2008 near Blackrod have been received but have yet to be verified. If it feeds on cultivated clematis I would expect it to

be more widespread. The best way to search for Traveller's Joy is to look for the seed-heads or "old-man's beard" in the winter months. It stands out a long way off. All the records are between July 5th and 27th.

Plain Pug *Eupithecia simpliciatata* (Haw.)

Plain Pug - Flixton (Photo Kevin McCabe)



This is a local southern species that just extends into our area. There are a small number of scattered records from sites in lowland south Lancashire, but only three records from north Lancashire, all coastal - Bispham, Heysham, Middleton Industrial Estate and Warton Bank, near Preston. Its foodplants are the Goosefoot family, especially Fat Hen, which may be found commonly in waste places, roadsides and field edges. It is a distinctly large pug (22-24mm) with a pale brown background and a gently curved fascia beyond a tiny discal spot. There is often a prominent wavy pale line inside the outer margin, well shown

on the photo. The flight period records in Lancashire are from 9th of July to 1st August.

Triple-spotted Pug *Eupithecia trisignaria* H.-S.



About a fortnight before this article went to press, Triple-spotted Pug had been relegated to the unconfirmed or extinct category of Pugs in this article. Then on 30th July, a single female (confirmed by dissection) was found in a light trap in Preston (S Palmer). The previous records for this moth are from the Preston district in the 19th century (Mansbridge, 1940) and Gait Barrows in 1984 (E Emmett) but are unconfirmed. The VC60 dot in Riley and Prior (2003) may relate to the former record. The moth is similar in size and shape to Currant Pug, with slightly less rounded wings. It lacks the prominent white tornal spot of that species and is more grey-brown in colour than Currant. Searches for the larva on Angelica could well prove worthwhile.

Triple-spotted Pug – Norfolk
(Photo R Leverton)

LATE JULY/AUGUST

Bleached Pug *Eupithecia expallidata* Doubl.



This is a very local and scarce pug with all records except one coming from Gait Barrows – the one other location being nearby Silverdale. Its foodplant, Golden Rod (the wild variety) occurs regularly in the limestone pavement grassland. This is a large pug (24-26mm) which looks like a pale grey washed out Wormwood Pug. This gives rise to some difficulties in identification if the Wormwood pug is worn. I am told that a fresh Bleached pug is a beauty and so distinctive that there should be no doubt about its identity. The Gait Barrows records range from 15th July to the 20th August. It could well be found in other parts of the Morecambe Bay area where its foodplant occurs.

Bleached Pug - Gait Barrows
(Photo R Petley-Jones)

PUGS – extinctions, doubtful records and possible new additions to the Lancashire list

Maple Pug *Eupithecia inturbata* (Hubn.)

This is a rather local southern species but has recently been recorded for the first time in South Cheshire (Shane Farrell, Cheshire moth report 2006). Perhaps it may be spreading northwards. There is mention of a Lancashire (VC60) record in Riley and Prior (2003) but no details are given and no record for this species occurs in Mansbridge (1940).

Lead-coloured Pug *Eupithecia plumbeolata* (Haw.)

Dots are present for VC59 and VC60 in Riley and Prior (2003) and it is assumed these refer to records in Mansbridge (1940). It is said to have been recorded in Bury, Mereclough, Prestwich and Piling Moss all prior to 1887. This species feeds on Common Cow-wheat and the moth is still to be found in south Cumbria.

Pimpinel Pug *Eupithecia pimpinellata* (Hubn.)

This is a moth primarily of Eastern England and the authenticity of the old record from the Manchester district (Mansbridge 1940) as well as the VC59 and VC60 dots in Riley and Prior (2003) are open to debate. No further details are known about these references to this species. However this is an easily overlooked moth whose larva feed on Burnet Saxifrage, a plant associated with calcareous grassland.

Bilberry Pug *Pasiphila debiliata* (Hubn.)

Locally common in parts of southern and western England and Wales, this moth is said to be "*sporadically recorded elsewhere with no breeding colonies*" (Riley and Prior, 2003). It was reported as being present on Chat Moss prior to 1862 (Mansbridge, 1940) but there are no further records. It must be considered extinct in Lancashire but if looked for, searches in open woodland with a ground flora dominated by bilberry (the larval foodplant) might just be worthwhile.

Corrections

In Pugs, Part One, Currant Pug was included under the late June to July flight period, whereas it is double-brooded in Lancashire flying in May and early June and again in late July and August.

In order of appearance, one of the more tricky pugs (Golden-rod) was not entered in the flight period list until its second brood. It does also fly in late April and May, although only in small numbers, and should therefore be considered with the other early "brown" pugs.

Grey Pug was omitted in error from the list on the first page of Part One of this article.

Thanks

The authors would like to thank Shane Farrell, Roy Leverton, Kevin McCabe, Rob Petley-Jones, Tony Riden and Ben Smart for the use of their photos to support this article. Thanks also to Chris Darbyshire for his comments on an earlier draft of this article.

References

Mansbridge, W. (1940) The Lepidopterous Fauna of Lancashire and Cheshire by Ellis. Revised Mansbridge, 1940.

Riley, A.M. & and Prior, G. (2003) British and Irish Pug Moths.

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

I was first introduced to moths by my uncle (David) from Garforth, near Leeds. However it was only in May 2006 he told us he had been studying moths for twenty odd years. I thought that sounded interesting, a natural progression from my bird watching and sea fishing. My late father's job as head of the Greenhouse facilities at various sites had meant many visits to Parks up and down the country until the age of 19 and had given me a general understanding of and respect for the natural world around me.

I started my journey into a world of fascination and unrivalled beauty by purchasing a 15w Actinic Heath trap and a copy of Townsend, Waring and Lewington's field guide to Moths of Great Britain & Ireland. At that time I was one of those people who thought a moth was a brown thing that occasionally came into the house. I didn't even see them in my car headlights; now I don't even miss a midge.

I identified quite a few in the first few weeks but was mainly happy just to see the beauties. I even caught what I was sure was an August Thorn. Understandably, the lack of a photo or specimen meant it was not subsequently accepted. However the most enjoyable part was how very peaceful it was emptying my trap on a beautiful summer's morning, sat at my garden table, with brew and yes, I'm afraid to say, a fag. Then my mother and uncle asked me if I'd like to visit the RSPB Leighton Moss Moth Breakfast in July 2006. There was an amazing array of moths that had been put on show from the previous night. I was trapped, light, sheet & cable. I never did find out what happened to the Garden Tiger Moth eggs that were in a pot with the moth, but I will find my own one day. I had a brief chat with Steve Palmer and Kevin McCabe, informing them that I had purchased a trap of my own.

The steep learning curve and my enthusiasm made me hard work in the early days as Steve will verify, particularly if he decides to go to press with this write up and has to correct all the spelling mistakes first!

I soon started sending typed up records in with the most blurred photos you could imagine. The occasional one was suitably in focus to allow an attempt at identification to be made after nipping round to the local Tesco for development. In November 2006 Steve wrote "I'm afraid I have not been able to identify your photos, some are too out of focus to guess at. The two in focus could be Turnip Moth, Dark Sword-grass or Pearly Underwing, but not sure". Fortunately a Christmas present sorted this problem - a digital camera, with a macro lens and automatic focus.

The first records I sent in from my garden were dated 31st August 2006 and totalled 76 moths of 14 species. The mild winter of 2006/07 saw moths turning up unexpectedly, my first being Satellite and Chestnut on the 15th January 2007. An early record of Spring Usher (on 31st January) in my garden was pleasing, more so as it was a bedraggled specimen which suggested it had probably been out for a week or so. Dusking [*searching with a torch at dusk – Ed*] on Sallow blossom was an experience I have never encountered before. It was amazing seeing thirty odd moths including Common and Small Quaker, Hebrew Character and Satellite feeding together. A Red Sword-grass to my 15w Actinic at German Lane, Euxton in late February was a cracking moth, but in my novice experience, I hadn't appreciated the significance of the record - one of only five in Lancashire that spring. I also photographed one at willow blossom at White Coppice.

Enter Andy Barker. Now Andy at that time didn't have a Red Sword-grass on his list and he was keen to see one. Our first outing was to German Lane, Euxton. I was a little concerned that a generator would disturb the owner of the land who had kindly given his permission for me to moth-trap. So Andy & I settled for a session around my battery run Actinic trap as well as dusking the willow and blackthorn blossom. Our results included the usual early spring species as well as Shoulder-stripe and *Diurnea fagella*, but no Red Sword-grass. Throughout the summer and autumn Andy and I teamed up for light-trapping sessions at various locations in central Lancashire where I learnt a lot from him. Indeed on one trip to White Coppice on a near perfect night and my first with Andy's generator, I was dressed in a white jumper. He advised me not to wear white but we were already there. Within no time I had plenty of bugs flying round and settling on me. I also had my fold-away chair. Andy's advice was to put it away as you won't have time to use that. He was quite right. Up until that point I had assumed this hobby was a

sedate pastime - how wrong I was! I'd progressed from emptying my trap at our garden table to losing weight due to the physical activity required - but of course enjoying every minute of it.

My thanks go out to Andy and long may our sessions continue. Indeed my thanks go out to everyone, who has helped me and it wouldn't be right not to mention a few. Chris Darbyshire's tireless answers to any questions asked, Kevin McCabe has always helped me out and Steve who has always had time for me - indeed its 9.85 miles to Steve's from my house and I've a fair few visits under my belt. So now there are only the stars of the show to mention - with 239 of the larger moths to my name to date. Long may they fly. Absolutely amazing! Happy-trapping Eddie (AKA Eddie Langrish)

MOTH EVENTS 2008:

27TH SEPTEMBER 2008 - INTRODUCTION TO MOTHS COURSE, LEIGHTON MOSS - FULLY BOOKED.

If you are interested in attending this type of course then please register your interest with Butterfly Conservation as it is very likely that at least one further course will be run at the same venue in 2009. Telephone Sarah-ann Mold on 01929 406009 or email on nMrs@butterfly-conservation.org

15TH NOVEMBER 2008 - DISSECTION COURSE

NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL

Limited places available - please book through Guy Knight, Zoology Curator Entomology, National Museums Liverpool (Tel: 0151 478 4369) (Fax: 0151 478 4350). Check out their website - www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

Please consider putting together a note or article for the Newsletter on your local patch, garden or mothing experiences. Space is available for short notes in Newsletter 19 but longer submissions for Newsletter 20 onwards would be particularly welcome. Material for inclusion should be sent to Steve Palmer (address below) well before deadline dates if possible.

Deadline dates for inclusion of material:

Newsletter 19 - **31/10/08**

Newsletter 20 - **30/6/09**

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