

# **LANCASHIRE MOTH GROUP**

NEWSLETTER No. 35: FEBRUARY 2018



SYCAMORE LARVA



# WELCOME

SCARCE SILVER Y

Welcome to the second half year Newsletter. Sorry for the delay but had some problems writing the recent sightings section. Apologies if anyone's key sighting(s) might be missing.

The Newsletter contains an article from Bill Honeywell who is (sadly) just outside our area in VC64 but who has provided a really good set of records for an under-recorded 10km square. Jane Jones is another welcome Ribblesdale arrival, fortunately IN our area and she gives an account of her first year in mothing. Steve Priestley recalls the "golden years" of sugaring and begs the question as to why the number of moths decline in later years. Brian Hancock provides an excellent article on moth predators. Hope you enjoy the contents and thanks to the contributors!

The weather forecasters/guessers have had a terrible time this last few months, especially with "medium range" or even short-term forecasts beyond a day or two. The forecasts for March have been jumping around between mild Atlantic stuff and polar conditions, and the latest suggests a prolonged 'beast from the east' in the offing. The reality so far has been a real mixture of wet windy followed by 2-3 days of cold and it has been pretty poor for the early season moths so far with my regular 'Mealbank car headlight' run just producing the odd Early Moth. This makes it very difficult to work out exactly when the various early season moths are going to appear, but the answer so far seems to be "later than usual" as I stare out of the window at the lingering snow on Leck Fell and Ingleborough. So please watch the weather and try and intercept Spring Usher and later Yellow Horned which have short emergence periods which are so easy to miss.

The moth social has been arranged for:

**Friday 16th March at Lancashire Wildlife Trust Headquarters at Cuerden doors open 1900 for 1930-2130 programme**

Please let me know by 1st March if you want to make a presentation of up to 20 minutes and please let me know if you are attending (PMrsh123@aol.com or mobile 07532433043 or 'snail' Leck View Cottage, Ashley's Farm, High Tatham LA2 8PH)

It is always best to keep a degree of flexibility in organising moth events. The 2017 Manchester Treble Bar session was at a day's notice as the subsequent forecast went pear-shaped! As implied above, it is also hard to work out emergence times and for that reason any decisions on the exact date of the adult stage Belted Beauty search will have to wait. The Belted Beauty date will be circulated nearer the time via the usual means but if you are not sure whether you have received the information, please contact Steve Palmer.

There will be other possibilities throughout the year, notably in the Sefton coast area but also at several North Lancashire sites, including the usual Leighton Moss programme. Please contact Richard Walker for VC59 events (contact details on the back page) and if you want to attend any events organised at relatively short notice in VC60, please email Pete Marsh and ask to be put on an event circular

Similarly, if you want to organise an event yourselves, please let us know and we can make sure that as many people in the mothing community as possible get to hear about it

Have a good start to the year and hopefully see you at the social, hopefully with a few moths under the belt by then!

# SIGHTINGS

*Apart from a very few exceptions, this report does not include any data on the vast number of records of early stages, prompted initially by Ben Smart's many postings and latterly the excellent book. This will be documented for the Butterfly Conservation annual report and help with this gratefully received. It does suggest that if you want to cover yourself with glory in 2018 and discover some 'new for county/VC' records (eg Kevin McCabe coming all the way from Flixton to discover a new VC60 record in the wood next to my house!), it will be well worth taking a crash course in Botany, as several species of leaf miner are host-specific, and perhaps especially identification of 'half dead leaves' with respect to mine location in the late autumn!*

*There might be a few overlaps with the midsummer report here! As already indicated, this report mainly covers adult stages of macro and micro moths and is by no means a comprehensive section. For example, quite a few records from VC59, which were only known about from the Facebook site, have not reached us yet. Unless otherwise indicated, all the following records are from VC60.*

In a good year for scattered **Lunar Thorn** records, one was at Crook of Lune on 10/6 (Steve Graham (SG)). A worn **Satin Wave** was eventually identified from Heysham road on 13/6 - an uncommon species in VC60 (JH). Two excellent records from (BH) Yealand Conyers garden in the form of **Ochreous Pug** and **Pretty Chalk Carpet**, the latter following the wild clematis he planted! A successful little expedition into one of the Thrushgill plantation rides saw the epicentre of the population of **Small Argent and Sable** shift to a more 'open' site and hopefully it won't become too enclosed before it has had time to spread to rides along newer conifer re-growth (several observers). A rather belated check of the Sunderland Point trap on 17/6 revealed a completely unknown geometrid which turned out to be a dark example of **Brussel's Lace** - new for VC60. Other June interest included 12 **Thyme Pug** at the reliable Cotes-tones site on 20/6 (BH), **Cypress Tip** moth at Nether Kellet on 18/6 (Julie Mason (JM)), and the following day 21/6 saw some **Belted beauty** larvae at Middleton.

Some good VC59 records from early in the period (or just before!) included a **Scarce Footman** on the Sefton Green Beach on 4/7 (Richard Walker (RW)). There are only 11 recent records from the whole area with the Sefton Coast favoured and those claims from VC60 perhaps in need of 'review'.

A spectacular **Sycamore Moth** larva was located in Chorlton on 13/8 (D Riding) and a live example, for which I have not got full details was photographed in the Liverpool suburbs (K Fairclough).

It appears these may be the precursors of further records of this spreading species July and August sightings of interest included a welcome revival by **Barred Hook-tip** with records from Warton Crag (JP), Wray West (Gary Jones (GJ)) and three from Yealand Conyers (BH).

**Oak Lutestring** is very common where it occurs and specific targeting of Cragg Wood near Baines Crag saw 39 in two traps on 27/8 (JP). Scarce geometrids included **Satin Wave** at Sunderland on 24/8 (PM), **Lesser Cream Wave** at Yealand Conyers on 6/7 (BH), **Blood-vein** at Warton on 27/8 (PS) and a series of **Clay Triple-lines** in the north-west of the area with a more surprising two records from a new site at the Hermitage on 16/7 (Steve Graham (SG)).



**OAK LUTESTRING**



TWIN-SPOT WAINSCOT

From VC59 came records of **Golden Plusia** from Flixton on 18/7 (KMCC) and **Marbled White Spot** at Knowsly Safari Park on 29/5 (Ron Moyes (RM)). The real star of the show, however, was the first record of **Twin-spotted Wainscot** at Stadt Moers CP on 25/8 (RM, Colin Daly checking Biodiverse society traps). Given there is a mysterious Sefton coast record on the NBN gateway, Les Hill was contacted and this record was not on the national database - in other words unconfirmed/not proven at the most optimistic.

Les informed that the nearest post 2000 record is (west) Yorkshire in SE14 with single pre-2000 records well inside Cheshire in SJ46 and SJ57. What is not known, of course, is whether the reed was imported into this country park from a site within the known range - this does seem unlikely and this sort of 'paranoia' can be applied to a lot of isolated records of species jumping well north (or south) of their range.

More VC59 notables included **Plain Pug** at Flixton on 13/8 (KMCC), **Beautiful Snout** at Foxholes on 25/5 (K Haydock (KH) and J Mills (JM)), **Black Arches** at Fazakerley on 27/7 (L Ward (LW)), **Scarlet Tiger** in the deep south on 16/6 (JM-L) and the day-flying **Marsh Pug** at the Sefton Green Beach on 4/7 (RW). Moths just creeping into VC59 included a small number of **Round-winged Muslin** (JM-L, CC and KMCC).

**Netted Carpet** at the Hying Wood and area sites peaked at seven on 30/7 and there were 19 "moth/nights" in total between 24/7 and 10/8, perhaps not all different individuals each night (BH, PS)! Other local carpet species included **Blue-bordered Carpet** at Leighton Moss (two) and Wray west on 22/8 (GJ) and **Dark Marbled Carpet** away from the usual inland woodland/moorland edge sites at Leighton Moss on 26/8 and Yealand Conyers on 25/7 (BH).



PRETTY CHALK CARPET

Along with the aforementioned **Pretty Chalk Carpet**, the planting of Traveller's Joy in (BH) Yealand Conyers garden also attracted a number of **Haworth's Pug** with five in total from 3/7-24/7. In contrast, the decline of **Tawny-specked Pug** continues with just the one record from Sunderland on 25/8 (PM). The VC59 situation was a little more optimistic with 11 records from the Sefton coast sites. The nationally very scarce **V-moth** is still present around Warton and Yealand Conyers with four garden records this year (BH, PS).



AUGUST THORN

**August Thorn** is an enigmatic species with odd ones turning up very occasionally over a wide scatter of locations. This year it was at Wray West on 27/8 (GJ) and Sunderland on 12/7 (PM)

Later autumn notables from VC59 included **Dusky-lemon Sallow** at Hale on 27/9 (CC) and **Orange Sallow** at Wigan on 26/8 (G Wynn). KH and JM indulged in high-altitude activities more commonplace in the likes of SD66 and 67 and ran a series of late autumn trap nights on Winter Hill with the predictable appearance of **Haworth's Minor**, peaking at 14 on 1/9.

An expedition to Loftshaw Moss at the end of July on the only decent afternoon produced a really good range of species including some immaculate newly-hatched **Manchester Treble Bar** (JP, SP et al). However plans for riparian torchlight **Butterbur** expeditions were foiled, as in 2016, by the weather and it was a major surprise to find one away from seemingly suitable habitat in a garden trap at Yealand Conyers on 27/7 (BH)



**MANCHESTER TREBLE BAR**

Interesting records later in the autumn were mainly limited to migrants. Adventurous trapping sessions away from the key sites were few and far between, probably due to the weather but of note was the lengthy emergence period of **December Moth** ranging from Middle Gill on 14/10 to High Tatham on 19/12 and it is not unusual for them to appear after the turn of the year, presumably related to short scattered periods of suitable emergence. It was a similar pattern in VC59 as the weather did not encourage (very) late autumnal trapping. This can lead to "virtual absence" of **Scarce Umber** records, not a common species in your average garden site and with a relatively limited emergence period compared to Mottled Umber.

The only one recorded was at Flixton on 14/11 (KMCC) and the only **Northern Winter Moths** from VC59 were two each at Flixton and Tyldesly (D Shearer and KMCC)

A few sites away from gardens were covered well. Docker Moor is a mixture of moorland, mire, pond, conifer plantation, poplar plantation and older birches and oaks and is an excellent large site where one or more of the locations is inevitably sheltered (except on NMN this year!). Some notables from 2017 included a single trap record 12 **Small Yellow Wave** at Docker Moor on 19/6 (PM, JR) record single trap catch of **Welsh Wave** with 57 on 9/6. A new site for **Valerian Pug** was located/previously overlooked with 6 in the trap on 10/6, two days previously they were located in good numbers at the established Cinderbarrow site. A visit on 24/5 saw a ridiculous 29 **Pale Prominent** in a single trap and other notables were **Lunar Thorn**, **Glaucous Shears** and the surprisingly local (considering its easy to identify!) gorse-feeding **Agonoperix umbellana**. Later in the year, a visit to the moorland-dominated bothy site produced a nice catch including **Hedge Rustic**, **Neglected Rustic**, **Anomalous**, **Heath Rustic**, and **Barred Chestnut**.

Perhaps the best record of the year was a northern extension of the range of **Calamotropha paludella** - watch out for this at Leighton Moss!

Secondly, Heysham Moss LWT is revealing isolated populations of species associated with more inland birch locations and Grey Birch was added to this list on 18/4 and this is one of the best sites to observe the day-flying Orange Underwing as it flies round the tops of the trees on sunny days in Heysham Moss in late March/early April. The localised Beautiful Yellow Underwing was also located here (Steve Garland) and JP produced many interesting records including **Yarrow Plume** and **Apotomis turbidana** on 1/6. Nearby, a **Ruddy Highflyer** was notable at Middleton on 28/4 (JP) extending the known clusters at nearby Heysham NR and Heysham Moss.

Warton Crag was given a lot of coverage this year, ranging from Barred Tooth-striped surveys to targeting the scree slopes on the LNR with overnight traps and day searches (JP). For example, a nice selection from Warton Crag scree on 30/6 included **Teleiodes sequax**, **Least Minor**, **Barred carpet** and **Elachista gleichenella** (JP).



**HEATH RUSTIC**

The main feature of the effort on the scree-slopes was the number of **Annulet** with 44 between 15/7 and 22/8 and a maximum of eight on 25/7. Tenented leaf mines of **Ectoedemia arcuatella** on Wild Strawberry, were found on Warton Crag 15/10 (JP & later confirmed by John Langmaid). Subsequent searches (twitches?) revealed the species to be locally abundant, also being found at nearby Gaitbarrows. (New for VC60)

The beech-feeding micro, **Strophedra weirana** was recorded again at Leek Hill Wood, nr Warton on 21/6 (JP).

**Beautiful Carpet** is very difficult to pin down to habitat and just turns up in ones, or in this case, twos for (PS) on Warton Crag on 24/5 and 26/6 along with an early **Blomer's Rivulet** on 26/5. **Cistus Forester** sightings on Warton Crag in the known areas included 3 on 26/5 (KH).

**Pammene spiniana** was caught at Gaitbarrows (JP) on 08/08 and confirmed by SMP (Gen det male) (New for VC60). Other scarce or rare micros included **Acleris effractana** on Dalton Crag 28/08 (SG) and confirmed by Gen Det. This is only the second site for this species in Lancashire and seems to confirm a habitat preference for the Pennine foothills. (3rd VC60 record). Searching in Herring Head Wood found and photographed **Ectodemia argyropeza** mines on fallen Aspen leaves on 12/11 (KMcc). This species is well recorded in Southern Lancashire (VC59) but is new for VC60. A walk around Middleton Industrial Estate on 15/09 turned up **Heliozela resplendella** mines on Alder leaves. (KMcc/JP/SMP). Common in VC59 but this was new for VC60. It has since been recorded at two further sites and so possibly previously overlooked. JP found **Dichrorampha flavidorisana** in the centre of Heysham Moss, 20/08. (Confirmed by Gen Det – JG) This is a species that could easily be confused with the very similar *Dichrorampha alpina*. (2nd VC60 record.)



ANNULET



MOTTLED UMBER



BLOOD VEIN



OBLIQUE CARPET

# MIGRANTS IN 2017

It was an interesting but not spectacular year for migrants, the exception perhaps being **Rusty Dot Pearl** (*Udea ferrugalis*) numbers during the autumn at Sunderland Point where they peaked at 19 on 26/8. The next highest was 5 at Tarleton on 9/8 (R Pyefinch). Five 'garden traps' stood out as serial scarce migrant sites. Pride of place must go to John Holding's coastal trap on Heysham Road which produced **Ni Moth** (27/6), **Palpita vitrealis** (18/9) and **Convolvulus Hawk-moth** (20/10). The only other Convolvulus Hawk-moth was found by day on a log at Ainsdale National Trust on 25/10 (RW). The other garden sites will become apparent as we go through the other individual species.



CONVOLVULUS HAWK MOTH

The **Deaths Head Hawk-moth** found at Cuerden on 28/6 (Simon Thorpe) made the previous Newsletter. It was quite a good year for **Humming-bird Hawk-moth** with the usual scattering of records on IREcord from casual observers supplementing the usual moth-er records. There must be many others not being reported as two of the records only came to the fore due to 'random casual conversations'!



SCARCE BORDERED STRAW

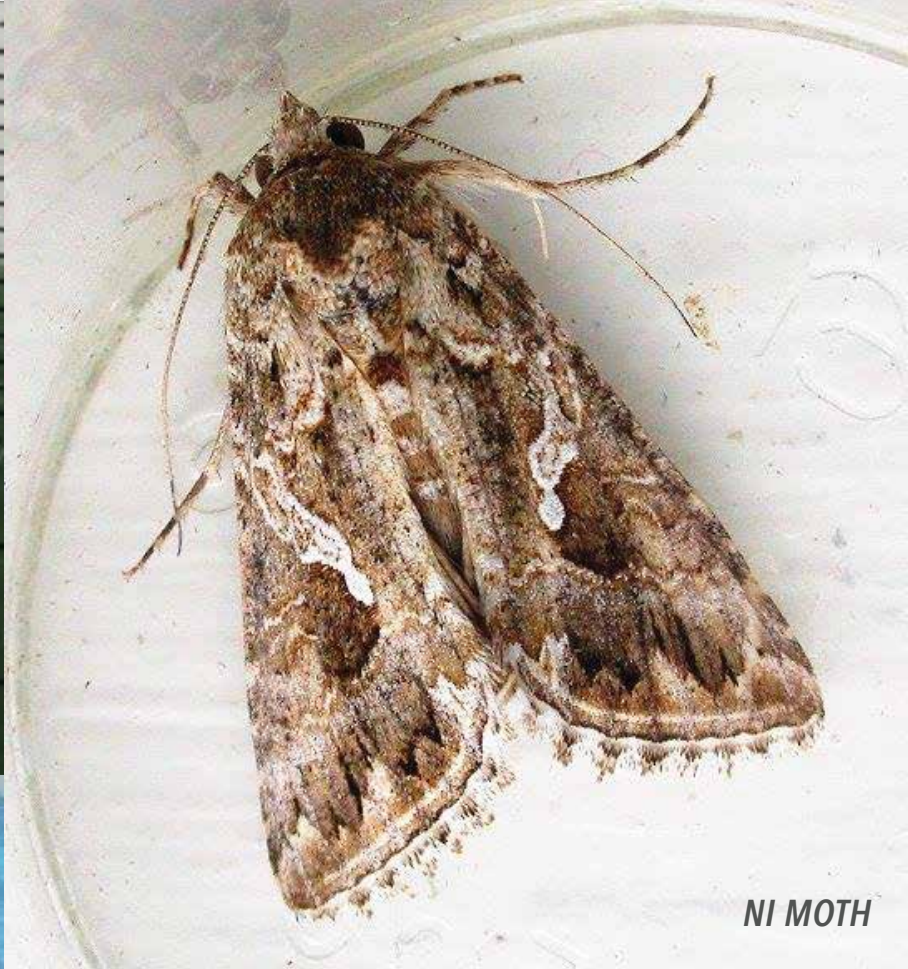
There was a significant nationwide arrival of **Vestal** in late October, but I suspect many traps had already been put into storage in the rather erratic autumnal weather and the only records were one at Hesketh Bank on 15/10 (R Yates), a single at Leighton Moss on 23/10 and two at Sunderland, one at nearby Heysham Road, with one further south at Ainsdale, all on 25/10. One was also in the Sunderland trap on 25/8. Running the Sunderland trap during this rather volatile late autumn 'migrant weather' saw a pre-'Storm Brian' **Gem** on 19/10, preceded by two at Leighton Moss on 14/10.

**Scarce Bordered Straw** might not produce the occasional dramatic summer-month influx of its implicitly commoner relative, Bordered Straw, but is an increasingly reliable autumn migrant with records from Sunderland (25/8 - note Vestal on same night), Bolton-le-Sands on 28/8 (SG), Hesketh Bank on 6/9 (RY), Morecambe on 23/9 (JP) and Longton on 21/10 (JG). The only **Bordered Straw** record was from Hesketh Bank on 27/6 (RY). **Small Mottled Willow** had a 'quiet year' in VC60 with just a singleton at Sunderland on 22/7 but was 'numerous' at two sites in VC59 with 7 at Hale (CC) and 5 near Penwortham (JG) with others at Gorse Hill (S Haselton) and Hesketh Bank (RY). **Pearly Underwing** is not quite annual these days as there were welcome singletons in VC60 at Sunderland on 15/7, 19/9 and 21/9 and at Heysham Road on 22/10, but only one reported so far from VC59 - Longton on 18/10 (JG).

Of the more regular migrants, **Rush Veneer** (*Nomophila noctuella*) had a quiet year peaking at just 5 at Sunderland (24/7), **Dark Sword Grass** was well-scattered in small numbers with early records from High Tatham on 13/3 and Heysham on 14/3 suggesting hibernation but the only catch above three being 11 at Heysham Road on 20/9. **Silver Y** was relatively numerous with a peak of 21 at Sunderland (13/7). **Diamond-back Moth** (*Plutella xylostella*) was back this year to just ones and twos in moth traps with by far the largest count being 25 along Hest Bank shore line on 28/05. There were no obvious unexpected influxes of resident species, suggesting migratory 'top-up' (candidates include Angle Shades and Large Yellow Underwing), but this is very difficult to discern at a low level. Finally two examples of the "back of a lorry" 'migrant', **Boxworm**, were located in October in Formby (T Davenport), indicating that several of the "one-offs" might also be from dubious sources rather than a lengthy flight from the south



**VESTAL**



**NI MOTH**



**SILVER Y**



**HUMMINGBIRD HAWKMOTH LARVA**



**VESTAL**



**PALPITA VITREALIS**



# 100 EMPORER (SATURNIA PAVONIA) EGGS

RICHARD WALKER

It is unusual for an Emperor moth to be recorded in an MV trap. But in Formby on early April 2016 a dead female was found which had laid around 200 eggs, where? Well in an egg box! 100 of these were cut off the cardboard and put amongst fresh heather branches in a large plastic box, the rest were returned onto heather plants around the site.

Five local moth-ers were happy to accept between ten and fifteen larvae each with a view to breeding them though to adults. Whilst it could not be said that a well controlled experiment was conducted all agreed to keep the larvae well supplied with fresh heather, kept out of doors and in a natural environment, i.e. in the cold and rain until March 2017. After a few months most had passed successfully through the instars and spun up a cocoon within the upper branches of the heather. For the first two weeks or so the larvae were black, hairy and gregarious. After that going their own ways and with each moult becoming more colourful yet highly camouflaged.

The results after they were collated were not initially as expected:- Of the 100 larvae two died in the latter stages of a virus.

98 pupated in a spun cocoon within the food plant.

The first to emerge was a female on 5 April 2017 and 30 followed, the last date being 28th April 2017. There was no clear pattern which suggested that more females emerged before males or vice versa.

Three of the 30 which emerged failed to expand their wings; and though using branches to hang from, this failed to happen..

Most were released within a day of their emergence including two, both female, of the three with deformed wings. These were put down with other females who within minutes were paired up with males attracted by the female's pheromones. Those with unexpanded wings did not attract males during the twenty minutes or so that I was present. Perhaps they were not able to produce the necessary pheromones, perhaps too that might be viewed as a form of natural selection in the Darwinian sense.

The remaining pupae were kept in natural condition and on the 15 September one female emerged, quite a surprise. A week later I decided to open any remaining pupae, cutting through the silk cocoon with scissors with the following findings. In one a female had emerged with stunted wings yet laid around 40 unfertilized eggs. One pupae was holed and an ichneumon fly lay dead next to it. Of the rest around half had not completed the change from larvae to pupae and half though in pupae form were desiccated.

Out of 100 larvae only 28 made it to a successful adult stage. Should this be considered a good outcome? Yes, an exceptional one. It only needs one male and one female to mate and get one male and one female through to adult stage and retain this success ratio for the population number to remain static. If two of each sex completed this successfully the population numbers would double. So 14 pairs could be seen as a very successful year. This female Emperor's death in a moth trap was not in vain.

## UK Biodiversity Action Plan moths in VC59, 2017.

### Goat Moth (*Cossus cossus*).

Between 17/6/2017 and 9/7/2017 eight males either came to MV light or to pheromones plus one female to an MV trap on Freshfield Dune Heath. RW, RM, JG & J M-L. A single specimen came to a 15 Watt actinic trap in Formby. T D.

### Forester (*Adscita statures*).

This year the small colony on Ainsdale NR was thriving and with even more food plant than usual, Sheep Sorrel, it should do well in the future. Between 1st to 25th July around 68 were seen mainly nectaring on Ragwort. RW, RM, CD & JM-L. 34 were recorded on one hot and windless day.

## Pheromone trials and records.

In VC59 pheromones have been trialled and successfully used to attract:-

Forester, (*Adscita statures*).

Goat moth, (*Cossus cossus*).

Six-spot Burnet, (*Zygaena filipendulae*)

Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet, (*Zygaena lonicerae*)

Red-tipped Clearwing, (*Synanthedon formicaeformis*)

Currant Clearwing, (*Synanthedon tipuliformis*)

Emperor moth. (*Saturnia pavonia*).

# **THE MYSTERIES OF SUGAR**

STEVE PRIESTLEY

In 2010 Eddie Langrish, Andy Barker and I started in earnest recording moths on sugar. This was a mixture of Guinness, sugar and black treacle which was also very good to eat on a cold night but we always left some for the moths!

Eddie and Andy had done some sugaring prior to 2010 but their records increased substantially in 2010 and 2011. Prompted by Eddie, I started to record moths to sugar over the autumn/winter of 2010/2011 and the results surprised me. Looking at MapMate there are a large number of records from 1985 from JD Wilson and Chris Derbyshire. But from then on there are only a few records until 2010.

In 2011 Eddie threw down a challenge and the number of records and recorders increased dramatically.

The highest number I have recorded is **63 Satellite** in November 2010 but this is dwarfed by Eddie's **240 Copper Underwing** (agg) in August 2010 and 199 in August 2011; **101 Satellite** and **94 Chestnut** on the same night in October 2011; **182 Satellite** on 21st Nov 2011 and **305 Satellite** on 26th Nov 2011. Meanwhile Andy wasn't going to be beaten and he recorded **206 Copper Underwing** (agg) on the 12th August 2010 and smashed that on the 15th with a remarkable **314 Copper Underwing** (agg).

My own records were very modest in comparison but they provided a welcome addition during the cold months of November/December 2010. At that time I was living in Walton-le-Dale and the nearby Holland Wood allowed me to have a quick look just after dark, which I found to be the most productive time. The number of species was few but I recorded **Satellite**, **Chestnut** and **Brick** supplemented by the occasional **Red-line Quaker** on a nightly basis.

I continued sugaring when I moved to Holmeswood. Here I painted sugar solution on the rear fence and on a set number of tree trunks in the adjoining carr woodland. Taking part in Eddie's Challenge I recorded from June- November 2011. The numbers were nothing like those being recorded by Eddie and Andy but I was pleased with the range of species that were attracted to the sugar, recording my first **Old Lady**. My largest number of any species on one night was **46 Common Rustic** (agg). During October/November I was seeing **Satellite**, **Brick** and **Chestnut** on regular basis with **40 Chestnut** on one night in late October. A **Rusty-dot Pearl** was a first for me taken in early November 2011.

But then strangely the moths deserted me in 2012. Apart from a handful of records taken in 2014 and 2015 I just couldn't get moths in any numbers and I did not use sugar in 2016 or 2017.

I still puzzle as to what happened. I experimented with different sugar mixes to no avail. Of course I was on a downward spiral because without any moths I didn't put on the sugar every night and I feel that the moths were possibly not responding because the sugar wasn't available on a regular basis. However with my sugaring in Holland Wood and my 2011 sugaring the moths responded straight away and since nothing succeeds like success, the more I recorded the more sugaring I did.

The following records I have taken from MapMate, which of course will not be a comprehensive set of records for VC 59 &

Aug-Sep 1985 – multiple records  
Nov 1985 – 1 record – JD Wilson  
Aug 1986 – 8 records – JD Wilson  
June 1987 – 15 records – Chris Derbyshire  
July 1987 – 9 records – Chris Derbyshire  
Aug-Sep 1987 – multiple records  
Oct 1987 – 3 records – FA Middlehurst  
Aug 1989 – 2 records – Chris Derbyshire  
Aug 2000 – 3 records – Jeff Clarke  
July-Nov 2001 – multiple records – B.Leecy  
Sept 2002 – 4 records – PJ Alker  
April 2003 – 3 records – B Cockburn  
June/July 2004 – 6 records – Judith Swift; Andy Bunting  
July 2005 – 2 records – JD Wilson  
Oct 2006 – 3 records – Carol Cockbain  
July 2007 – multiple records – G&D Atherton  
Oct 2007 – 1 record – Eddie Langrish  
March 2008 – 6 records – Eddie Langrish; Andy Barker  
July/Aug 2008 – 6 records – Jeff Clarke  
Sept 2008 – multiple records – Andy Barker; Graham Dixon  
Oct 2008 – 9 records – Graham Dixon; AC/BL/CS  
Aug 2009 – 4 records – Eddie Langrish;  
Jun 2010 – 8 records – Yvonne Mynett  
July 2010-1 record – Trevor Davenport  
Aug-Nov 2010 – multiple records  
Dec 2010 – 6 records – Eddie Langrish; Steve Priestley  
Jan 2011 – 3 records – Steve Priestley  
Feb 2011 – 9 records – Steve Priestley  
March, June-Nov 2011 – multiple records, incl 'Eddies Challenge' Aug-Nov  
April 2012 – 1 record – J Clews; C Daly  
August 2012 – 2 records - RW Rhodes  
Sept 2012 – 2 records – Brian Hancock  
Oct 2012 – 1 record – Andy Barker  
Aug 2013 – 21 records – Ron Moyes; Brian Hancock  
Nov 2013 – 5 records – Ron Moyes  
Jan 2014 – 2 records – Ron Moyes  
Oct 2014 – 6 records – Steve Priestley  
Nov 2014 – multiple records  
Jan 2015 – 3 records – Ron Moyes  
March 2015 – 5 records – Ron Moyes  
Aug 2015 – 5 records – Ron Moyes  
Sept 2015 – 9 records – Steve Priestley  
Dec 2015 – 2 records – Ron Moyes

*Postscript (Ed): Clearly, looking at MM, sugaring has gone off the radar in recent years, perhaps in relation to the amount of dusking with LEDs or more of an emphasis on autumnal checking of ivy bloom. This does not however explain Steve's experiences in more recent years, hence the title. Anyone want to organise a 2018 version of the "Eddie challenge"?*

# **MY FIRST FULL YEAR MOTHING IN THE GARDEN**

JANE JONES

I have always had an interest in Nature, dabbling in bird-watching, however finding the LBJ's (Little Brown Jobs!) just too frustrating, thought to look elsewhere for 'my fix'. In July of 2016 I duly departed with my husband in-tow to the Dolomites in Italy on an organised Butterfly and Moth holiday. The wealth of butterflies and moths we saw over the week truly inspired me to take this further back at home. The butterflies in this corner of Lancashire not being as numerous or as varied as we saw in Italy led me to "The Dark Side" and so to the moths! Being fortunate in having an August birthday, I was duly treated to my first Moth Trap – a Twin 20W Compact Fluorescent 'Lucent' moth trap. Our garden is on the edge of a housing development in a rural area with mature mixed woodland close by. We are within a quarter of a mile of the River Ribble, on the South side, so fall into VC59.

I started gently, getting excited by new moths such as **Canary-shouldered Thorn** and **Oak Hook-tip**, which was initially questioned by the county recorder but soon positively identified from my photo and lauded as a great find. I enjoyed the morning opening of the trap and the anticipation of what I would find but soon became overwhelmed by my daily catch of Large Yellow Underwings! We did haul the trap all the way to Scotland in the October hoping for wondrous new species in a totally different habitat, but were disappointed catching very little. On our return the weather soon turned autumnal and the catches diminished to a point where I was questioning my trap. I persisted for a while unsuccessfully, so on the advice of Peter Marsh (Macro County Recorder VC60), decided to ask Father Christmas for a more powerful trap of a different design – happily, my request was heard and so 2017 started with me as proud owner of a twin 30W (60w) Actinic Robinson Moth Trap, feeling unable to go the full-hog to an MV due to the proximity of neighbours. I have enjoyed a full year of trapping in the garden with very satisfying results.

My trapping resumed in February with **Oak Beauty** and **Pale Brindled Beauty**, then into March getting **Engrailed**, **Hebrew Character**, **Clouded Drab**, **Twin-spotted Quaker**, **Common Quaker**. On 19/4/17 a single Streamer on the wall next to the trap was another "new for my SD73 square". Feeling inspired by the thought of adding valuable records to the Database I pushed on!

At the end of March I attended the Lancashire Moth Group Social at Lancashire Wildlife Trust HQ where I was able to meet and chat to several members of both the Lancashire and Cumbria groups. It always helps to be able to put a face to names you see and the various talks were all interesting and informative.

On the 11th May I joined the Butterfly Conservation Lancashire Branch Trip/walk along Langden Brook in the Trough of Bowland AONB in search of Emperor Moths using pheromone lures; the weather was warm and sunny and a moderate breeze was blowing. We saw many Green Hairstreaks on the Bilberry and were eventually treated to an male Emperor Moth attracted to the lure.



Back in the garden through May, I was treated to **Elephant Hawk Moth, Buff Ermine, White Ermine, Green Silver Lines and Small Angle Shades** amongst a host of others. June highlights were **Pale Tussock, Dot Moth and Scorched Wing** (all new for SD73). Various Pugs started to frequent the trap which I found to be frustratingly hard to ID. The Lancashire Lepidoptera Facebook group proved to be very helpful and supportive in my need to ID everything, when I say everything, I have to admit a certain hesitation in pursuing Micros unless they look relatively straight forward. I suspect as time goes on, I will become braver (and maybe more patient) in attempting these!

Towards the end of June I caught a **Grey/Dark Dagger**, so, encouraged by Richard Walker (VC59 County Recorder), I humanely dispatched the specimen and posted it to Richard for dissection and positive ID. The moth was on this occasion a Female **Dark Dagger**. Richard suggested that should I manage to catch a further specimen, it may be worth sending that on also, to see if I have the two variants in my garden. Thankfully I only had 3 weeks to wait before catching the next one (20/7/17) and this followed the same route to Richard. Very happily this was identified as a Male Grey Dagger, confirming both species.



July brought me many more "new for SD73" including **Muslin Footman, Single-dotted Wave, Shaded Broad-bar and Barred Hook-tip**. It was a good month for me with so many moths over many nights of trapping. To crown the month though, a **Gold Spot/Lempkes Gold Spot** found it's way into my trap. An email discussion with Richard Walker followed which resulted in the specimen being posted off to Formby for inspection. Richard confirmed it as Lempkes GS, not only that though, apparently there were no examples of Lempkes in the Liverpool World Museum and Richard wanted to be able to add it to the collection. It is now in place there with my name on no less! I am looking forward to visiting the museum with Richard Walker to see it in place at some point this year.

August continued with more "new for SD73" including **Pebble Hook-tip, Dusky Thorn and September Thorn** and a **Ruby Tiger** which hasn't been seen here for over 100 years. A longer-than-usual holiday took us away in mid-August and sadly, due to various things – work and family commitments, the weather and full moons my mothing has been significantly neglected since then. I now have a (nearly) full year of records and am looking to build on the species collected in the garden this coming year. I am looking forward to getting going again as soon as the weather permits. **Bring it on!**



# NOTES FROM A NEWCOMER TO THE WORLD OF MOTHS

BILL HONEYWELL

I've always been interested in natural history, mostly as a birdwatcher, but to be honest anything to do with the natural world – animal, vegetable or mineral – is likely to catch my attention. I remember an interest in butterflies as a child, including rearing caterpillars of the Large White and then being fascinated to watch several tiny, yellow-cocooned ichneumon fly larvae burst out of the unfortunate caterpillar's body as it was about to pupate. In more recent years I've often found moths around the outside of the house, tried to identify them and take a photo, but that was about it...

...Until earlier this year, when I decided to buy a Robinson Trap to see what was lurking out there in the garden whilst everyone was asleep. I live just outside Clitheroe, with a medium-sized garden separated from pastureland by a hedge (with mature Ash, Alder, Holly trees) and small stream. There is a good-sized pond, an apple tree and a plum tree, vegetable garden and some (neglected) borders.

I put out the trap for the first time on 2 June and looked in amazement the following morning at nearly 40 moths of 16 different species – Buff and White Ermines, an amazingly camouflaged Buff Tip, Elephant and Poplar Hawk Moths, Common Swift, Common White Wave, Silver-ground and Common Marbled Carpets, Small Angle Shades, Ingrailed Clay, Heart and Dart, Clouded Border, May Highflyer, Flame Shoulder and Scalloped Hazel. It's fair to say that I was hooked from that first morning!

Photographing was a bit tricky to start with but I soon learnt the 'fridge' technique – which works well for Noctuids but hardly at all for Geometrids, I find. The neighbours were curious about the bright light, but at least it doesn't bother their sleep so there are no problems there. I learnt the moths' "Sod's Law" – if you spot a moth you're pretty sure you haven't seen before, it'll be the first one to elude capture and fly off!

Over the following weeks I put out the trap whenever I could (avoiding consecutive nights though) and the number of species climbed relentlessly. For weeks – months – there was hardly a morning when something new didn't turn up. My preconceptions of dull, cryptic creatures were shattered by Brimstones, Light Emeralds, Gold Spots, Peppered Moths (cryptic but certainly not dull!), Ghost Moths, Burnished Brass, Merveille du Jours – the list goes on and on. Of course I made some elementary ID mistakes, but the various Facebook pages, including Lancashire Lepidopterists, were full of helpful fellow-enthusiasts, who would point out errors extremely politely!

When I enquired about submitting records I found out about Vice-Counties for the first time. And then the shock that despite having been in Lancashire since 1974, my garden is in VC64 – North-west Yorkshire! A minor anomaly, with the bonus (?) that at the end of the year I was told I'd recorded 62 species new to my km square in VC64. Clearly a function of previous under-recording rather than skill on my part, but nevertheless an encouragement, as I haven't touched the first five months of the year yet.

The total number of species recorded during my first seven months is 164 (including some tricky micro-moths and those counted as aggregates like November Moths and Common Rustic). Highlights have been some of the immigrant species, like Vestal and a rare Gem, as well as comparative rarities like Blood-vein (2), Barred Hook Tip, and surprises – I never knew that stunning species like Canary-shouldered Thorn, or Eyed Hawk Moth, even existed, never mind coming to my garden!

Things have been very quiet for two months, with my last moth being a December Moth on 27 October. Since then four or five attempts with the trap have yielded nothing. So roll on warmer weather! In the meantime I'm now enthused to make the garden much more moth-friendly, scouring the on-line seed catalogues for food plants and a year-long range of big nectar producers!

# **MOTH TRAP PREDATORS. A PROBLEM SOLVED**

*BRIAN HANCOCK*

All of us at some time have had an occasional problem of birds entering our moth trap and feasting on the contents. Usually shutting down the trap for a couple of days solves the problem.

At RSPB Leighton moss where we run a Robinson Trap daily, the problem became acute in 2016. At first fixing a wire cage over the trap seemed to help but when the predation recurred we made second wire net cover and suspended old CDs around the trap and switched the trap off for a fortnight. In spite of this, the problem rumbled on though the summer with the wings of two or three moths often found in the trap. It reached a head in on one day in October when there were wings of 10 moths with just one alive. We shut the trap down and prayed that the problem would not recur in 2017.

The problem of predator entry continued as soon as we started trapping in 2017. Caroline Clay our new volunteer had the bright idea of using a night vision camera and sure enough the culprit was quickly identified as a Wren.

It was getting through the two layers of netting with ease. What surprised us was that it was entering the trap when it was still dark. The problem was solved by David Mower who designed a cone with a narrow exit fitted to the normal entrance to the trap.

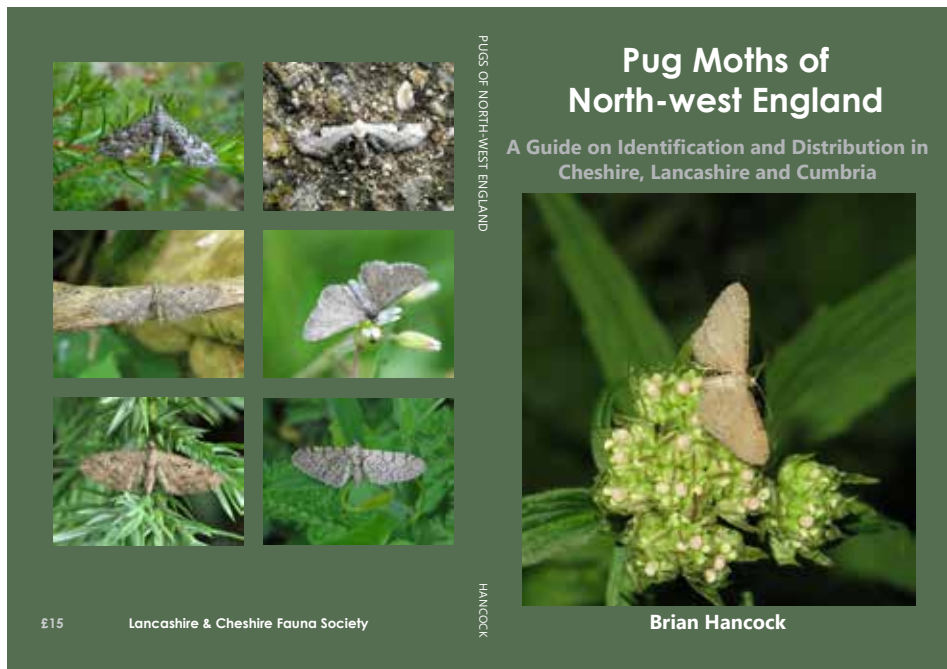
This certainly stopped the Wren but we were concerned that a large moth may get stuck. Our fears were confirmed in May when a Poplar Hawk did get stuck. The exit has been enlarged a little and we have no more intruders or stuck moths though 2017.



The trap in 2016



The funnel inside the Robinson trap



## **COMING SOON**

*A book on Pugs of the North-west England by Brian Hancock.*

*Dave Bickerton will give a preview at the Moth Social in March*

*Many thanks to our Newsletter compiler, Heather Bickerton, who's done another splendid job!*

### **Recorders**

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### **Useful contacts and links:**

Lancashire Moth Group Website: <http://www.lancashiremoths.co.uk>  
 Lancashire Moths Yahoo Group: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/lancashiremoths/info/>  
 Lancashire Lepidoptera Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/119829941488294/>  
 Lancashire Micro Moth Tips FB Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/580000418802001/>  
 UK Moths Website: <http://www.ukmoths.org.uk>  
 Leaf Mines UK: <http://www.leafmines.co.uk>  
 Gelechiid Recording Scheme: <http://www.gelechiid.co.uk/>  
 Butterfly Conservation: <http://www.butterfly-conservation.org>  
 Butterfly Conservation Lancs: <http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/306/lancashire-branch.html>  
 Norfolk Moths: <http://www.norfolkmoths.co.uk>  
 Hampshire Moths: <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk>  
 The National Biodiversity Network Mersey Bio Bank: <http://www.merseysidebiobank.org.uk> <http://www.lacfs.org.uk>