

LANCASHIRE MOTH GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 34 : JULY 2017



Fox Moth



Ghost Moth

WELCOME

Despite the Macro Moth atlas recording period being done and dusted, there are still plenty of reasons for carrying on documenting our catches and investigating new sites. Having been delayed during the morning, I approached the Sunderland Point trap for the most routine of routine checks about 1330hrs, armed with just a notebook. Bad move, anything can be in a sun-sheltered moth trap, even at 1330hrs! I was faced by a moth which was completely unfamiliar, with initial thoughts along the lines of breaking the Carnforth railway station Waved Black monopoly. It transpired to be a dark form of Brussel's Lace, one of these species which occurs 'north and south of here' and indeed has recently appeared in VC59.

How many people were jumping around and punching the air when they encountered their first Blackneck five or six years ago? Yet, once it found the Tufted Vetch hotspots such as Middleton nature reserve, it soon became a common component of the moth fauna. This Newsletter contains a piece by Richard Walker on Lyme Grass – now a 'plague' species at Ainsdale (see recent sightings section) and gaining a toehold in VC60 as per Ashley Baines's records from Lytham. On the other hand, when did you last see a

Dusky Lemon Sallow and, the way it is going, we might be asking the same question of e.g. Gold Spangle in the next few years.

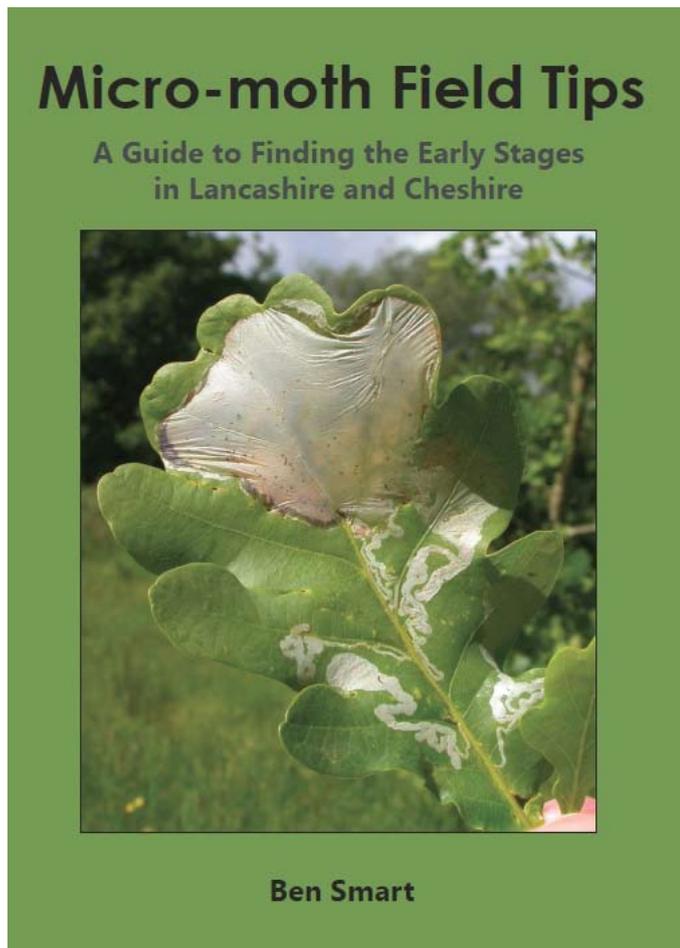
Other changes have included the identification and subsequent searching of prime habitat for yet more of the localised species. Hence Kate Hughes and Denis Lambert searched out the appropriate bilberry understory habitat at Beacon Fell and near Hurst Green respectively and found Beautiful Snout in the same habitat as at Lord's Lot and Docker Moor further north. Led by Justine Patton's Warton Crag discoveries over the last few years, the targeting of ash saplings on limestone pavement for Barred Tooth-striped with the new pheromone lure (rather than searching around for little pockets of wild privet) has been a revelation. Sites minus the privet, which were formerly not considered suitable, have produced the goods as ash is obviously the well-used larval food-plant in our limestone areas. This is all old hat to Brian Hancock, of course, as he has indicated time and time again over the years that targeting the food-plant finds the pug, even if it means resorting to Google earth for Bilberry Pug!



Lyme Grass

Another major change, of course, has been a considerable increase in the number of people with the skills to search for larval and other non-adult moth signs. In many ways, this is a re-birthing of old (albeit male-dominated) field skills, although maybe pupa digging is perhaps best

field with Arthur Watson, for example spotting a Grey Chi on a limestone wall 20 feet away and a Puss Moth larva on willow at an even greater distance. Then many of us lost our way a little, maybe too 'reliant' on the morning MV catch? Therefore Ben Smart's book on how to go about this at all seasons of the year has quite rightly found itself, not on people's bookshelves, but out there in the field and joining the Collins Bird Guide in the glove compartment of the car, as the new generation, this time including equal numbers of both sexes, develop their skills. This book has quite rightly received praise from all quarters of the moth community. Have you a copy? If not, it can be obtained from the Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society at just £16 plus P&P - email robj.yates@btinternet.com.



The various people to contact, recommended websites and other information is all on the back page. Thanks to everyone who has been involved in both recording and admin during this year. Please allow me to single out Alex Parsons. As well as devising the well-used spreadsheet as a MapMate alternative, he has spent quite some time (along with Graham) dealing with the problem where the taxonomic names changed, resulting in MapMate 'losing' all the records of the likes of Common Marbled Carpet. This was a real pain when sorting out the end of year records for the final Atlas submission, yet Alex was able to sort it out quickly and Graham Dixon gave invaluable help at the MapMate end of things. Hopefully everyone has adopted the new scientific names patch on their own MapMate - if not, please do so before you submit any records! Graham will help if you have any problems

Have a good second half of the year!

consigned to the eco-vandalism dustbin! I for one feel really privileged to have spent time as a youngster in the

Pete Marsh



Blood Vein



Broad-barred White

SIGHTINGS

January - June 2017



Red-necked Footman

These are by no means comprehensive and there may be one or two which deserve a bit more scrutiny before they are accepted. Some of these records may be in danger of disappearing into the ether i.e. off Facebook etc. Please do make sure they are documented in the usual fashion either via MapMate or the (revised) spreadsheet (see Lancashire Moth Group or the 'sticky' on the Facebook site). Thanks very much. Please note that with respect to records from overnight traps, the dates refer to the previous evening but diurnal records are from the actual day – hope that makes sense in the text.

January kicked off with an **Early Moth** near Leighton Hall on 1/1 (Justine Patton). This followed an incredible mid-winter catch on 30/12/16 in Aughton Woods of 402 Mottled Umber, 23 Winter Moth and 5 Chestnut (JP). No wonder there was plenty of larval food for this year's Blue Tit nestlings! The 7/1 saw **Mottled Umber** and **Satellite** at St Helens (Ray Banks) and **Pale Brindled Beauty** at High Tatham (Pete Marsh). **Pale Brindled Beauty** reached St Helens on 8/1 and there was an **Early Moth** in snow at High Tatham on 12/1. A series of **Early Moth** records from Longton Brickcroft started on 14/1 (GJ). Pete Stevens nabbed the first **Spring Usher** at Warton on 15/1 (rare on the limestone) and the first Millhouses trap of the year on 17/1 predictably saw a decent catch of

one very late **December Moth**, 12 **Spring Usher**, 15 **Pale Brindled Beauty**, one **Early Moth** and just the one hibernator - a **Chestnut** (PM). Discoveries at Freshfield on 21/1 included **Agonopterix ocellana**, **Caloptilia beticola** and **Emmelina monodactyla** (Charlie Fletcher). Probably related to pupal warming indoors was an unseasonal **Angle Shades** at Southport on 24/1 (Alex Parsons). A **Spring Usher** at Cuerden on 30/1 was a good record for a rather localised species.

February started with another excellent winter catch at Aughton Woods including 46 **Spring Usher** and less dramatic numbers of **Tortricodes alternella**, **Dotted Border**, **Pale Brindled Beauty** (JP). An indoors **Double-striped Pug** materialised at Morecambe on 5/2 (JP), then the

middle of the month produced an early **Hebrew Character** at High Tatham (PM), **Acleris hastiana** at St Helens (RB), **Oak Beauty** at High Tatham (PM) and Hurst Green (Jane Jones). The second Millhouses trap of the year on 15/2 included 6 **Small Brindled Beauty** and 63 **Pale Brindled Beauty**, but the following night saw a record Lancashire catch of 9 **Small Brindled Beauty**. This location appears to be in the middle of its restricted county range (PM, Jean Roberts). After some poor mothing weather, which included a late **Dark Chestnut** on our southern boundary on 21/2 (Carol Cockburn), the scarce and unpredictable **Grey Shoulder Knot** made post-hibernation appearances at Longton on 27/2 (John Girdley) and Hoghton on 7/3 (Graham Dixon).

March was not brilliant for moth trappers and although the **Lead coloured Drab** season at Herring Head Wood started well with a singleton (10/3), there were no other opportunities due to wind and/or cold until April. Joy Mitchell-Lisle fared better with this species right on the southern boundary with a record eight in her trap on 28/3. The 10/3 also saw two excellent records from Heysham Road in the form of the increasingly scarce **Tawny Pinion** and an out of range **Yellow Horned** (John Holding). A few migrants began to appear starting with **Dark Sword Grass** on 10/3 at Herring Head, **Rush Vener** at Marshside on 11/3 (Graham Jones) and **Diamond-back Moth** at Longton on 15/3 (JG). An **Orange Underwing** flying about at the inner end of Heysham wooden jetty on 27/3 unfortunately failed to cross the harbour and add itself to the iconic SD36 list - nevertheless it was unsurprisingly new for SD35 and rather lost! More expected were 6 at Bold Moss on 24/3 (RB).

A trickle of **Dark Sword Grass** and **Diamond back Moth** continued into April where the first notable event was the appearance of **Chocolate Tip** at southern VC59 sites, notably new for (RB) at St Helens. A very early **Old Lady** was recorded on our



Old Lady

southern boundary on 11/4 (JM-L). A possible "Goat Moth Tree" was located at Brockholes on 15/4, but no further news of activity by early July. **Emperor Moth** luring was the order of the day and (sadly one year late for the Atlas) produced new SD57 Lancashire records at Lord's Lot and Docker Moor as well as hordes at e.g. grouse moorland sites. The **Belted Beauty** survey at Middleton saltmarsh saw 366 on 16/4 – a decent number (Steve Palmer *et al*). Heysham Moss is revealing isolated populations of species associated with more inland birch locations and **Grey Birch** was added to this list on 18/4 (JP). Little has been said about **Barred Tooth-striped** so far as I was hoping for a separate article from BC. In the meantime, definitely worthy of mention is the situation east of the M6. There were two previous records from the Crow Trees 'triangle' just south of Dalton village (the parish *is* in VC60!) and it was assumed that it occurred there at a very low level. Yet a pheromone trap set on 18/4 produced, as far as I am aware, the highest single catch from the survey of 43 **Barred Tooth Striped!** Interestingly, a few **Early Tooth-striped** were also attracted to the lures, including 5 to the aforementioned. A very early **Buff Ermine** appeared at Rindle on 20/4 (Ian Walker) with the first **Striped Twin-spot Carpet** at Warton Crag on the same night (JP). The highly restricted **Great Prominent** refuses to cross the M6 to eminently suitable habitat and records included singles at Yealand Conyers on 22/4 and Warton on 13/5 (BH, PS). **Scarce Prominent** *does* cross the M6 but was under-recorded this year with all records received so far from Warton Crag (JP, Tom Vosterman). A **Ruddy Highflyer** was notable at Middleton on 28/4 (JP) extending the

known clusters at nearby Heysham NR and Heysham Moss and **Chocolate Tip** appeared for (JM-L) on the same date on our southern boundary

An early highlight in May was a **Chocolate Tip** at Rindle on 6/5 (IW) and a very early **Burnet Companion** appeared at Heysham NR on 8/5 (Janet Packham). **Chamomile Shark** has been very scarce in recent years so two for JH at Heysham road on 12/5 and 13/5 was a little greedy! An elusive **Mullein moth** appeared in at trap at Yealand Conyers on 14/5 (Brian Hancock) – this species is usually found as a conspicuous larva later in the summer. On the same foodplant theme, a spring brood **Mullein Wave** for (Jill and John Webb) at Silverdale on 23/5 was an excellent record. A major find, following last year's record, was a **Maiden's Blush** at Formby on 23/5 (Richard Walker). A Docker Moor 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**. Another local moorland species, **Light Knot-grass**, appeared at Middle Gill on 23/5, including the first dark form seen by the observer (PM). An elusive day-flyer appeared for (Ashley Baines) in the form of **Small Yellow Underwing** at Lytham

St Annes NR on 24/5 and the first of a more conspicuous one, **Humming bird Hawk-moth**, was on Heysham Moss for (JP) on 25/5. **Beautiful Snout** is proving to be a species which can be "habitat targeted" with the key being bilberry understory to e.g. birch or pine. Recent records away from the northern stronghold have comprised Hurst Green (Denis Lambert) and (Kate Hughes) located the first of two daytime records at Beacon Fell on 25/5. In contrast **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. A hotspot for **Shaded Pug** at Middleton NR was visited by (BH and JP) on 25/5 and 5 were found whilst 'dusking'. **Cistus Forester** sightings on Warton Crag in the known areas included 3 on 26/5 (KH) and the night of 26/5 saw **Bordered White** and **Ptycholoma lecheana** new for garden in Morecambe (JP). On the Ainsdale area Green Beach on the same night, (GJ) recorded **White Colon** and **Anania fuscalis**. Some odd new for site wanderers included a **Scorched Wing** at Sunderland Point on 26/5 (new for SD45) and a **Light Knot Grass** at Knowsley on 26/5. Highly significant were a series of **Orange Footman** records with



Lunar Thorn

two at Ainsdale NNR on 25/5 (Colin Daly) and a singleton at Southport on 28/5 (Andy Pryce). The back end of the month saw a flurry of interest with 25 **Silver Y** in a single trap at Walmer Bridge on 29/5 (GJ), 20 **Little Emerald** at Birkbank on 30/5 (JP), **Anania perlucidalis** at Hoghton on 31/5 (GD), **Lunar Thorn** at Warton on 31/3 (PS) and 8 **Currant Clearwing** at Greenbank Fruit Farm near Over Kellet on 31/5 (Linda Renshaw, Barbara Crooks). Way out of its usual range was an egg-laying female **Fox Moth** in a Warton garden on 27/5 (Martin Elsworth). **Dwarf Pug** was notable for Walmer Green on 31/5 (GJ)

Yarrow Plume and **Apotomis turbidana** were excellent records from Heysham Moss on 1/6 (JP). An **Ochreous Pug** turned up at Hoghton on 1/6 (GD) and nearby **Blood Vein** and **Broad-barred White** were excellent records at Rishton on 9/6 (Dave Bickerton). A new site for **Valerian Pug** was located/previously overlooked at Docker Moor with 6 in the trap on 10/6, two days previously they were located in good numbers at the established Cinderbarrow site. In a good year for scattered **Lunar Thorn** records, one was at Crook of Lune on



Olethreutes arcuella

10/6 (Steve Graham). **Olethreutes arcuella** was a good record for (Mark Nightingale) at Gaitbarrows on 12/6 and some excellent daytime finds were two **Red-necked Footman** at Beacon Fell by (KH) on 9/6, a **Humming-bird Hawk Moth** at Weeton on 9/6 (Jackie Fennell) and **Silver Hook** at Lytham St Annes NR on 14/6 (AB). Docker Moor produced a record single trap catch of **Welsh Wave** with 57 on 9/6 (PM). **Scorched Wing** graced the Ribble valley at Hurst Green on 15/6 (Jane Jones) and on the same date a **Humming-bird**



Small Argent & Sable

Hawk-moth was on the valerian by Sunderland Point toilets (PM). A worn **Satin wave** was eventually identified from Heysham road on 13/6 – an uncommon species in VC60. Chancing its luck away from the usual coastal locations was a **Yellow Shell** at Hoghton on 15/6 and an **Elachista triatomea** was unearthed by Ben Smart at Chorlton on 17/6. 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! On 16/6, the most lucrative trapping session in the south of the area saw over 100 **Lyme Grass** at Ainsdale with excellent support from 30 **Shore Wainscot**, 10 **Sand Dart**, **Dark Tussock**, **Anerastia lotella**, **Mompha conturbidella**. In contrast, **Lyme Grass** has only been found so far at Lytham in VC60 and two there for (AB) on 16/6 were welcome records. A Scarlet Tiger was at the very south of VC59 on 21/6 (JM-L). The second **Beautiful Snout** for Beacon Fell and the first this year from Hurst Green on 17-18/6 (KH, DL) consolidated their presence away from the well-known northern sites in SD57. 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 regrowth (Terry Whitaker, KH, JR, DL, BH, BS). 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 notable records from mid June included an early **Old Lady** at St Helens on 18/6 (RB), **Clay Triple-lines** at Longton on 19/6 (JG), a single trap record 12 **Small Yellow Wave** at Docker Moor on 19/6 (PM, JR) contrasting with a single for (BH) on 30/6 being only the fourth record on the AONB limestones, 12 **Thyme Pug** at the reliable Cotestones site on 20/6 (BH) and a garden **Dark Tussock** at Southport on 21/6 (AP). Longton produced a few migrants at this time with **Small Mottled Willow**, **Rusty Dot Pearl**, **Dark Sword Grass**, **Silver Y** and **Diamond back Moth** (JG).



Dark Tussock



Thyme Pug

Indeed the national picture shows quite a few **Small Mottled Willow** and I expect these in some of your traps as the warm spell coincides with



Small Mottled Willow

the production of this Newsletter. Other notable site records included **Scorched Wing** at St Helens on 20/6 (RB), **Cypress Tip moth** at Nether Kellet on 18/6 (Julie Mason), **Hummingbird Hawk Moth** at Tatham Fells on 20/6 (Anne Wilson), **Silver Hook** at Southport 21/6 (AP), **Marbled White Spot** and **Batia lunaris** at St Helens 20/21/6 (RB), **Tachystola acroxanthe** at Rishton on 21/6 (DB). The beech-feeding micro, **Strophedra weirana** was recorded again at Leek Hill Wood, nr Warton on 21/6 (JP) and the following day saw some **Belted beauty** larvae at Middleton. The Facebook site has a nice pic of a **Pine Beauty** larva on 24/6, reminding me of visits to the Outer Hebrides where this species defoliated many spruce plantations (Gary Hedges). A very odd and presumably very old individual on

24/6 in the form of a worn hibernating species, **Pale Pinion** at Morecambe (JP). **Dingy Shell** has been off the northern radar this year so good to see records at Rishton from 22/6 (DB) and a record from Formby on 24/6 (Charlie Fletcher). Other good local records at the back end of the month included **Silver Hook** at Middleton NR on 26/6 (JP), **Eidophasia messingiella** at Longton on 27/6 (JG) and a nice selection from Warton Crag scree on 30/6 with the highlights being **Teleiodes sequax**, **Least Minor**, **Barred carpet** and **Elachista gleichenella** (JP). However, the really spectacular end of the month records were both migrants: a **Death's Head Hawk-moth** was fortunately easily identifiable from a record shot taken at Cuerden

on 28/6 (per GD) and a **Ni Moth** appeared in JH's trap on Heysham road on 27/6



Welsh Wave



Ni Moth

Mompha propinquella



My leaf-mining highlights from the first half of 2017

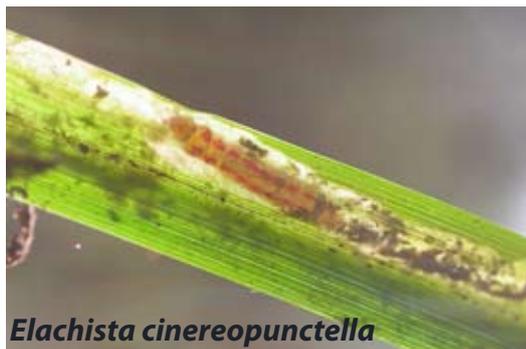
Most micro-moth leaf-mine records come from the second half of the year, particularly from autumn. However, some interesting species can be found in the first half of the year, particularly mines of the *Elachista*, *Eriocrania* and *Mompha* species. Mines of the Nepticulidae and Gracillariidae families may also be found in small numbers. Examples of the latter family were the early finds of *Phyllonorycter leucographella* on *pyracantha* in the grounds of St Helens Hospital on 14th January 2017 and in a Rochdale garden on 12th February, and *Aspilapterix tringipennella* mining ribwort plantain at Hardy Farm, Chorlton, Manchester on 28th March.

grass on 1.5.17. These three were all found in Chorlton, Manchester. An adult *albifrontella* emerged on 30th May.



Mompha propinquella

A nice *Mompha propinquella* moth emerged on 11th June from two larvae found mining the lower leaves of great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) in St Helens on 5th April. The blotch mines made by this species can be large and, according to texts may fill the entire leaf. These were some way short of that.



Elachista cinereopunctella

Most larvae of the Elachistidae family can be found mining grasses, sedges and wood-rushes in spring. A single *Elachista cinereopunctella* leaf-mine was found in a glaucous sedge leaf-blade at Warton Crag on 2nd April. The two rows of red spots running lengthways down the body of the larva are diagnostic. There are very few Lancs records for this species, and it is new for the site.

Other *Elachista* mines found were *E. argentella* in an unknown grass species on 3.4.17, *E. maculicerusella* in reed canary-grass on 9.4.17, and *E. albifrontella* in cocksfoot



Mompha langiella



Elachista albifrontella

Mompha locupletella leaf-mines were present on one of the smaller willowherbs at Rixton, VC59 on 11.4.17, and many *Mompha langiella* mines on broad-leaved willowherb at Fletcher Moss Gardens Didsbury, Manchester on 29.5.17. The adult *langiella* emerged 25.6.17. *M. langiella*, formerly a very scarce moth in Lancs, seems to be spreading throughout the country and is now common in VC59. The larvae also mine enchanter's nightshade and great willowherb.

Eriocrania mines appeared fairly early on birch, with three of the six birch-feeding species (*cicatricella*, *sangii* and

unimaculella) all present at Hardy Farm, Chorlton on 29th May. The last of the six species to appear, *E. sparrmannella*, was noted at the same site on 26th June.

Poplar mines of *Phyllocnistis unipunctella* and *Stigmella trimaculella* were found on 19th June at Stretford, with mines of *Stigmella plagicolella* and *Parornix finitimella* being found a day later on blackthorn in Chorlton. Hopefully some of these will emerge as adults in the next few weeks.

Ben Smart

North Preston – Spring 2017

In a north/south alignment, Preston is situated mid-County and is close to the border of VC59 and VC60. We are also not too far away from the coast and the hills, so you would think it would be safe to assume that we'd get a wide range of most moths that the county has to offer coming to our garden light trap. Just to whet the appetite occasional wanderers, or those expanding their national range, do appear briefly but unfortunately very few of these stay and make it their home. One glimpse at the increasing extent of urbanisation and the associated poor quality amenity planting is all that is needed to explain why this is the case.

It has always intrigued us why some species, such as Pale Prominent, have never appeared in our area despite occurring throughout much of northern and southern parts of the county. Even those species expanding their range, such as Clay Triple-lines and Small Blood-vein have pushed northwards through the county over the years but not deemed our area suitable for a visit. Some, such as Blackneck and White-pinion Spotted, have made giant strides into much of the county, but only ever appeared a few times in our garden light trap.



Little Emerald

Fortunately there are some exceptions. *Tachystola acroxantha* started in Lancashire with a strong colony in the Mersey valley and has, in recent years, moved strongly northwards. A recent slight increase in records suggests it has taken a liking to our area, with six records overall including two this May. Blood-vein has also, at last, shown signs of settling (first seen here in 2008 it has now been occurred in our garden in 2016 and now 2017. Other species may just be present in very low numbers. Least Black Arches is one of these and made an appearance on

the 25th May this year (only our sixth record for the garden) and, surprisingly, Green Carpet is another. It is so abundant in some areas but only made its fourth appearance here, on the 31st May. The best of the lot however was Little Emerald which made only its second visit (first was in 1996) when one came to light, also on the 31st May.

2017 to date has proved reasonable but there has not been much to get excited about. Of our resident species, Seraphim seems to be having a good year in 2017 being present from 12th May to 28th May (max. 4 on 25/5). Migrants have included Diamond-back Moth, Rush Veneer, Dark Sword Grass and Silver Y, but all in very small numbers.

On the down side, new housing development has hit the area with a vengeance. Large swathes of hedgerows are being ripped out over much of northern Preston. Even in May the chain saws move in without any concern for the many denizens of our hedges, such as the larvae of many moths feeding at this time of year on hawthorn, blackthorn and many other hedgerow shrubs and plants. Will 2017 be the last year we see Early Moth in our garden? Removal of their larval food-plants took minutes, for the 100 yard stretch so far removed (see photo). These hedges have taken many decades to establish and will soon be replaced with swathes of brickwork, concrete, tarmac and so-called mitigation wildlife habitat (usually consisting of laurel or other totally unpalatable non-native plants – at least *Epiphyas postvittana* will have a smile on its face!). It seems quite likely that our January gem and many of its fellow species will become only a fading memory, but at least the migrants might still find us, unless the increased light pollution also causes them to pass on by.

Stephen and Carolyn Palmer



A story of mixed fortunes on the Sefton Coast

The Liverpool World Museum entomology library contains much historic moth information which when added to the Lancashire Moth Group records, particularly those of recent years, show very changing fortunes for two Sefton Coast moths, Belted Beauty (*Lycia zonaria*) and Lyme Grass (*Chortodes elymi*).

Both require a coastal situation and also exist very near the edge of what is possible and what is not possible for their survival. Lyme Grass (*Leymus arenarius*), the plant for Lyme Grass larvae, is amongst the earliest coastal colonisers and along with Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) and Sea-couch Grass (*Agropyron pungens*) are regularly inundated with new blown sand, salt sea spray and on some high tide occasions covered in sea water. The larvae of Belted Beauty on the original Crosby sand dunes would have eaten Common Bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) and some Clovers (*Trifolium* sp.).

Belted Beauty *Lycia zonaria*.

1891 Entomologist's records, vol. 2, page 180. "Belted Beauty has turned up again in good numbers at Crosby. It is almost impossible to walk on the sand hills without treading on them." The following year it reported "Belted Beauty occurs in 100s at Crosby, more than have ever been seen before and similar numbers at Wallesey".

Richard South, Moths of the British Isles 1946. (Writing on Belted Beauty) states "Locally common on sand hills, on the coast of Cheshire, Flintshire and Carnarvon. Wallasey is a noted locality. The earliest British specimen was taken in 1832 at Wallesey. Occurs on the Lancashire coast near Liverpool and Blackpool districts".

The last record was a single seen at Crosby in 1948. So what happened to the site? The sand dunes were levelled off completely and turfed over to create a walking area just inland of the "Iron Men" at Crosby. A protective sea wall and promenade was built so the dunes were totally destroyed and with it went the moth.

Lyme Grass *Longalatedes elymi*.

Richard South, Moths of the British Isles 1946. states "Not recorded until 1861. Known to occur from Norfolk to Durham" Also noted as occurring on the Forfarshire coast of Scotland. 2015 British Moths, C Manley. "In coastal sand dunes and salt marshes from Suffolk northwards and at Camber Sands, Sussex."

In 2010 a single example turned up in Crosby. In 2012 and 2013 it was recorded at Altcar, Formby in singles and Ainsdale Green Beach in small numbers all in the first half of June by a number of recorders. Last year, 2016, John Dempsey of Sefton Council showed me photos of a "Wainscot" he wasn't sure of, these were four Lyme Grass moths. At Formby National Trust, MOD Altcar and again on the Green Beach small numbers came to light. But a session with John Girdley and myself with three traps near the Ainsdale Discovery Centre, Southport on 12th June we recorded 20 plus. Two nights later Simon Tobin and myself recorded 29 between 9.30pm and 11.30 pm. C Manley 2009 mentions and illustrates two colour forms; of the darker we recorded only a single example. One of the big issues of light trapping for Lyme Grass is getting generators and MV traps onto the foreshore. Sand dunes are hard enough to walk over but at night with heavy equipment it's almost impossible!

The loss of Belted Beauty was understandable; human requirements forced it to fail. But like King Canute, who failed to stop the tide, so Crosby Council are failing to stop new dune formation against the promenade and if the small colony of Belted Beauty at Wallesey can cross the Mersey? For Lyme Grass, on the other hand, I cannot easily understand how it jumped or flew from the east coast to the Sefton Coast on the west.

Richard Walker

Alder, Sallow and Poplar Kittens

It is possible that mistakes have been made in the past in the identification of these three moths. Worn examples, poor photographs or a combination of the two can lead to errors.

The following text, taken from volume 9 of MBGBI by Maitland-Emmet, is a summary of the salient points of differentiation which if read along side representative photos taken from the World Museum, Liverpool, Entomology department should help in making the correct identification.

The tables below are based on pristine or possibly bred examples while moths caught in light traps often show wear or fading to key features which should be borne in mind when identifying these three species.

| Characteristic | Alder Kitten (<i>Furcula bicuspis</i>) | Sallow Kitten (<i>Furcula furcula</i>) | Poplar Kitten (<i>Furcula bifida</i>) |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
| Wing span | 40 - 80 mm | 35 - 42 mm | 44 - 48 mm |
| Head | white | pale grey | pale grey |
| Forewing | white | pale grey | pale grey |
| Median fascia | braod, dark greyish brown almost black | grey, edged black & yellow/orange | dark grey |
| Inner margin | concaved, subterminal line dentate, black | margin straight | margin straight, edged black & yellow |
| Outer margin | concaved, subterminal line dentate, black | ill-defined, pale grey, edged black & yellow | smoothly concaved & sharply defined |
| Subapical patch | almost black | grey, edged black & yellow/orange | grey |
| Hindwing | white | pale grey | very pale grey |
| Abdomen | white, grey bandds | grey & banded dark grey | grey and dark banded |
| Flight times | May & June | Late May to early June | May to July |



Alder Kitten (*Furcula bicuspis*)



Sallow Kitten (*Furcula furcula*)



Poplar Kitten (*Furcula bifida*)

Recorders

PMrsh123@aol.com Peter Marsh – VC60 Macro

john@birdtours.co.uk John Girdley – VC60 Micro

rbkvwalker@talktalk.net Richard Walker - VC59 Macro & Micro

troubleatmill@btinternet.com Graham Dixon – MapMate hub

Several people help with the determination of micros from VC59 and VC60, but also we recommend that you post the trickier ones which can be identified by photos (both aspects please, lateral ones can be very important in the identification process) on the Lancashire Moths Facebook site where several people, including Ben Smart, can offer advice.

In some cases this may mean that the specimen requires dissection and whether you wish to pursue this option is entirely up to you. However acceptance of the record without dissection is unfortunately not an option with several species. If it is obviously likely to be a rare and localised species, where perhaps a new population in VC59 or 60 is a possibility, can we please urge you to retain the specimen for dissection and therefore confirmation or otherwise. Thanks

If you do not wish to own MapMate, please could you send your records in, if possible, using Alex Parson's spreadsheet, the details of which are on the Lancashire Moth Group website.

Of course, we will still accept paper copy or any other means of sending records in - it is not a problem entering these. However we will not be entering casual postings on the Facebook site where the location has not been published. We have had problems requesting details from people whose mothing motivation is not the 'recording scene'.

Thanks once again for all your efforts and good mothing!

Useful contacts and links

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| 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 |
| European Butterflies & Moths | http://www.lepidoptera.eu |
| The National Bio-diversification Network | https://data.nbn.org.uk |
| Mersey Bio Bank | http://www.merseysidebiobank.org.uk |
| Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society | http://www.lacfs.org.uk |