

Moth Report for 2002 by Roger Gaunt

The weather in the early part of the year was quite good however the middle of the summer period was cold and wet. This inhibited recording and reduced opportunities to record the rarer day-flying moths. The short flight season for these was over by the time the weather improved later in the summer.

Gloucestershire continues to be very much under-recorded. Only a handful of our Nature Reserves have a reasonable species list for moths. Add to those that haven't such a list the countless other good sites, many unvisited and one can see that an army of recorders would be needed to cover the county properly.

This being the case and because moths are not as well recorded as butterflies it is harder to detect trends, but the overall impression I have is that numbers are declining. Some species usually recorded annually have not been seen for several years. These include Argent and Sable, Pale Shining Brown, Broom-tip, White-marked, Common Fan-foot, White-line Snout, The Sprawler and Deep-brown Dart. Against this trend The Sycamore, Straw Dot and Scarlet Tiger have become more widely recorded.

There has been further use of pheromone lures to attract clearwing moths. Species in this group are elusive and until this method became available, there were very few records of these most un-mothlike insects. It is now clear that the Six-belted Clearwing can be found all the way along the Cotswold Escarpment. There have been more records of Currant Clearwing and it is hoped that better weather when most species fly will give more success in 2003.

There are several new county records which are as follows:-

Isophrictis striatella July 2002 Cheltenham Robert Homan
Falseuncaria degreyana July 2002 Slimbridge Neil Woodward
Eucosma tripoliana July 2002 Pilning John Martin
Eucosma conterminana 25.7.2002 Hempsted Gordon Avery
Tinea columbariella 19.5.2002 Pool Hill Michael Bradley
Luffia lapidella 7.7.2002 Flaxley David Gibbs
Argyresthia trifasciata 29.5.2002 Gloucester Roger Pearce
Cypress Pug 17.9.2002 Bishop's Cleeve Angus Moir

In addition there have been a number of new Vice-county records, mainly leaf-miners, that Guy Meredith has recorded in VC 33.

In the old days recorders were unable to collate all their records and many records got no further than the field notebook. Most of these unfortunately have subsequently been lost, and this may be a reminder to all those reading this report that unless records are handed on to a county recorder they have only a personal value. The arrival of computers with their astonishing ability to process and retrieve information has revolutionised the way in which records can be handled. After several false starts I have at last a database (MapMate) that is capable of giving me all manner of information relating to my records.

I have not completed the transfer of all known records yet nevertheless it may be illuminating to give you the following information. So far I have well over 40000 records on the database. There are records for 1250 species of which 561 are macro-moths and 689 are micro-moths. The 10 km square with the most records is SO50 with 9408, followed by SO92 with 4903 and SO80 with 4669. Not unexpectedly the Silver Y is most widely recorded with records from thirty-seven 10km squares, whereas the Large Yellow Underwing is most abundant. Apart from garden sites that obviously receive extra attention the site with the most species is the Nagshead Reserve with 350 species followed closely by Rodborough Common with 344 species. I have so far entered records

from 165 different people 36 of whom have produced more than 100 records and 12 more than 1000.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed records in 2002 and preceding years. For those who are not already aware of the fact, I produce a Newsletter six or seven times a year which contains much more information than I am able to give in this report. If you would like to receive an electronic copy please let me know. I can post copies, but would appreciate help with the postage.