

Moth Report for 2003 by Roger Gaunt

General observations. 2003 was a successful recording year with a lot of useful effort being made by a good number of recorders. There is however a lot more recording that I hope to see done in the future especially in relation to our rarer species. This will always offer scope for individual recorders to make a valuable contribution. Gloucestershire is a large county and there are many species, some quite conspicuous, that are known to be in the county but are seldom recorded.

Weather conditions were good for much of the year unlike previous years. To give some indication of the level of recording, I have had records from 49 individuals altogether though 22 of these were of one record only, usually Humming-bird Hawk-moth. Ten people gave me between 2 and 20 records, and seventeen more than 20, in some cases several hundred. Altogether 6500 records were made bringing the total on my database to 57306. I would remind readers that when people record in their gardens, I only include one record per species per year otherwise there would be a lot of repetitive detail.

A feature of the year was the number of migrant moths some of which made the headlines in the press. The Humming-bird Hawk-moth was very common. I actually received 56 records, but many people said that they were so common that they didn't bother to report them. There were nine records of *Convolvulus* Hawk-moth more than doubling the number of records on my database. Three of these records were of larvae indicating breeding. There was one record each for Bordered Straw, Small Marbled, The Gem, Bedstraw Hawk-Moth and Death's Head Hawk-moth, the latter being of a larva and a pupa in a compost heap! There were several records each of the Vestal, Small Mottled Willow and Scarce Bordered Straw. There were many reports of the commoner migrants.

Other Macro-moths. There are new county records for three species. The heath-land restoration site at The Park, Tidenham Chase produced two more records of macro-moths new to the county. The Beautiful Yellow Underwing *Anarta myrtilli*, a day-flier, was recorded first of all as an adult and later in September as a larva confirming that it is breeding. The Northern Eggar *Lasiocampa quercus* f. *callunae* came to a Heath trap left overnight on a patch of heather. At WWT Slimbridge, Neil Woodward recorded Lempke's Gold Spot *Plusia putnami* ssp. *gracilis*, noticeably different from the common Gold Spot, a Slimbridge resident.

Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Drab Looper. This has been reported from six sites, Woodchester Park, Russells Enclosure (FOD), Hailey Wood, Daneway, Buckholt Wood and Lineover Wood. Despite a considerable time spent searching in the Forest of Dean it was elusive to say the least, unlike the year 2000 when it was quite common.

Common Fan-foot. A survey funded by Butterfly Conservation resulted in one worn male being found in the Cannop Valley near Beechenhurst. This is the first record since 1998. A technique involving breaking twigs of oak at a certain height, pioneered in the Wyre Forest, is to be tried next year to enable searches for larvae to be made. (The larvae feed on shrivelled oak leaves.)

White-line Snout. Two were recorded in a Heath trap in Wye Valley woodlands on the edge of Tidenham Chase.

Barberry Carpet. Dr Paul Waring has continued to monitor the population at Westonbirt Arboretum. He has told me that good numbers of larvae were present in 2003.

Chalk Carpet. This species has been reported from Breakheart Hill Quarry and the Avon Gorge.

The use of pheromone lures to attract clearwings has continued, and it is possible to draw some conclusions about their status in the county. All are Nationally Notable, though this status is likely to change now that lures are being used.

Six-belted Clearwing	Common on the Cotswold scarp.
Orange-tailed Clearwing	Present in several places where there is <i>Viburnum lantana</i> .
Red-tipped Clearwing	Infrequent.
Red-belted Clearwing	Quite common in orchards, even young ones.
White-barred Clearwing	Confined to one extensive site at Woorgreens, Forest of Dean.
Yellow-legged Clearwing	Thinly distributed.
Currant Clearwing	Quite common where there are currant bushes.

Micro-moths. There are quite a number of new micro-moth records, mainly arising from survey work done by David Gibbs who is able to confirm identification by means of genitalia examination. All new micro records are given below:

<i>Phycitodes saxicola</i>	Hempsted	2.7.2001	Gordon Avery (dis DG)
<i>Grapholita lunulana</i>	Lydney (GIG)	18.5.2003	Roger Gaunt
<i>Stigmella basiguttella</i>	Leckhampton Hill	26.7.2003	Guy Meredith
<i>Monochroa palustrella</i>	Pilning	24.6.2003	John Martin
<i>Mompha bradleyi</i>	Records from several sites	2003	David Gibbs
<i>Prochoreutis sehestediana</i>	Nagshead	7.8.2003	David Gibbs
<i>Stigmella filipendulae</i>	Brassey NR	21.9.2003	Guy Meredith
<i>Aplota palpella</i>	Highnam RSPB	4.8.2003	David Gibbs
<i>Niditinea striolella</i>	Highnam RSPB	11.6.2003	David Gibbs
<i>Ectoedemia heringi</i>	Nagshead	10.6.2003	David Gibbs
<i>Stigmella splendidissimella</i> f. <i>dulcella</i>	Cranham Wood	13.9.2003	Guy Meredith

Three attractive pyralid moths should be mentioned. *Mecyna asinalis* was recorded in Wye Valley woodland and the Avon Gorge, *Oncocera semirubella* was seen at Slimbridge and *Calamotropha paludella* first recorded in 1999 has been found in several more places.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed records for 2003, in particular Gordon Avery, Jon Brock, David Gibbs, Robert Homan, Guy Meredith, Roger Pearce and Neil Woodward.