

GLOUCESTERSHIRE MOTHS

2008 Newsletter 4

The weather in June was variable and conditions were not too bad for moth recording. It has therefore been disappointing to have very poor numbers for the time of year. This seems to be general throughout the county. Most of the lists I have seen for National Moth Night on the 7th June have been much shorter than might be expected. Is this a result of the poor summer of 2007 compounded by the fact that a smaller population suffers from proportionately more predation? Despite this however there are some remarkable records to follow.

Species seen

First of all two remarkable double events.

I led a field meeting at Cinderford Linear Park on 14th June. This is an interesting area and a number of rare moths such as Clouded Buff (see later) and Small Argent and Sable have been seen there. Imagine my surprise when Gavin Peplow found and netted a **Forester** (picture below by Peter Fitchett).



This species has not been recorded in the county since 1995 and this was from the only known site west of the Severn at Poors Allotment. A little later about 300m further south I find another which suggests that there could be a good population here. That is not all for Gavin informed me that on the Gloucestershire 'Birders' web site there is a picture of one taken by Mike King at The Park, Tidenham Chase a few days earlier. This site is over the road from Poors Allotment so not quite so surprising. It is interesting to speculate how such a noticeable moth can escape detection at these sites for so many years. It is likely that they are resident and have not moved into the area.

If this wasn't surprise enough I received the picture on the next page of a spectacular **Hornet Moth** from David Iliff at Woodmancote, Cheltenham. This had not been recorded in the county since 1946 – 62 years! It was on *Salix acutifolia* in David's garden. David is quite sure of the tree species as he planted it some time ago. The books give Poplar sp. for this moth and there seem to be no poplars in the vicinity so this raises another question for sightings of this moth are usually after emergence on their host tree.



Then came a message from Robert Homan to say that he had found another **Hornet Moth** on a hybrid poplar near the Severn at Deerhurst. Not having his camera he potted it and took it home to photograph. On returning to the scene with the moth he found another attracted by a female hanging on the end of a hawthorn branch between the poplars. This flew away but then a few minutes later it, or another, returned and within seconds the pair started mating. Thus three Hornet Moths at this site.

Here is another from my list of moths not seen for years. Guy Meredith found a male **Clouded Buff** at Cinderford Linear Park on 29th June close to where I recorded the last seen in the county in 1999. Again it is surprising how such an obvious moth escapes notice for years.

I had to tell Peter Cranswick that his sighting of a **Pine Hawk-moth** at Dursley in 2006 must be recorded as unconfirmed (see this year's second newsletter). However there was no doubt about the identity of the moth that Sue and Bob Smith photographed at Chalford Hill on 9th June (thanks to Peter Hugo for forwarding the photograph). We can now say with certainty that this species has arrived in Gloucestershire.

After all these amazing sightings the following seem rather anticlimactic, but are nevertheless important.

John Martin at Pilning has had the **Seraphim** and on the 7th June two more **Cypress Carpets**. He had the first and only other county record of this species on 14th October 2007 so it seems that it has now become established in his locality.

Liz Radcliffe's NMN list from Cinderford had two nice species – **Fox Moth** and **Alder Kitten**. The latter has also been recorded and photographed by Paul Wilkins at Brockweir.

David and Susan Dewsbury recorded the **Bird's Wing** at Milkwall, Coleford on 4th June. This is the third record since I recorded one at The Wilderness in 2006 after a gap of many years.

Guy Meredith has been out and about as usual. He recorded 151 *Adela croesella* at Welshbury Wood on 6th June, 1122 *Ancylis obtusana* south of Brierley on 16th June, and 651 *Oecophora bractella* and 646 *Telechrysis tripuncta* at Black Morgan's Wood on 23rd June. The next day he had 611 *Elachista triatomea* at Kilkenny Viewpoint and a case of 496 *Coleophora milvipennis* at Cinderford Linear Park on 29th June. He found time to do some dissections on a wet day and identified 1225 *Pammene obscurana* taken at The Park, Tidenham Chase on 12th May this year. This is a new county record. He visited Welshbury Wood on 14th May and took a coleophorid that turned out to be a male 580 *Coleophora sylvaticella*.

Gordon Avery has had a surprising 965 *Cochylis hybridella* at Hempsted. This was clearly identified as compared with similar moths by its white thorax.

As already stated, National Moth Night turned out to be rather disappointing this year. I trapped at Ban-y-gor Wood with members of the public present organised by GWT. We did not see any of the small-leaved-lime specialities I was hoping to record however I took and later dissected 1229 *Pammene albuginana*. This is another new county record. Roger Pearce spent the night at Ringhill Farm and had probably the best list I have seen including five **Four-dotted Footman**.

End of an era!

I called at the Norchard Steam Centre toilets, near Lydney, the other day and was disappointed to find that they have been re-wired with touch sensitive light switches. Some years ago I was told about the moths seen in there as the lights were left on all night so I have called in whenever in the vicinity and have recorded no fewer than 103 species there including **Waved Black** and **Blotched Emerald**. Sadly there will be no more easily acquired records from there.

National Moth Night 2007

A summary of last year's results has been published in Atropos number 34. Records were received from 11 sites in VC33 (East Gloucestershire) and 8 sites in VC34 (West Gloucestershire). This compares favourable with neighbouring counties. In VC33 144 species were recorded (101 macro/ 43 micro) and in VC34 163 species (109 macro/ 54 micro). Nationally the only record of *Esperia divisella* was from Pool Hill; of *Acleris notana* and *Pyla fusca* from Tidenham Chase; and of Golden Plusia from Culkerton.

If you have records to send me for NMN 2008 please send them soon as I will be forwarding those I now have in the next week or two (though it is never too late!).

I am omitting the usual features about sites and moths to look out for as this newsletter is already late and I am pressed for time. There are no fixed dates for trapping sessions ahead.

Roger Gaunt, St Briavels, 5th July 2008.