

GLOUCESTERSHIRE MOTHS

2009 Newsletter 1

Moth recording is now getting under way after the coldest winter for many years. This newsletter is a little earlier than usual because there are several items of news that need to be circulated.

One of the things that is becoming more apparent is how little we know about the distribution of moths in Gloucestershire. When one considers that having trapped in one's garden for several years on a regular basis there are still some surprises. Then consider some reserve or other habitat better than the average garden. This may be trapped once in a year or less frequently. Some reserves have never been trapped. Then there are private estates and woodlands that would qualify to have reserve status. The surface is barely scratched!

I am working round to Mike McCrea's 2008 records. Mike has been recording for many years. Indeed many of his records are mentioned in 'Macrolepidoptera of Gloucestershire' published in 1984. Mike dug into his notebooks and has sent me a most interesting list of last year's highlights. Perhaps the most extraordinary record is that of **Scarce Burnished Brass** recorded at Cannop, Forest of Dean, on 23rd July 2008. Whether this was a wanderer or there is a colony will not be known until further trapping takes place. The habitat is right and the food-plant is present. Returning to what I wrote about above, to my knowledge there has been no previous trapping at this particular place and very little in the Cannop valley itself. There is still plenty to discover in these unrecorded places.

More of Mike's outstanding records are **Oblique Carpet** at Whitminster on 14/6/08 (two were recorded at WWT Slimbridge later in the summer all being the first records since 1973), **Small Argent & Sable** beaten from undergrowth in Dymock Woods on 15/6/08 (a new area), **Dew Moth** at Swift's Hill on 11th June (a known site) and Scar Hill Common, Nailsworth on 15th June (the first from this area for over 50 years). A **Clouded Buff** was seen flying south of Speech House on 22nd June. This is half way between Cinderford Linear Park and Gorsty Knoll where it has been recorded most recently. Finally four **Crescent Striped** at Whitminster on 23rd August is the first record since 1975. Whitminster is near enough to the Severn to see this species.

I have received 44000+ records from the Rothamsted Survey traps going back to the 1960's. I have had records from the one operated at Westonbirt Arboretum for a number of years. The batch of records just received is not only from Westonbirt but also from three other stations in the county that ran a trap for a year or two. The names given are the scientific ones and one caught my eye on first perusal. The **Lappet** moth must have been quite common at the Cheltenham site as no fewer than 8 were caught (and killed) in July 1969. There have been no records anywhere in the county since 1996. When I have processed the records I will report any more items of interest.

Peter Hugo is as active as ever and has already trapped in a number of places. He hopes to target Lower Woods every Saturday, leaving traps overnight, through the season. He has already had **Small Brindled Beauty** and this unusually coloured **Blossom Underwing** on 14th March.



If anyone thinks this is a different species, please let me know. I don't think it can be a Northern Drab both on dates and markings.

Leslie Kent has had a **Yellow Horned** at Winchcombe. This is a new area and very few have been recorded in VC33.

Things are moving on the internet. Perhaps long overdue, Joff Elphick from Cirencester has opened a forum for Gloucestershire Moths. <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/groups/Glosmoths/>

In this era of instant communication it is useful to be able to exchange ideas, help with identifications and so forth in all matters relating to Gloucestershire Moths. Already a fair number have joined and this note will I am sure add more.

There was a time when only a handful of people were recording moths in the county however now there are 60-70 and rising, I am kept busy just communicating, handling all the records and doing my own recording. Help will be welcome in identifying moths, mainly micros. With the ease of using digital photography I now receive large numbers of photographs to be identified (one CD arrived with over 100 images!). This is not easy (and often dissection is the only sure way). A photo may take a lot of consideration before a conclusion may, or may not, be reached. Hopefully the website may be of use in this respect as several opinions may lead to a conclusion where one opinion will not. Please try using this facility.

The new website will also be helpful in enabling people to get together and trap in all parts of the county either to a prearranged programme or informally at short notice.

Despite recent cold nights there have been good catches. On 19th March I had 258 moths of 10 species here and Peter Hugo had 264/18 at Lower Woods on 14th March.

Roger Gaunt, St Briavels, 23rd March 2009.