

**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



Mothy Mutterings – October 2015

In the last newsletter we reported that surveys were underway for the Barberry Carpet *Pareulype berberata*. These surveys involve several volunteers and Butterfly Conservation (BC) staff. This autumn we covered 26 sites surveying locations in Dorset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Extant populations are present in the former four counties, the species being found at eight sites (some comprising of several subsites) this autumn. At a very few sites some hedgerows/bushes had been trimmed, and we have since contacted two land holders to try to address this issue and to encourage them, that if trimming is required, to undertake this over the winter months. Two of the latter three counties were the focus of recent introductions; unfortunately no larvae were found at either site. In Norfolk, Suffolk, and in a few of the other counties listed, we also surveyed sites supporting Barberry but not known to support the moth (as we try to do each year); no additional populations were located. As this is a Schedule 5 species listed on the Wildlife & Countryside Act we have also completed a summary of the results and forwarded this to Natural England, this a stipulation of the licence. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all involved in the surveys for their time and for the quick return of the results.

Dr Paul Waring has been co-ordinating monitoring work on the Marsh Moth *Athetis pallustris* over the years, this species confined to just two sites in the country, both in Lincolnshire, although it is only noted in numbers regularly at one of these sites. We have recently received this year's results. Encouragingly numbers of larvae found using the standard litter pile technique (a standardised grid of vegetation cuttings placed in piles) were up on 2014, with 29 larvae found compared to just 10. However, this figure is less than half the highest counts for this site which has been monitored since 2005. A draft report on this autumn's monitoring of Romney Marshes Marsh Mallow Moth *Hydraecia osseola hucherardi* populations by Sean Clancy has also been received. The recorded number of Marsh Mallow Moth during the 2015 survey/monitoring was slightly higher than during the previous two seasons, although still lower than any single annual total recorded during the 2006 to 2012 period, with the species currently thought to occur at four sites across the Marsh. This report builds on previous years monitoring and will be produced under Butterfly Conservation's Action for Threatened Moths Project, and circulated to partner organisations and site owners/managers.

We have also received several other reports on Priority species, including an MSc student project on the Scarce Hook-tip *Sabra harpagula*. BC has circulated a few reports on Priority moths this month with others in preparation. These cover aspects of this year's work (including monitoring and site assessments) on Bright Wave *Idaea ochrata* and Black-veined Moth *Siona lineata*, with a report on monitoring of the Sussex Emerald populations and another on assessing habitat creation for the species in Kent already circulated. Also a file note has been compiled and circulated on this summer's survey and monitoring of the Straw Belle *Aspitates gilvaria*, which includes observations on the Chalk Carpet *Scotopteryx bipunctaria* and *Phyllonorycter scabiosella* (all three Section 41 species) at various sites along the North Downs.

Work on Scotland's rare and threatened Burnet moths is overseen by the Burnet Study Group, who meet annually to review, and plan and encourage further survey, monitoring or management work. The most recent meeting, in October, was a solemn affair focusing on the misfortunes of one of our rarest moths; the New Forest Burnet. A combination of poor spring and summer weather, along with sheep gaining access to the site through several breaches in the perimeter fence due to landslips, resulted in the average vegetation height being halved and a maximum daily count of just 14 moths being recorded. Volunteer work parties, over two weekends, undertook emergency repairs and the fence is now stock proof. Butterfly Conservation Scotland is currently working closely with both Scottish Natural Heritage and the landowner to find a means of installing a new fence.

There was similar glum news for Slender Scotch Burnet with low counts, from its known colonies on Mull. However, targeted survey work by Andrew Masterman, and the testing of pheromone lures produced more positive results for both Transparent Burnet and Forester moths, and potentially a very welcome and useful means of surveying and monitoring their populations. Andrew also collected key habitat attributes at sites for both species to help improve our understanding of both moths' requirements. Fingers crossed that with better weather and armed with further pheromones, 2016 will be a more positive year for Scotland's iconic Burnets.

The programme for the National Moth Recorders' Meeting which will be held on Saturday 30th January 2016 at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, central Birmingham has been finalised and can be found at the end of this newsletter. The speakers include both amateur moth recorders and academic researchers. We have several traders in attendance including [Atropos](#), [Creature Candy](#), [Hachiware Art](#), [Pemberley Books](#) and [Watkins & Doncaster](#), so bring your purses and wallets to stock up on natural history books, moth-ing equipment and other moth-related things. Please contact the traders in advance if there is anything specific that you would like to pre-order and collect on the day. As usual, there is a £7.50 per person registration fee for attendees, payable on the day. This includes morning and afternoon tea/coffee and a buffet lunch all subsidised from Butterfly Conservation budgets. Advance booking is essential, to book your place please contact info@butterfly-conservation.org or telephone 01929 400209. We hope to see you there.

E-moth the electronic newsletter from the Moths Count project and National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS) has just been published. This edition includes the usual update on the NMRS, feedback on Moth Night 2015 and some other snippets. You can read October's E-moth [here](#).

As part of our efforts to raise the profile of moths and moth recording, Richard Fox, Butterfly Conservation's Head of Recording, spent two of the most unusual moth trapping nights of his life in mid-October. Located at a purportedly-haunted ruined castle in Devon and accompanied by the well-known physicist and presenter Professor Brian Cox, as well as a gaggle of excited children, Richard was helping with filming for a forthcoming BBC1 television series due to be broadcast sometime next year.

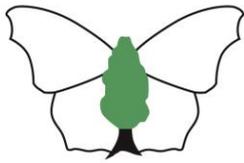
For those following the neonicotinoid debate this recently published [paper](#) (Botias *et al*, 2015) may be of interest. The results from this study demonstrates that the application of neonicotinoid seed dressings to autumn-sown arable crops gives rise to contamination of pollen and nectar of nearby wildflowers the following spring and summer, with concentrations that are sometimes higher than in the crop, and for bees (and presumably potentially other pollinators in this environment) wildflowers were the major route of exposure.

STOP PRESS!

PhD opportunity

Applications for an exciting PhD opportunity to *investigate the mechanism behind moth declines: plants, landscape, pollution and climate* are now open. For further details click [here](#).

The Moth Team



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NATIONAL MOTH RECORDERS' MEETING 2016

**Lyttelton Lecture Theatre, Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham
Saturday 30th January 2016**

- 10.00 am Arrival and coffee
- 10.30 am Welcome
Dr Martin Warren, Chief Executive of Butterfly Conservation
- 10.35 am National Moth Recording Scheme Update
Dr Zoë Randle, Butterfly Conservation
- 10.55 am Changing fortunes of moths in Yorkshire
Dr Charles Fletcher, Yorkshire County Macro-moth Recorder
- 11.20 am Conservation of Fisher's Estuarine Moth: helping the species to spread its wings
Dr Zoë Ringwood, Natural England
- 11.45 am The Bordered Grey Enigma - A Riddle Solved
Paul Brooks, Moth Recorder Angus
- 12:10 pm Discussion session
- 12.30 pm **Lunch**
- 2.15 pm Burnets, cyanide-bombs and colonisation
Dr Mika Zagrobelny, University of Copenhagen
- 2.40 pm The dark side of street lighting: impacts on moth abundance, activity and pollen transport
Callum Macgregor, Newcastle University / Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- 3.05 pm Some like it hot: why species respond differently to climate change
Dr Georgina Palmer, University of York
- 3.30 pm **Tea**
- 4.20 pm A focus on moths: thoughts from the youth nature network
Simon Phelps, Megan Shersby, Ben Porter and Laura Richardson, A Focus on Nature
- 4.45 pm Discussion session & closing remarks
- 5.00 pm Close of meeting