

MOTHS OF DORSET

NEWSLETTER NO 2

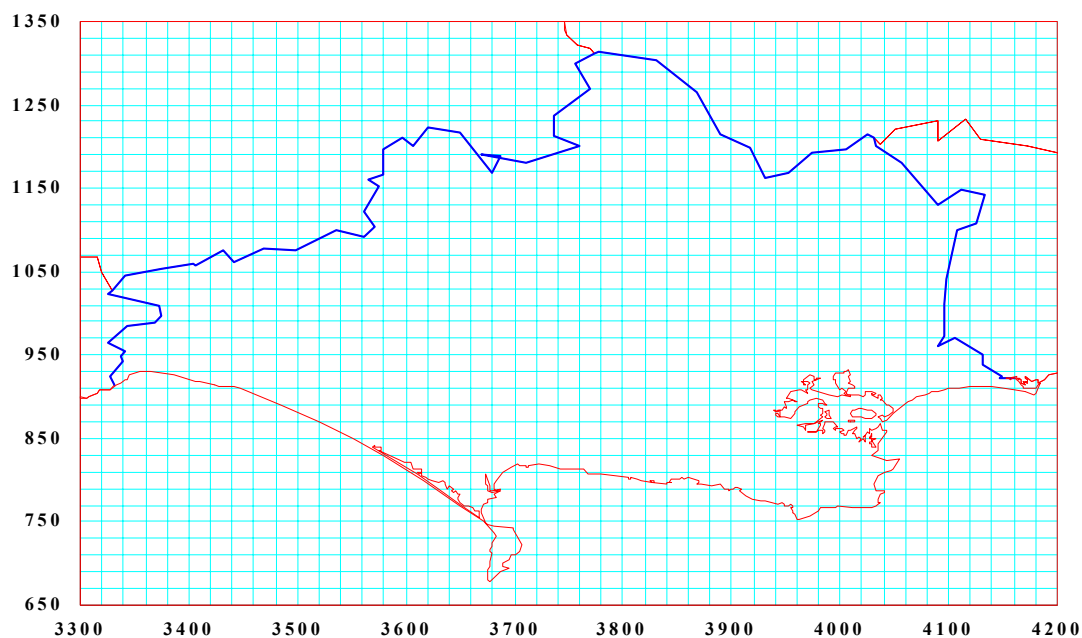
1 DECEMBER 1994

INTRODUCTION

A year has passed since the Moths of Dorset project was first proposed. During that time, a great deal has happened. The distribution of newsletter number 1 in February stimulated a tremendous amount of interest, and thanks to your feedback we now have a very solid and sizeable recorder network in place. The authors have been kept busy responding to requests for assistance on a range of different issues, particularly helping to identify some of the more tricky species and keeping up with the steady stream of records that continue to pour in. In parallel with all of this, 1994 has produced some truly stunning records for the county - more of this later.

DATA CAPTURE

As promised, this newsletter carries a map of Dorset depicting locations (opaque circle) for which we now have significant amounts of macro-lepidoptera data. Localities where recording has just started or which have been singled out for special attention in 1995, are denoted by a clear circle.



The task of centralising macro-lepidoptera records into a single computer database continues apace. So far records received from the following people have been processed in this way:

RECORDER	LOCATION	PERIOD	SPECIES
Dick Burt	Woolgarston, Corfe Castle	1991 - 1993	392
Clayesmore school	Iwerne Minster	1954 - 1968	420
Peter Davey	Gaunt's Common	1988 - 1994	400
Peter Davey	St. Alban's Head, Purbeck	1972 - 1994	261
Peter Davey	Oaker's Wood, Affpuddle	1994	254
Roy Eden	West Bexington, The Fleet	1991 - 1993	324
Jim Fradgley	Ashington, Wimborne	1986 - 1993	347
Gordon LePard	Matchams, Hurn	1984 - 1991	394
Nigel Webb	Furzebrook, Wareham	1972 - 1976	392

RECORDER ISSUES

One of the requests that appeared on the returned recorder requirement forms (Newsletter 1), concerned information on access to sites around Dorset. At the end of this newsletter you will find contact details for a large number of sites. Wherever permission is granted to run moth lights, and this is discretionary, recorders should take great care to observe all caveats and conditions imposed by the authority concerned. This is a golden opportunity to access many of the varied and interesting habitats that exist within Dorset and observe what species occur there.

IDENTIFICATION OF MOTHS

Macros

Two species which were difficult to separate but are now relatively easy to differentiate are the Copper Underwing and Svensson's Copper Underwing. The marking which sets them apart is the double chevron or outward pointing pair of arrows vertically beneath the circle in the centre of the top wing. If the tip of the two arrows are in a vertical line, then the species is the Svensson's Copper Underwing; if the tip of the two arrows lie on a 45 degree slope then the species is the Copper Underwing. In Bernard Skinner's book, Copper Underwing examples are figures 3, 5 and 6 whereas figure 2 refers to Svensson's Copper Underwing.

Micros

1994 RECAP

The 1994 season got off to a very late start with a damp and at times cold spring. However, this did not deter Julian Clark, who in late May (?) set up his portable trap at Durlston and caught a *Cucullinae* species he was not totally sure about. To his credit he despatched the moth to the Natural History Museum who duly identified it as the Water Betony. It turns out that this is only the second UK record of the adult moth, the first was taken at light also at Swanage on 12 June 1949. Subsequent searching during the summer failed to reveal any larvae. Prior to this Phil Sterling kicked an Aspen tree trunk on ... and out fell a Light Orange Underwing.

The weather improved marginally during June and many recorders took the opportunity to follow-up our plea in the first newsletter for information on Forester and Burnet localities. Thanks to you we now have a better picture of where these species are, and pleasingly certain Cistus Foresters, Foresters, Narrow Five-spot Burnets and Five spot Burnet (sub-species *palustrella*) colonies are flourishing - please keep up the *Zygaenidae* spotting in 1995.

The first colony of Mere Wainscot moths were discovered in June near Beaminster where its foodplant Wood Small-reed is abundant - another Mere Wainscot was trapped at this time in Oakers Wood but this could have been a casual specimen as a Small Mottled Willow moth was at rest on an adjacent egg box!

The heat was turned up in July, a beautiful hot sunny and dry summer month. Moth and butterfly activity was intense during this time, and from many of the commoner migrant species were seen. A dazzlingly white *Colias* butterfly flew lazily by the Davey family whilst they were paddling in Shell Bay at Studland, one hot Saturday, and around this time Bordered Straws, Scarce Bordered Straws and further Small Mottled Willows were turning up at light.

The heatwave culminated in a protracted run of southerly winds during the first two weeks of August. This airmass originated from the western Mediterranean and the Pyrenees, and brought with it a large number of migrant species. Vestal moths were frequent, and an example of the Pyrale *Evergestis Extimalis* was caught at Gaunts Common. Two Tawny Waves were trapped, the first by Mike Jeffs at Hengistbury Head, the second by Martin Cade at Portland Bird Observatory. Roy Eden trapped an exotic and immaculate looking moth with highly distinctive cream and chocolate markings which he subsequently took to Phil Sterling to be identified. It turned out to be the Pale Shoulder moth, the first taken this century anywhere in the UK, indeed the only example ever seen was in Sussex in 1856, some 138 years ago. A second Pale Shoulder was taken in Kent a few days later.

During October, the Great Dart was trapped at Portland by Bernard Skinner and an example of the Flame Brocade was exhibited as moth of the day at Durlston Country Park. Both these species have put in a limited but regular appearance in these respective locations in recent years, and it may just be possible that some of these are indigenous. Together with the 46 Large Wainscots that came to Peter Davey's moth traps one October night in a Poole basin reedbed was one moth that looked at first glance to be another Large Wainscot. The wingspan was 37 millimetres, the abdomen was long as were the antennae. However, there were differences. The forewings were notably pointed and concolorous, save for minute dark speckling; the hindwings were much darker than the forewings. The moth itself was fidgety unlike the lethargic Large Wainscots. ...

Peter Davey and Phil Sterling

DORSET SITE DETAILS

DORSET COUNTY COUNCIL (EAST) - Phil Baarda of Moors Valley Country Park for site details and access particulars.

DORSET COUNTY COUNCIL.(WEST) - David Carmen 0305 252433 (Tony Harris 0305 252235) - planning/environmental services for site details and access particulars

POOLE BOROUGH COUNCIL - Susan Dawson and/or Nick Woods - planning/environmental services for site details and access particulars

DORSET COUNTY COUNCIL (HQ) - Phil Sterling - SSSI's in Dorset

DORSET TRUST FOR NATURE CONSERVATION - Robert Brunt (Reserves Officer, 15 North Square Dorchester 0305 264620; John Crewe (0202 549377 - home, 0202 861321 - work) is warden for certain east Dorset DNNTC sites.

FORESTRY COMMISSION - Mike Casserley and Harold Gillan (Coldharbour, Wareham 0929 551811) for access to Forestry Commission sites in Dorset (on OS maps, Forestry Commission managed land is bounded by a thin green line).

NATIONAL TRUST - Access/permits, initial contact Ivan Smith Stourhead House estate office 0747 841152 or East Leigh Court Bishopstrow Warminster Wilts BA12 9HW 0985 847777.

NATURE CONSERVANCY COUCIL (ENGLISH NATURE) - the Council can negotiate access to certain suitable sites in Dorset; contacts are Dee Stephens, Melanie Heath, Jim White at Slepe Farm, Arne (0929 556688).

RSPB - contact Brian Pickess, Syldata, Arne, Wareham, BH20 5BJ for access/permit for moth recording in Garston Woods or Arne; contact M Slater, 96 Oakbury Drive, Weymouth, DT3 6JQ for access/permit for moth recording at Radipole.

WOODLAND TRUST - contact Sally Glass, Pimperne Cottage, Melbury Osmond, Dorchester DT2 OLX 0935 83094 for site details.