

MOTH MUMBLINGS – EARLY AUGUST 2021

FLYING NOW

I don't have time to compile much of a list at the moment. There have been three separate reports of **Forester Moth** *Adscita statices* in July (at least two of which were male), at Chorleywood and Maple Lodge in Herts and Trent Park, Enfield in Middlesex. See item later in this newsletter. There are reports of Jersey Mochas and crimson underwings in Middlesex. An odd one is a **Luna moth** *Actias luna* (Saturniidae) at St Ippolyts, Herts ... a North American species which, in western Europe, is allegedly vagrant (but where from?). If you need to know more of what is flying now, check out the Herts Moth Group Facebook site.

FLYING SOON

Two species that are rare/threatened nationally should be targeted now if you have the time and interest!

The first ten days of August is the peak period for **White-spotted Pinion** (*Cosmia diffinis*) – a species that was almost lost in the 1970s as a consequence of Dutch Elm Disease. There is evidence that it is creeping out from its last stronghold in Huntingdonshire and should be looked for in the northern parts of Hertfordshire where Elm is growing. My personal experience is that it comes readily to battery powered actinic light, usually before midnight, if traps are placed directly under elm trees. It seems to like elm trees with lots of random side shoots etc., and may shun taller trees with bare trunks.

Striped Lychnis (*Shargacucullia lychnitis*) larvae can be found on Dark Mullein (*Verbascum nigrum*) at a known site in Bedfordshire near Barton-le-Clay. The plant is known to grow in adjacent areas of Hertfordshire, notably in the area around Hexton Chalk Pit nature reserve. If you are looking for a new site to ramble, may I recommend the footpaths in this area of the county.

Please note that I may ask for photographic or other proof of both these species if you are successful.

TWO MOTH GROUP OUTINGS FOR YOU

Following the trip to Springwell Reedbed recently, I have been hassled by several of you to organise another excursion. So, I have done just that – one in the south of Herts and one in the central area. Both are open to all, no need to book, but any children must be kept on a leash at all times!

BRICKET WOOD COMMON 28th AUGUST 2021

Details will follow as soon as we have worked these out. Please mark the date in your diary. This site is in the south of Hertfordshire enclosed within the north-east corner of the intersection of the M1 and M25 motorways.

PANSHANGER PARK, HERTFORD SATURDAY 14th AUGUST 2021

This site lies on the north side of the A14 main road between Hertford and Welwyn Garden City. **Meet at 19.30 hours for a prompt move off to trapping areas within the park at 20.00 hours.** Latecomers will be able to walk in, but are advised to call my mobile number to locate us as the park is very large (over 1000 acres). Meet **outside** the western entrance to the park in Panshanger Lane, SG14 2TS. This is at grid reference TL277126. There is plenty of parking space. At 8pm we will open the gate and move inside. **BRING EXTRA LIGHTS IF YOU HAVE THEM.** This is a colossal site with a range of

habitats from woodland, through grassland and ruderal ground to marshland alongside the River Mimram. We will split up into different areas to cover as much as possible, but as the site is furnished with tarmac roadways it will be no problem to move between areas to see as many moths as possible. **This trip will be especially suitable for beginners** so do feel free to come along even if you have only just started getting into moths. Bring a torch, wear sensible shoes/boots and even if it is warm remember to bring a coat for when it cools down later. Cameras welcome. Some of us may stay until the sun rises, but you will be able to leave at any time and staying to dawn is not compulsory.

KEEPING MOTHS ALIVE FOR IDENTIFICATION

I am always happy to check IDs and name anything you cannot recognise. Start with an e-mailed photo if you have no idea what it is, but please **KEEP THE MOTH IN THE FRIDGE** until I have replied (usually within 24 hours). I may simply want a different photo, or I may want the moth itself (alive) to look at closely. Either way, if you let it go then I can take the naming process no further. A few potentially interesting records have been lost over the years, because people let the moth go before I had a chance to look at it!

Moths take no harm at all in the fridge – they just think it is a British summer! Keep them in a sensible sized container (room to flap wings without damaging wing tips, but no need to use huge jam jars). There is **NO** need to make air holes – there is enough air in a standard one-inch glass tube for the average moth to last a fortnight. Of course, remember I said “fridge” – not the freezer!”

THE CONTINUING QUEST FOR *CALOPTILIA* (AND *COLEOPHORA*) SPECIMENS

I still want these. Please send all your examples of *Caloptilia* and *Coleophora* species, live or dead, to me at my address at the end of this newsletter.

In the last two weeks we have found *Caloptilia honoratella* at two additional sites away from its 2020 base in Stevenage. These are at Berkhamsted in the far west (Ian Gamble, a female confirmed by me) and Little Hadham in the far east (Jono Forgham, a female confirmed by Graeme Smith). A further possible example is from St Albans, but has yet to be confirmed. This is a species that was added to the British list only a year ago; it is associated with Sycamore trees. Yet another new-to-Britain species of *Caloptilia* is in the formal publication queue (which means that, ethically, I cannot yet name it here); it should be published in September. It may well be in Herts or Middlesex. Look for mines on Hop leaves (and for a folded leaf edge of the same leaf as the mine).

Many species of both *Caloptilia* and *Coleophora* are flying now!

INFORMATION FROM THE HERTS& MIDDLESEX WILDLIFE TRUST

The following is reproduced without alteration:

Hi there, you can protect a rare forester moth that has been identified at a site threatened by development.

The dazzling green forester moth was spotted in Maple Cross last week. Previously thought to be extinct from Hertfordshire, the moth was last seen in 1976 on the Trust's nature reserve near Aldbury Nowers, near Tring. This new sighting of the moth is on land

in Maple Cross, currently under threat from development. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust are calling for the site to be protected from development to safeguard the species.

If you live locally to Maple Cross or know someone who does, you can help the forester moth! Local residents have until 20th August to comment on the planning application - leave your comment to object to this development or encourage a resident in the area to stand up for this threatened species!

Full details of the planning application can be found by searching **21/0573/FUL** on [Three Rivers District Council website](#).

LACEWING RECORDING SCHEME

Not really moths, but light trap operators often come across lacewings, so this is for you!

The British Isles national recording scheme for lacewings and allied insects (Neuroptera, Megaloptera, Raphidioptera and Mecoptera) has been conspicuous by its inactivity over the last twenty years – a fact that is entirely the fault of myself, as scheme organiser/national recorder.

This is about to change, however, as the scheme is being relaunched as of now. I very much welcome material for identification and/or confirmation. In particular, operators of light traps are encouraged to save the lacewings, alderflies, snakeflies and scorpion flies that enter their traps. **All of them** – there are several near identical species amongst both the greens and the browns. I also want casually collected material away from light traps. There are over 70 species to find! Specimens may be pinned, papered, preserved in alcohol or simply stored dry in tubes. Dated, nightly samples would be the absolute ideal, but pooled, weekly samples are better than nothing. I will supply lists to all contributors, but note that the default position is that I will keep or discard specimens unless directed to return them.

We also aim to revitalise the website (<http://lacewings.myspecies.info>) and the newsletter *Neuro News*, with a first edition appearing this autumn. The newsletter will be edited by James Jepson, who is based in Manchester. Please send contributions for the newsletter to him, preferably by email to LacewingRS@gmail.com or by post to Dr James E. Jepson, Editor, *Neuro News*, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Williamson Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL. **Specimens should be sent to myself:** Colin W. Plant, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CM23 3QP.

All for now. Apologies for anything important that I missed.

Do keep me updated.

Happy mothing,

Colin
