

MOTH MUMBLINGS

WELCOME

We have all been locked indoors for weeks now and we have all agreed, even if grudgingly so, that this has been a necessary evil.

However, the rules are now being slackened. We are now allowed to undertake various activities, though the list of what is permissible is somewhat confusing, generally contradictory and prone to change. You should, of course, temper all and every decision that you make based on interpretation of the law with a consideration of disease epidemiology – the virus does not just vanish because a politician says it is safe. I am not at all convinced that we will not have a third wave.

With all that in mind, here is my interpretation of the law with regard to moth trapping outings.

Vincent Judd has commented to me, and I agree with him, that the notion that we are not allowed to go out to trap moths, due to the Covid restrictions, does not seem to reflect the legal position. Under the ***Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (All Tiers) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1374) regulation 5(a)***, we are now (15th March 2021) permitted to leave home "... to provide voluntary or charitable services ...".

I agree that we are, therefore, allowed out to the local woods with our moth traps. This is because we are voluntarily obtaining records which eventually go to the National Moth Recording Scheme at Butterfly Conservation, a registered charity. Because records are submitted via myself, you should be clear that I am happy to provide evidence to your **voluntary or charitable services** should I be asked.

However, to remain legal, any rules concerning the number of people from different households, that apply at the date of your trip, should still be adhered to. Public events are not a good idea, whether legal or otherwise, as the virus is still in the environment, but meeting with someone from another household is not a problem.

However, it is most likely that P.C. Plod will probably not know this (or even care). They tend to have only a very sketchy knowledge of the non-criminal law and will be working to whatever set of rules the Duty Sergeant dictated at the start of their shift (and they probably get extra brownie points for each arrest made). No doubt you will be able to prove yourself right in the longer term, but nobody really wants the grief of being hauled off to the nick or, even worse, told to pack up your traps! They rarely compensate for false arrest! If challenged, stand your ground. Always carry a copy of the legislation if you have one (Internet?). Carrying this newsletter and my phone number might also help. If you do have the misfortune to lose out a confrontation with the Police, please advise me ASAP so that appropriate steps can be taken to correct the situation.

Any lawyers care to comment? Surely we must have at least one in our ranks?

MARCH 2021 TARGET SPECIES – FLYING NOW

Tim Green, who lives in that strange and exotic county of Essex to the east of us, writes:

“Another species probably under-recorded in Herts is *Pammene giganteana*. I had one to the MOL (*Grapholita molesta*) lure in the garden on Tuesday afternoon (9th March) at 13:50 when sunny. This is the 4th garden record after two to lures last year. I didn’t start ‘luring’ until mid-April last year so don’t know if this earlier date is significant. The first came in within 10 minutes of deploying the lure at lunchtime on 16th April. Jon Clifton [ALS] now sells the MOL lure which has been great for me in terms of other tortrix species recorded to it.”

There are now a great many pheromone lures available via Anglian Lepidopterists Supplies or via various other web sites and not at all just for clearwings. Do a web search. Using these lures is an effective and discrete way of recording moths and evidently is already proving its worth in March. I advise buying (or making) traps to contain the lures and retain attracted moths – otherwise you will have to sit and watch them all day.

MANLEY VERSION 3

Thanks to all those who replied to the last newsletter with regard to edition 3 of Manley's moth guide. I am told that it is due out in June. The blurb states "All 2500+ species on the main list are now illustrated as adults, including three new to Britain last year, many with early stages such as leaf mines and larval cases, plus some 80 species on an adventives appendix. Almost all images are of live adults but there are some museum specimens of rare or extinct species, such as the Manchester Moth from 1829 on the first spread."

ESSEX NATURALIST – FREE TO A GOOD HOME

As it says on the tin. I understand there may be a complete run. Free to genuine naturalists (no traders), but buyer collects from Woodbridge area of Suffolk (or pays delivery costs). Contact Howard Mendel direct at h.mendel@btinternet.com.

That's all for now.

Enjoy!

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