

MOTH MUMBLINGS MID-APRIL 2021

WEEKEND WONDERS!

Summer is here – well, the English version with hot days and overnight frost. Nevertheless, the moths are evidently unaware that it is cold. Here are a few for THIS WEEKEND. Who can tick off the most!

1: NIGHT TIME

SLOE CARPET

Set actinic traps (mv traps may also work) up against or in amongst the densest Blackthorn you can find. I will issue a challenge – IT IS NOT PRESENT IN HERTS OR MIDDLESEX. Please prove me wrong. It is on the wing this week at a site in Essex.

2: DAYTIME

COLEOPHORA PYRRHULIPENNELLA

The caterpillar lives in a case made from bits of the **Heather** that it feeds on; hard to spot, but when you get your eye in you can find several. First find some Heather (which is the hard part – there is some at Nomansland Common, Hertford Heath, Sherrardspark Wood and possibly elsewhere) then use a sweep net on the plants. Tip out sweepings onto a sheet (or the net flattened on the ground) and collect those bits of vegetation that eventually get up and walk away. Take your time – some may not move for a good few minutes. Feeding now – not yet recorded in Herts or Middlesex.

COLEOPHORA ALBICOSTA

This one has over-wintered in the seed case on a Gorse bush and will have pupated in the last fortnight ready to start flying any day now. COLLECT DEAD SEED PODS from gorse, and from the ground beneath, put in a dry container in a shaded, cool place – and wait! Easy-peasy and even I can name this one (hint: it has a white costa!). Widespread, but local in Herts and Middlesex. A good 70% chance of success I reckon.

PHYLLONORYCTER ULICICOLELLA

Whilst you are busy donating blood whilst examining gorse bushes, look for the mines of this one - ACTIVELY FEEDING NOW. Select bushes that have seriously meaty spines (ideally the ones that can take out an artery, not the piddly little things that just scratch) and look for surface mines on these spines (= leaves). They should still contain feeding larvae. Cut affected sections, place in a suitable sized container and store in a cool, dry shady place whilst waiting for the adults to emerge. PROBABLY GONE FROM HERTS AND MIDDLESEX, so please prove me wrong.

ARGYRESTHIA TRIFASCIATA / CUPRESSELLA / DILECTELLA

Look for pale areas, slowly turning brown, on the frond-like leaves of Lawson's Cypress or similar Cupressaceae. These will contain larvae of one of these species, actively feeding NOW. *A. trifasciata* is widespread and common and you will find it, probably in your garden! The other two are extremely rare with us (rear adults to know which you have found).

That's all for now ... I want this ready for you to read over your morning caffeine injection so you can all get out there early! Pictures of all easily available on the Interweb.

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