

MOTH MUMBLINGS – LATE MAY 2021

SUNSHINE AT LAST!

I was surprised the other day to open my curtains and discover some strange yellow stuff falling from the sky. According to the Interweb it is called “sunshine” – a phenomenon affecting Britain for a small number of days per year and usually excluding holiday weekends! Yes – it seemed that spring had arrived at last – just a week ahead of “blazing June”. Sadly, however, everything returned to “normal” on Friday afternoon and as I type this on Saturday morning it is dull and miserable again.

Thankfully, however, it is much warmer than it has been in ages. This will undoubtedly cause stuff to start flying – so be on the lookout for moths (remember moths?). Of course, it may not last; I suggest you get out there ASAP to see what you can find – ahead of the third wave of Covid 19 which is building up nicely for the summer holidays.

GREAT PROMIMENT (*PERIDEA ANCEPS*)

Is evidently having a good year, turning up at many new places, including some in habitats that are less than “textbook typical”.

LARGE RED-BELTED CLEARWING (*SYNANTHEDON CULICIFORMIS*)

should be flying now across Britain, until the end of June. Use the appropriate pheromone lure, if you have it, in mature birch woodland areas (or mature woodlands that include mature birch trees). It is not an expected species in the south-east, but then neither was Sallow Clearwing (*S. flaviventris*), which popped up all over the place last year. seek and ye shall (possibly?) find.

LEAF MINERS

These have been with us throughout the recent rainy season, but now that they have had a couple of days of warmer, drier weather they are developing rapidly and many should be obvious over this holiday weekend. Images of the mines of all the species mentioned below can be examined and identities checked at www.leafmines.co.uk.

Look especially at **BIRCH** trees for mines of several species of *Eriocrania* (remembering that saplings and scrub may support different species to those on taller, semi-mature trees).

Look also on **OAK** trees (deciduous English Oak and Sessile Oak are best – oddments like Turkey oak may be less productive). The near unpronounceable *Acrocercops brongniardella* is now making upper surface mines.

Mines of **Firethorn Leaf Miner** (*Phyllonorycter leucographella*) are currently obvious on the upper surface of leaves of **Firethorn** (*Pyrracantha*) bushes in people’s gardens.

Talking of garden plants, **Rose of Sharon** (*Hypericum* sp.) should now have fairly obvious mines in the leaves – these will almost always be made by *Ectoedemia septembrella*.

Careful inspection of the stems of **BROOM** bushes may well reveal a slightly brownish tunnel mine just beneath the surface, running in a straight line down one face of the usually square stem. This will be *Trifurcula immundella*.

Other leaf mines are also in evidence on various tree species, but don’t forget to look at herbaceous plants as well. **OX-EYE DAISY** leaves may have mines of *Bucculatrix nigricomella*, for example.

Various species of Longhorn moths may be flitting about at certain times of the day. There are two brown species and two or three green ones to find, as well as two darker ones with a yellow stripe across

the wing. If you are near plants of **Black Horehound** (*Ballota nigra*), you may find the reflective metallic one (*Adela croesella*).

Several of you have reported *Elachista* species flying during the daytime. *Elachista argentella* is the absolutely pure white one – other species are available this weekend!

Many other leaf miners to be found. Check out trees, shrubs and don't forget the low herbaceous plants, which also support several species of leaf-mining moths.

Rolled leaves are almost always caused by moth caterpillars (occasionally by beetles) – don't ignore them!

Given that many “May” species might be late, it is well worth inspecting flowers in grasslands, ruderal sites and some road verges as there are many species of **tortrix moths** to find here. Most are active in bright sunshine, but in the morning rather than the afternoon. When you are done, gently sweep the flowers with your net – you might be surprised at what your eyes missed!

These are just ideas off the top of my head - the list is not exclusive. You are almost guaranteed to find moths if you put in the effort.

APPLYING NAMES

If in doubt, you can either e-mail me a good quality image or else pop moths into tubes (one per tube) and send/deliver these to me, alive or dead, along with as much data as possible (as a minimum the name of collecting place, collecting date and your name; ideally, if known, name of flowers collected from, grid reference and any other relevant information).

You can also post images for ID on the Herts Moth Group Facebook site.

POSTING MOTHS TO ME (COLIN)

The postie is well-trained, but sometimes we get a temp in his place. So, **never** use any sort of special postal delivery. If you do, packages are likely to be held up at the sorting office until I can collect them – which can be a week or more. **Ordinary first or second class post is fine**. Try to send packages that will fit through as letter box (and remember that if the package is more than certain specified dimensions it needs stamping as a “Large letter”). IF IN DOUBT about the size, label the package with the words “**If out leave in black box by door**”.

POSTING LEAF MINES FOR NAMING

Gently **dab** the leaves dry with soft loo roll (dab – not wipe; wiping might remove surface egg shells). Put in a plastic bag, along with the data and the name of the plant that the leaf came from. In mixed samples, use a biro or similar to write the name of the plant on the leaf (taking care to avoid obscuring any part of the mine). Do not include tissues in the bag, or anything else that would dry the leaf out. Post to me immediately before they go mouldy.

NEW PERSON

Paul Cross, at Potton End, HP4 asks **if there is anyone else who records moths in my village or nearby?** Data Protection rules prevent me from giving out your contact details, but if you do live near Potton End he would very much welcome contact on: paul.anthony.cross@gmail.com

FROM OUR AMERICAN COUSINS

I have received the following e-mail: Given that it is a “virtual” meeting, some of you might be interested?

Greetings lepidopterists! We would welcome your participation in the upcoming virtual conference 18-20 August. In February 2021, the Executive Council of the Lepidopterists' Society voted to hold a virtual annual meeting due to safety concerns with the Covid-19 pandemic and the lack of an available venue for an in-person meeting. Although conditions have improved in most of the United States, the situation is not necessarily the same in other parts of the world, making travel difficult for many of our members. Together with the Southern Lepidopterists' Society, Association for Tropical Lepidoptera and Societas Europaea Lepidopterologica, we would like to take advantage of now familiar technology to offer a very low cost and inclusive conference open to all lepidopterists. Registration and instructions for submitting papers and posters will be posted soon on www.lepsoc.org. Instructions are also available via email to meeting@lepsoc.org. Please also address any questions by email to the same address. Registration will be \$15 for members of any of the four societies, \$25 for non-members and \$5 for all students, including non-members. If the registration fee is not possible for you, please register for the meeting and indicate that you would like a fee waiver when you get to that question in the registration process. Just a reminder that the abstract submission deadline is Friday, **July 16th**. We are looking forward to a very interesting and diverse conference and hope to hear from you soon. With best wishes from the 2021 organizing committee.

Call for Contributed Papers

The tentative schedule will include pre-recorded 12-minute Zoom presentations followed by live question and answer sessions. Posters will be viewable pdf files with a scheduled session of 2 minute "elevator pitches" and question and answers. Awards will be given for outstanding student posters and oral presentations. Please visit www.lepsoc.org to register and view the full schedule of activities, including featured speakers, online social events, and iNaturalist field identification projects. Presenters may screenshare using PowerPoint or other software in order to prerecord Zoom presentations. Instructions for recording and uploading presentations and preparing pdf posters will be available at www.lepsoc.org. Titles and abstracts **must be received by 16 July 2021** in order to be considered for inclusion in the program. Please fill out the pdf form available at www.lepsoc.org and email to meeting@lepsoc.org. A Word file including author(s), address, phone, email, presentation title, and abstract may be sent in lieu of the form. Please limit abstracts to 125 words or less, indicate poster or oral presentation, and if you are a student presenter.

BUGLIFE NEWSLETTER

Assuming that I can master the technology, the latest Buglife newsletter now follows. Sadly, the images will not play ball, but the various links seem to be OK.

That's your lot. Keep me posted on any interesting captures and if anyone else feels the urge to write a contribution to this newsletter please feel free to send it to me for consideration.

Happy mothing,

Colin

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Dear

Welcome to the latest news from Buglife with updates on a significant European ruling, a couple of new surveys for citizen science action and an invitation to sign up to support our No Insectinction Campaign.

Bugs Matter

An innovative app to survey insect populations is being launched. The user-friendly [Bugs Matter app](#) brings meaningful citizen science to the pockets of thousands and will help wildlife organisations better understand how our insect populations are faring – by asking people to count the number of ‘bug splats’ on their car number plates. Smartphone users can take part by downloading the free Bugs Matter app from their app stores. The concept is simple: before making an essential journey in a vehicle, clean the front number plate. When you reach your destination, count the bugs squashed on a section of the number plate by placing a ‘splatometer’ grid against the plate, which you will get when you download the app. A photo and details can then be submitted.

European Court of Justice ruling

The Court of Justice of the European Union has [ruled](#) that the European Commission was right to ban the use of three bee-killing neonicotinoid pesticides – imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam. The court rejected manufacturer Bayer’s appeal to overturn the ban and the 17 May 2018 ruling of the EU General Court, and instead significantly strengthened the ability of the EC to take action to prevent environmental harm.

(c) Clare Pumfrey

PotWatch

[Help us find invasive](#) non-native flatworms. [These](#) have been accidentally introduced to the UK in imported pot plants, and newly arrived species continue to be discovered. Once introduced these flatworms can reproduce rapidly, cannot be eradicated, and pose a risk to native soil invertebrates such as earthworms by feeding on them. There are at least three native species of flatworm in the UK but more than ten non-native species.

(c) S Rae

No Insectinction Campaign

We are looking for people to [sign up](#) to support the [No Insectinction](#) Campaign - the first 5,000 will get a packet of wildflower seeds along with a host of tips and suggestions on how to play a part in preventing the mass extinction of invertebrate species.

New Buglife Shop

Buglife have had a [shop](#) makeover with easy access to our great ranges including [clothing](#) and a whole new range of Buglife [homewares](#).

Fundraising

We have added a new page with ideas for [virtual fundraising](#) events and the very exciting prospect of amazing [charity challenges](#) for adventurers.

(Photo (c) Charity Challenge)

Join Buqlife