

NO:8 DECEMBER 2023

MOTH NEWS

FOR DERBYSHIRE 2023

Derbyshire Moths Facebook Group (DMFG)



VC57

December - Early winter records

The month began with a real bang weather wise, which very quickly put paid to any Moth Trapping, as can be seen from Steve Orridge's photo taken on 3 December.



Buxton December 3rd 2023 – Steve Orridge

The first moth of the month was a **Many-plumed Moth** discovered on Matt Leedell's window sill in Belper on 3 December.



Many-plumed Moth - Matt Leedell

The next moth records came from Brian **Hobby in Kirk Hallam. He recorded two December Moth** on 10 December. Up to 14th no further moth records on DMFG.

April Darby recorded the mines of **Stigmella aurella - Golden Dot**, on Bramble (Rubus) at Clown Green, Clowne on 5 December.

During the middle of the month, the new Field Guide to the **Micro Moths of Great Britain and Ireland (second edition)** was released. A long awaited revised edition that will give us all something to read during the next month or so, when "Mothing" is in a state of semi-hibernation. I dare say will be on many "Moth-ers" Christmas wish list!

December - Early winter records cont'd

A very brief mild spell around the middle of December provided a few lucky Moth-ers with some late records. Graham Pollack had a single **Dark Chestnut** at Quarndon on 15th and Nikki Barrow had another **Dark Chestnut** also on 15th. Clive Ashton had 2 **Mottled Umber** at Cromford and Brian Hallam also had a **Mottled Umber** on a fence panel in his garden, his moth trap was empty.



Mottled Umber - Findern - Brian Hallam



Mottled Umber - Cromford - Clive Ashton

Mark Radford disturbed an *Agonopterix arenella* (Brindled Buff) during conservation work at Markham Vale also on the 15th



Agonopterix arenella - Mark Radford



December Moth - Clive Ashton

December - Early winter records cont'd

As the month and year came to an end, the last week was severely affected by Storm Gerrit, bringing some exceptionally strong winds and heavy rain, putting paid to any moth trapping.

The final moth records for the year came from Brian Hobby at Kirk Hallam, when somehow he managed to run a light trap on 17/18 December and recorded just a single **Dark Chestnut**, and from Martin Roome who found a roosting **Winter Moth** in Chaddesden Wood on 18 December. This encouraged him to run a light trap but only recorded 2 **Light-brown Apple Moth**.



Dark Chestnut - Brian Hobby



Clifden Nonpareil - Tony Davison



Reddish Light Arches - Tony Davison

My Moth Highlights for 2023 - by Tony Davison

I must confess that I didn't moth trap as much as I should have done during 2023, looking in my note book I can only see 6 separate moth nights of recording. However those 6 light traps did produce some lifers and several NFG. (**New For Garden**)

The highlight for me during 2023 was undoubtedly seeing Derbyshire's 2nd record of **Rannoch Looper**. Many thanks to Sam Goddard for trapping no less than two, and for the invite to see and photograph the 2nd record for Derbyshire, of this rare migrant macro moth. The 2nd highlight was recording a **Clifden Nonpareil** in my garden moth trap on 9/10 October, a lifer. Then I had two more lifers from the same trap on 10 September. My first **White-point** and **Box-tree Moth**. A NFG was a **Northern/Deep Brown Dart** on 15 September.

Emily Louise Milnes invited me over to see a **Reddish Light Arches** that she had trapped in her Sandiacre garden. Another lifer for me, and one of only two modern day records of this species in the county (both in June 2023). Finally, a **Black Arches** and **Haworth's Pug**, both recorded from a National Trust moth event at Staunton Harold Reservoir on 15 August. I **MUST** do more trapping in 2024!

Sam Goddard's 2023 "Mothing Review" - A personal story.

Having built my own moth trap, I started serious "Mothing" in 2023 when I could light trap for a full season of moths. A few tentative target species were picked out as desirable, such as **Burnished Brass** and **Canary-shouldered Thorn**, amongst others. The thought of a full season, and particularly trapping during the spring and early summer, was exciting; how many new species would I encounter? With all these questions, it seems sensible to note that the trap at home has been run out of Fenny Bentley, just outside of Ashbourne. A quaint little suburban village, and my garden has been well planted to encourage insects such as Butterflies, Flies, Bees and of course Moths, with some foliage through all the seasons.

Unfortunately, the spring seemed as though winter had never left, with bitterly cold temperatures pushing to -10 degrees, and so my moth trapping didn't really start until late April. Again, unfortunately, the first couple of traps were blanks, a humbling feeling for even the hardest of Moth-ers, and it wasn't until the 20 of May when the first moths appeared, with 2 **Pale Tussocks** and a **Muslin**, amongst 8 moths of 6 species.

Numbers stayed low throughout the rest of May, and with work days often consuming the good weather, trapping became limited to just the weekends. The 28 of May proved to be the best trap of the month with 19 moths of 15 species and a second record of **Poplar Hawkmoth**, with a first record of **Lesser Swallow Prominent** proving most notable.



Lesser Swallow Prominent - Sam Goddard



Pale Tussock - Sam Goddard

The first trap of June rewarded me with a new species for the garden, The **Shears**, whilst the 10 of June provided the first stunners, and two of my target species. **Peppered Moth** and **Scorched Wing** made their appearances simultaneously, also an **Elephant Hawkmoth**. A real eye opening trap for me, as I discovered the endless shapes and forms of moths that can appear in the trap. Two nights later, on the 12th, the numbers started to swell and a trap of 78/39 turned up a wide variety, unique in their own way. From the **Scorched Wing** to the tiny **Diamond-back Moth**, **Chamomile Shark** to **Ghost Moth**, while a **Green Oak Tortrix** was most notable.

The years biggest highlight came on the night of the 15/16 of June, when after checking the outskirts of the trap, and picking up a few interesting species, a moth got my nerves jangling. It was a small, yellow/orange/brown moth with feathered antennae, and a slight cross bar on the forewing. It was quickly potted and news promptly put out on the DMFG, Twitter and everywhere else that might help explain it. A **Rannoch Looper**, a species usually confined to Scotland and mainland Europe. An irruption of this species had taken place and many had arrived in the UK. As such, this moth was exceptionally rare and subsequently proved to be the first record for Derbyshire. What a feeling, especially so early into my first full season! There were many other interesting species in the trap including **Treble Lines**, **Gold Spot**, **Narrow-winged Pug** and **Clouded Silver**, it was certainly not just a 'one moth trap' amongst 73/32.

Sam's "Mothing" year continued

I ran another moth trap on 17/18 of June. My first port of call was to check the inside of the trap rather than outside and around the trapping area. Low and behold, I noticed a moth, small, yellow/orange/brown, feathered antennae and a significant cross wing bar on the forewing. SURELY NOT, many other expletives crossed my mind as I quickly potted it. Another **Rannoch Looper**! News was swiftly put out and I was joined later in the day by Tony Davison, who came over to see it for himself. A special feeling to be able to share your moth findings with others. At the time it was considered the second record for Derbyshire, but was later changed to the third record, as another Derbyshire Moth-er had found one by daylight elsewhere in the county. Nevertheless, I joined an exceptionally niche club in being one of a tiny proportion of Moth-ers to have multi-trapped this species. The highlights didn't stop there as the Rannoch was just one of 146/46 recorded, my first trap to 'ton up' in the year.



Rannoch Looper No:1 - male - Sam Goddard



Rannoch Looper No:2 - male - Sam Goddard

Another huge trap followed on the 23 of June, when **Buff-tip** made its first appearance for me, amongst 144/41, but it was the following night that really set the bar high, with a whopping 267/40 having moved the trap to the front garden (though 180 of these were Garden Grass Veneer). Joining these was an interesting Pug species which turned out to be a **Valerian Pug**, another rare Derbyshire species. At this point, it felt like every moth I could wish for may drop into the trap, and long may it continue. At the end of June though, I came crashing back to earth, when on the 30th a measly 21/14 were recorded.

July started with 77/27 on the 2nd, with a **Small Rivulet** and **Mottled Rustic** being the most notable, before a near wash-out in the trap on the 10th, brought another poor return of 22/14, although my first **Light Arches** wasn't to be sniffed at. The 13 July returned a smile to my face, with my first **Burnished Brass**, a simply stunning moth and one you can't quite appreciate from photos. Coupled with a **Poplar Hawkmoth**, a return of 70/27 wasn't upsetting, though not quite the numbers I might have caught last year in the blistering temperatures. The rest of July went along without too much to shout about, a **Yellow-tail** on the 16th was nice, showing off its intriguing defensive skills. The last trap of July came on the 21st/22nd, rewarding me with a **July Highflier** and **Carcina quercana**, quite a stunning little moth and one that I'll be excited to attempt to catch again.

August soon came around, and with a holiday to the Isles of Scilly looming, I knew trapping opportunities would be limited. So, a rush of moth traps at the start of the month, with a few new moths recorded, such as **Bordered Beauty** and **Shaded Broad-bar**, the former being one of my favourite moths I've trapped this year. The afternoon of the 2 July brought the first **Hummingbird Hawkmoth** of the year to the garden, always a special sight. Further traps brought **Blood Vein**, **Bulrush Wainscot** and a host of micros, with the final moth trap before the holiday, recording **Magpie Moth** and my first **Ruby Tiger**, certainly a garish character, then away on holiday.

Sam's "Mothing" year continued



Bordered Beauty - Sam Goddard

The 24 July was my next moth trap, when I recorded my first **Small Phoenix**, quite a charming moth for sure, whilst an **Acrobasis advenella** put the term 'Little Brown Job' to shame. Busy with work, I didn't then trap until the start of September, with 25/16 on the 2nd, in what felt a disappointing trapping session in good conditions, with 51/17. Similarly the following night, just proving that September Mothing can be disappointing at times. **Feathered Gothic** and **Green Carpet** made an appearance, with the 9th proving most fruitful for the latter, with 21 recorded in a huge trap of 132/38+. A late **Wormwood Pug** on the 10th/11th was joined by an **Orange Sallow** overnight, and made for a special trap in which 86/29 were caught, as well as a **Purple Bar** and 3 **Brown-spot Pinions**.

The 16 of September proved to be my final trap of the month, following a sporting injury which kept me off my feet for a couple of weeks. I recorded 2 **Frosted Orange**, 17 **Lunar Underwing** and singles of **Brown-spot Pinion**, **Centre-barred Sallow** and **Canary-shouldered Thorn** happy with that until October. A return of 3/3 kicked me off on the 3 of October, with the highlight being a **Pale Tussock** caterpillar which appeared to have drowned in the bird bath, but miraculously rose like Lazarus to return to the world of the living, three hours later.



The 7th-8th and 8th-9th^h of October brought some new moths, including both **Red-line** and **Yellow-line Quaker**, **Green-brindled Crescent**, **Blair's Shoulder Knot** and 3 **Barred Sallow**. Home trapping was put on hold after this, as I returned to the Isles of Scilly and had some rather glorious moth encounters.

The local Moth-ers were capturing some exceptional species including, **Grass Webworm** and **Spanish Dot**, which was considered to be a moth with less than 20 records in the UK. Mega!



This trip also provided me with my first **Crimson Speckled**, whilst I also found **Yellow Underwing Pearl** (*Uresiphita gilvata*) and **Olive Pearl** (*Palpita vitrealis*) which proved to be good records for Scilly, especially the former with less than 50 records for the islands.

The Isles of Scilly don't do boring moths: *U. Gilvata* top), **Crimson Speckled** (bottom)

Sam's "Mothing" year continued

I returned home later in the month and felt that the conditions were good enough to continue moth recording through some parts of November, particularly the later stages, and a single **December Moth** was trapped on the 20th, before what I take to have been my final trap of the year on the 23 of November, bringing in a surprising 14/5; with 10 **December Moth**, *Caloptilia stigmatella*, **Mottled Umber**, **Pale Brindled Beauty** and **Feathered Thorn** rounding it off. The **Pale Brindled Beauty** being an exceptionally early record and one that wasn't on my radar at all.

So, the year totals were as follows: I trapped a total of 36 times during 2023, from April to November. These included 212 species of moths with 2309 individuals caught (and many more escaping). I estimated I may have caught 140 species by October, so the total numbers really surprised me, especially with a homemade trap in a rather sheltered garden. A year I'm particularly happy with, capturing a good number of target species whilst still leaving some good moths for the future.

It is also at this stage I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the Derbyshire Mothing community for helping with the identification of numerous species throughout the year. I'm certainly a better Moth-er now than I was at the start of the year!

As for 2024, I'm living away in Lincolnshire for the year as I take up a post at Gibraltar Point NNR, where amongst the working and other things, I hope to be doing an awful lot of Moth trapping. I'm certain to be tweeting about this a lot!

A sterling 2023, and a 2024 to do it all again. Happy trapping all!

Sam.

Steve Thorpe put together a message to the Face Group, just before Christmas which contained some encouraging news. The DMFG goes from strength to strength, with improving skills from all recorders on the group. This has led to some great strides forward in Derbyshire mothing.

Recently Steve and myself have had conversations with DANES and DWT about the county recorder position, and we hope to bring you all some definitive guidance early in the new year.

For those already helping us test the iRecord system, the stats are proving most useful. Currently we have over 42,000 records of moths, with 2023 accounting for 7,619 of those, so far, and comprising 704 species recorded this year. There were some 36,000 outstanding records which required verification. We have now processed all but 400 or so and hope to have all records up to date very soon. That's pretty fantastic statistics, considering we started the year with very little in the way of information. So please keep us informed of your finds, help us to build more of a picture of the moths in the county, but most of all enjoy being part of a thriving community. Let's all look forward to a new Mothing Year 2024.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the contributions to the monthly bulletin. Please remember this is your bulletin. If you want to contribute to it, please get in touch. I need plenty of material for January 2024!

Tony Davison