

# GMS NEWS



Week 36 - Autumn 2007



**Golden-rod Brindle, S. Grimwood, 27/8/07, Mid-Wales – ‘Obviously a moth with good taste, reading the last issue of GMS News!’ (if only I could see this species in my back garden! – Ed)**

## **Introduction:**

Welcome to the final newsletter of 2007 for the Garden Moth Scheme (GMS). This year was probably the first year when we could really call ourselves a national scheme. Now all we need to do is spread the word and get more recorders joining GMS for 2008. If you know anyone who might be interested from anywhere in the UK then please get them in touch with me or your area recorder.

If you haven't already sent your GMS 2007 records in for this newsletter then please get them in as fast as possible and definitely before Christmas. It can be a real pain if I have to chase you for your records – a hassle for you and for me! Please get them in as fast as possible to help your country coordinator for Wales (GMS Cymru – Norman Lowe) and your area coordinators for Essex and nearby counties (East England – Chris Gibson), for Surrey/Kent (South East England – Malcolm Bridge/David Gardner) and from the Back-Garden-Moths website (Simon Wantling). The photo above was taken by Suzanne Grimwood in Mid-Wales and shows the real popularity of our newsletter! If anyone else has good photographs of GMS moths or their moth trap or garden then we would love to feature them in future newsletters. Please send them through to me and I will try to get them included. All photographs will of course be credited to you and not reproduced again without your permission.

The next publication you receive will be the Annual Report, which will come out some time in February. It will be out in time for the GMS AGM, which this winter will be held at Coleshill, in North Warwickshire on February 17<sup>th</sup> 2008 – see the

information already mailed to you if on email or the attachment in with this newsletter if you receive it by post. Everyone who recorded for GMS in 2007 or is thinking of joining the scheme in 2008 will be very welcome (plus friends/relatives), but please can you let us know that you are coming to give us an idea of numbers for chairs, tea, coffee etc.

Don't forget the new recording season will start on Friday March 7<sup>th</sup> 2008, make sure your trap is ready for the launch again! New recording forms and instructions will come through to you in time for the start. We are currently reviewing species on the recording sheet for all parts of the UK, so if you would like to suggest additions or/and deletions from the list then please let us know – we might add or/and delete up to about 20 species for each area. Your views on this are important. The next newsletter will not go out until after the end of April 2008, as soon as possible after week 9 (2nd May 2008). Articles from you all will again be very welcome.

Again, thanks to all of you out there for your brilliant hard work in recording your moths every week – your work is incredibly valuable. I hope you are all keen to continue in the GMS for 2008 and can maybe convince a friend to join?

### **So, What's the News from Autumn 2007?**

We've had records back for the newsletter from an excellent total of 86 gardens so far – well done to everyone who sent them in. For those who didn't send records in – then don't worry – the important thing is to get your full set of records in as soon as possible now.

In 2006 we didn't produce an autumn newsletter, so there is no direct comparison with results from this quarter last year. It does, however seem likely that our results at the end of the year will show that moth numbers in autumn probably didn't do as badly as those for the summer 2007. But, was I right, we will need to wait for the Annual Report from all your records before we can look at this?

So, I will go straight into analysing the differences in records from the different recording areas. The following table shows the top 30 commonest species in our gardens, with figures compared between all areas. Figures in each column are the average total number seen per garden over the 9 weeks for that area, with total figures included in the final column:

Species Number	Species Name	WM – 43 gardens	SW – 2 garden	SE – 11 gardens	EE – 10 gardens	CY – 20 gardens	UK – 86 gardens	UK – Total moths
2107	Large Yellow Underwing	35.51	33.0	92.55	86.0	29.9	47.31	4069
2134	Square-spot Rustic	9.16	23.5	35.36	37.3	25.6	19.94	1715
2109	Lesser Yellow Underwing	11.63	3.5	17.45	11.2	13.65	12.6	1084
2126	Setaceous Hebrew Character	8.63	15.0	8.18	23.3	9.15	10.55	907
998	Light Brown Apple Moth	11.28	7.0	9.64	11.5	6.85	9.97	857
2270	Lunar Underwing	5.81	23.0	26.36	6.8	6.5	9.12	784
1764	Common Marbled Carpet	4.51	7.5	8.27	3.0	10.65	6.31	543
1769	Spruce Carpet	1.47	0.0	0.64	0.3	22.9	6.17	531
2199	Common Wainscot	5.72	1.5	0.73	9.5	0.7	4.26	366
2232	Black Rustic	2.4	5.5	3.45	2.5	9.3	4.22	363
1906	Brimstone Moth	3.05	4.5	5.09	4.0	5.05	3.92	337
2353	Flounced Rustic	1.81	11.5	8.37	3.7	4.55	3.74	321
2240	Blair's Shoulder-knot	3.37	0.5	3.73	2.6	5.2	3.69	317

Species Number	Species Name (Continued)	WM – 43 gardens	SW – 2 garden	SE – 11 gardens	EE – 10 gardens	CY – 20 gardens	UK – 86 gardens	UK – Total moths
2477	Snout	2.02	3.0	6.27	4.5	1.4	2.73	235
1937	Willow Beauty	1.63	3.5	8.09	4.7	1.05	2.72	234
2117	Autumnal Rustic	0.74	0.0	n/a	n/a	8.7	2.4	206
1728	Garden Carpet	2.14	1.5	5.73	2.0	1.15	2.34	201
2389	Pale Mottled Willow	0.3	1.0	13.09	2.9	0.4	2.28	196
2306	Angleshades	1.53	0.5	1.37	3.0	3.4	2.09	180
2269	Centre-barred Sallow	2.02	0.0	0.91	3.2	2.25	2.07	178
2441	Silver Y	1.65	1.0	0.36	1.1	3.8	1.91	164
1760	Red-green Carpet	2.14	0.0	1.64	0.9	1.6	1.76	151
2272	Barred Sallow	1.65	0.0	2.91	2.9	0.3	1.6	138
2102	Flame Shoulder	1.4	1.5	0.55	1.8	2.4	1.57	135
1923	Feathered Thorn	0.98	0.5	1.27	1.7	2.3	1.4	120
1776	Green Carpet	1.63	1.0	0.82	1.5	1.15	1.38	119
2361	Rosy Rustic	0.91	3.0	n/a	1.9	2.3	1.28	110
2274	Sallow	0.6	0.5	n/a	3.4	2.35	1.26	108
2092	Shuttle-shaped Dart	0.56	1.5	2.45	4.1	0.3	1.17	101
2245	Green-brindled Crescent	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.5	4.0	1.1	95

(WM = West Midlands, SW = South West, NW = North West, CY = Cymru (for GMS in Wales), SE = South East, EE = East England) Where n/a is entered in the table this means figures are not available for this species in this area because they were considered too scarce to record. Some of these species will be reviewed in winter 2007/8 and may well be added to species lists (e.g. Green-brindled Crescent may be added to the West Midlands list.).



**‘Green-brindled Crescent may be added?’**

Average counts per garden are not very representative for South West England with records only from two Dorset gardens. Average counts for other areas are much more representative with at least 10 gardens per area.

Currently little is known of population sizes of common moth species across Britain. Most of the information available is about distribution of species with some 'dot maps' having been produced of which counties and 10 kilometre squares species occur in, but little detail on numbers recorded or comparisons between regions.

The information we have compiled is able to give quantitative information on distribution of species in different areas of Britain based on your records and this is an excellent and very useful addition to the information mentioned above.

As usual this maybe asks more questions than it answers. For instance Large Yellow Underwing (with over 4000 recorded) was again common in most gardens and top of the list in the table above. West Midlands, Wales and South West England appear to have very similar population levels, but why were population levels almost three times as high in East England and South East England? Does it just mean that the species flies later in these areas?

Lunar Underwing was about four times as common in South Eastern gardens, why was this? Spruce Carpet had consistent population levels across the English gardens, but averaged a figure over ten times as much in Wales! Autumnal Rustic was also noticeably commoner in Wales, this is particularly important as it has now been accepted as a United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan Research species, that has suffered worrying declines.

Pale Mottled Willow appears much commoner in the South East, was this due partially to immigration of this species. Green-brindled Crescent has been well recorded in East England and Wales, so it should maybe added to our species lists for other areas. Vine's Rustic was well recorded from East and South East England and will probably reach the top 30 if it is added to species lists for other areas and continues its expansion.



**'Lunar Underwing was about four times as common in south eastern gardens'**

There are so many questions to ask about these different populations in different areas – do you have any suggestions for the answers?

### **Notes from Contributors:**

(All the articles below are the opinions of the authors and not necessarily of the GMS or GMS coordinators as a whole)

#### **a. From Richard Clement, Pendock, Worcestershire** **First Year in the Garden Moth Scheme**

My interest in Lepidoptera started on receiving the Observer's Book of Butterflies as a Christmas present when I was still at primary school. The best species I remember in my suburban Malvern garden was a Clouded Yellow one late summer. The interest in moths started when I was at grammar school. The biology lab had a small box with about 40 mounted specimens of various moths. The only less common species I can remember was a Leopard Moth. At home I never caught anything too interesting but my grandparents lived near Pencombe in Herefordshire and I clearly remember nights when I caught in my home-made muslin various species attracted to the light outside the back door including Iron, Pebble and Lesser Swallow Prominents, Peach Blossom, Lappet and Antler Moth. The hawthorn hedge nearby had hundreds of Magpie Moth caterpillars.



**‘The only less common species I can remember was a Leopard Moth’**

This year, since 23 March, I have seen every species I saw when younger apart from Scalloped Hazel, Antler Moth, Peach Blossom, Lappet and Least Yellow Underwing. This year was the first time since childhood that I felt I had sufficient time to invest in the hobby to make it worthwhile. I have a 15W actinic trap and the good fortune to have a large garden on the south edge of a 60 acre mixed deciduous wood. The wood is on an outlier of the lower lias formation and the soil conditions are therefore distinctly alkaline. I live in Pendock, which is in the extreme South West corner of Worcestershire.

Armed with a copy of Waring and a digital SLR (plus my trusty x10 hand lens) I set about learning to identify the moths I trapped. The first really exciting find (and easy to identify) was a Silver Cloud on 9 April. 14 April brought the first Lobster Moth and an immaculate Scorched Carpet. This was the first of a large number of Geometrid species I caught that I think are breathtakingly delicate and colourful. On

this theme 20 April brought the first Maiden's Blush and Mocha (over 80 of these have come to the trap during the year) and 26 April a Cream Wave.

The first Hawk-moth was a Poplar on 28 April.

19 May brought the first moth that really stumped me. A photo on the website brought the solution – a Turnip Moth (almost black forewings were enough to fool me!) 22 May brought a Noctuid (got that far at least) that was clearly impossible to identify! Fortunately someone else beat me to posting a photo of an identical moth on the website and it was identified as an Ingrailed Clay – obvious really. 25 May produced a Grass Rivulet.

6 June saw an Obscure Wainscot (wandering a fair way from home?) The Bee Moth on 8 June stumped me for a time until I found the photo on the UK Moths website.

On 11 June I found a Small Elephant Hawkmoth. Once, over 30 years ago, I found a pair of these in *flagrante delicto* on an anthill on a sunny day on the top of the Malvern Hills. On 20 June whilst carrying the trap up to the edge of the wood I glimpsed a Scarlet Tiger in the grass. Did I really? I almost dropped the trap and went back – yes I did see it! 'Frantic dash into house to get net and camera (latter hiding like most malicious inanimate objects). Said moth clearly a ham since obligingly waiting.' Ended up with splendid photos. A friend of mine brought one of these to school one day that he had caught with a tennis racket – after which it was nowhere near as photogenic.

July 4<sup>th</sup> produced a Coronet – at this stage I was seeing very few Noctuids so this was welcome (and a very pretty moth). Four nights later confirmed that Footmen (or is it Footmans?) do like my garden – Buff and Muslin to add to Orange, Scarce, Dingy and Common (my second commonest moth with over 350 caught). 14 July produced the first Waved Black. Then came 20 July and rather a lot of weather (!!!) stranding me in Birmingham for 24 hours. I had a good catch on the 23<sup>rd</sup> (106 moths) but by late July I was catching less than 40 moths a night, this recovering to about 60 through the middle of August but the 29<sup>th</sup> only produced 24 moths even though the weather was sunny and dry and the night was still with a minimum temperature of 11°C. 21 August produced 6 new species (the best night of the year) including Canary-shouldered Thorn, Sallow Kitten and an Olive. The following night I caught the first of 23 Pale Eggars – this one having been eaten by a spider. Other uninvited guests to the trap during the year included 4 Hornets (all very docile), 1 wasp, countless Cockchafers (I could hear these in the trap 20 yards away – the real head-bangers of the insect world?) and one very large and ornate crane-fly. 28 August was memorable – a Great Brocade – remarkable how fresh it was considering how far it had travelled. The next event was on 5 September, though I am grateful for a number of people in the GMS for identifying the moth as a Square-spot Dart.

I thought things would just quietly fizzle out after that but the numbers of moths has been surprisingly high during October (the 12<sup>th</sup> produced 76 moths of 27 species including an incredibly late and fresh Blotched Emerald). I really like the autumn Noctuids; Sallow, Barred Sallow, Frosted Orange, Black Rustic, Satellite, Merveille du Jour (a spectacularly beautiful moth), Brown-spot Pinion, Dark Chestnut, Sprawler, Yellow-line Quaker, Red Underwing, etc.

It is clear that this has been an exceptionally poor year but one advantage of being new to the hobby is that I have no comparison and having caught 232 species of macro so far I cannot complain. The help of fellow GMS members has been of great value and interest. I shall definitely continue next year.

*(Editors note – those of you who are in the GMS chat-site will see Richard's regular mailings of rare and exciting moths in his garden that make the rest of us green with envy!)*



**'14 July produced the first Waved Black'**

**b. From Alan Prior, Hall Green, Birmingham**  
**The Ups and Downs of 2007**

I don't think anyone could say that 2007 was a good year for moths. I suppose we all should have expected it after a spectacular previous year. Generally, the usual species were recorded but, in low numbers. It appears from a brief analysis of my own garden that grass and nettle feeders seemed worst affected by the monsoon-like summer. It's also possible that people's short-sighted and selfish obsession with concreting over every bit of vegetation on their property contributed also! I found the largest declines were in species like *Agriphila straminella* and *Agriphila tristella* and Smoky, Common and Shoulder-striped Wainscots. The last species I didn't record at all. Many species such as Small Magpie, Mother of Pearl, Scalloped Oak, Swallow-tailed Moth, Bright-line Brown-eye, Marbled Beauty, Dark Arches and Spectacle were recorded 50% lower in number than the previous five year average. A lot of these species pupate in June/July and so the weather may have played a major role in their survival rate. Straw Dot was down 64% from 2006 but still had an average year, over the five year period. So, overall its steady increase was maintained. The Spring/ Early Summer species like *Chrysoteuchia culmella*, *Crambus pascuella*, Heart & Dart and Common Quaker were all around the average. However, Early Grey seemed to have a poor time with only six recorded. Late Summer/ Autumn saw *Agriphila geniculea*, Red-green Carpet, Square-spot Rustic and Pale Mottled Willow also have an average year. With the general lack of migrants, Setaceous Hebrew Character and Silver Y numbers probably only contained the resident population. However, it wasn't all doom and gloom, as a few species were found in record numbers. Garden Rose Tortrix, Large and Lesser Yellow Underwings were up significantly. Blair's Shoulder-knot also continued its steady rise. I, for one, will be very interested in what the GMS results will show when everyone's records have been analysed. Will my garden reflect other people's records on a local or national level? I expect, as usual, we'll have more questions than answers, but that's part of the enjoyment isn't it? Lastly, well done and thank you to every GMS recorder for making this scheme so fascinating. Together we are invaluable!

## A Round-up of Region & Country GMS Records so far in 2007

### **a. West Midlands – Dave Grundy**

Recording in the region is still going from strength to strength with a record 43 gardens having returned already and hopefully quite a few gardens still to come – please get them in as soon as possible and definitely before Christmas. Please also let me know before Christmas which species you don't ever record and you believe should be deleted from our list and which species you record commonly and aren't yet on the list (this information will be even more helpful if you can give me an idea of numbers and dates you see these species). There will then be a review of species on the West Midlands GMS list in time for the annual meeting and the start of the 2008 recording season (there won't be another species review for another 5 years). Remember species on the list need to be common in gardens and easy to identify.

Coverage between counties is pretty good in the West Midlands with records in from 2 Herefordshire, 16 Worcestershire, 11 Warwickshire, 9 Staffordshire and 5 Shropshire gardens so far. Coverage is therefore pretty good from three counties with some need for more recorders in Shropshire and definitely more from Herefordshire – so if you know anyone who can help us out in 2008 then let me know.

### **b. GMS Cymru – Wales – Norman Lowe**

Wales has scored an excellent 20 gardens that have already returned records in their first year in the scheme – thanks to Norman Lowe for his excellent job of coordinating all this and getting the information through to me. Using returns for the whole year from these gardens he has sent through the following interesting/worrying table of species that were least recorded in 2007:

Species Name	Total Number Recorded	Total Gardens Recorded
Spotted Magpie <i>Phlyctaenia coronata</i>	4	1 garden
Small Blood-vein	4	2 gardens
Brown-spot Pinion	4	2 gardens
Marbled White-spot	4	2 gardens
White-pinion Spotted	3	2 gardens
Figure of Eight	3	1 garden
White-line Dart	3	1 garden
Rustic Shoulder-knot	3	3 gardens
Brown-line Bright-eye	2	1 garden
Green Oak Tortrix	1	1 garden
Northern Spinach	1	1 garden
Peppered Moth (Intermediate)	1	1 garden
Peppered Moth (Dark)	1	1 garden
Gothic	1	1 garden
Bordered Pug	0	
Vapourer	0	
Sycamore	0	
Mouse Moth	0	
Red Underwing	0	

Many of these aren't a surprise, such as Figure of Eight which is known to be in serious decline and Sycamore which is known to be expanding its range toward Wales, and after a good 2007 seems to have gone backwards again. However some other species are more worrying and surprising such as Brown-spot Pinion and Mouse Moth.

Are these poor results echoed in other parts of Britain? – hopefully we will be able to see in the Annual Report.

### **c. GMS South East – Malcolm Bridge / Dave Gardner**

Malcolm Bridge has sent in early results from Surrey recorders for the whole year. The top ten commonest species for the year were in order; 1. Heart & Dart, 2. Large Yellow Underwing, 3. Common Quaker, 4. Small Quaker, 5. Square-spot Rustic, 6. Willow Beauty, 7. Hebrew Character, 8. Riband Wave, 9. Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing, 10. Light Brown Apple Moth.

Not really many surprises there! At the other end of the scale were 20 species registering no moths at all and 22 species with just one recorded. Maybe surprising among these low scorers were; Silver-ground Carpet, Scalloped Hazel and Small Angleshades with only one seen. Surprises among the species scoring no moths at all were Ingrailed Clay, Least Yellow Underwing and July Highflyer. Several Midland recorders have reported the last two species in very low numbers too.

## **So, What About Other GMS News over the Winter?**

### **a. Other GMS News**

Lots is happening behind the scenes over the winter ‘Shut-down’. We are trying to spread the word to recruit new people to join us as GMS recorders in 2008 by any means possible. So if you know of anyone who might like to join in then please enthuse them and get them to get in touch with me or your area coordinator as soon as possible. We’ll then send them out all the details they need. We are targeting recorders in the existing areas that we cover, particularly in Wales, SE and E England. Anyone new is welcome. We are also trying extra hard to get new recorders from other parts of Britain and are particularly trying hard in SW, NW and NE England at the moment. We are also looking at getting a GMS website set up, so watch this space and we will let you know when it is operational – it might take us some time!

After this newsletter comes out to you all, then the next priority will be getting all your records onto the new GMS Mapmate database and then drawing up the Annual Report. The Annual Report should come through to you some time in January/February. Then the next thing on the horizon will be the Annual General Meeting held in Coleshill, Warwickshire on Sunday February 17<sup>th</sup> from 1 to 5pm. You will of course be very welcome at the meeting, but please get in touch to let us know that you are coming so that we have enough chairs, cups of tea/coffee etc! If you are on email then you will have already received details of the meeting and if you receive this newsletter by post then the details will be included with this newsletter. So, I hope to see you there!

### **The GMS Chat-site**

Join up now to find out all the latest GMS news on the computer – this is a chat-site only for GMS members and no-one from outside the group – so you won’t suffer from spam as a result. You can join the chat-site and listen to other people’s comments, see their photos or you can contribute regularly or anything in between! Just contact our GMS chat-site coordinator, John Bryan on [johnpbryan15@aol.com](mailto:johnpbryan15@aol.com) and he will get you joined up. You will get to hear about all GMS news first via the chat-site.

### **The GMS Questionnaire:**

To date we have received the excellent total of 100 questionnaire forms. But, that means that there are at least 10 forms that still need to come in. If you are one of these people then **please, please, please** can you fill in and return your form as soon

as possible? If you have lost the form then that is not a problem; you can download a copy from the files section of the GMS chat-site, or you can receive a copy from me, or your area coordinator by email or post – just let us know if you need one. I will soon be chasing the remaining people for questionnaire forms over the winter. If you are finding it difficult to understand how to fill in the form then let me know and I will try and visit you to fill in the form for you.

### **Stop Press:**

The Garden Moth Scheme has been using Mapmate software to handle the database of all your records since the beginning of the scheme in 2003. Mapmate have now very generously offered to provide this annual software package for free to the GMS database for the foreseeable future. Mapmate are keen supporters of wildlife surveying and see the great value of GMS in recording what is happening to our wildlife in a changing world. It is great for us ordinary recorders to get this sort of confirmation of the value of what we are doing.

### **And Finally:**

In the words from Alan Prior's article; 'Lastly, well done and thank you to every GMS recorder for making this scheme so fascinating. Together we are invaluable!'

Keep up the good work everyone and hope you enjoy the start-up on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008, you should receive your recording forms by then.

Best wishes  
Dave Grundy  
Birmingham

Ps please, please, please return your GMS garden questionnaire forms if you haven't already.

Pps don't forget to send your final records in as fast as possible and definitely by Christmas if you want your records in the Annual Report. (and don't forget to send all your moth records to your county recorder by the end of the year for your garden and other sites on all dates and for all species! – ask us if you don't know who your county recorder is.)

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