

# GMS NEWS



Week 9 – Spring 2007



**The Muslin Moth – was 2007 a record spring?**

## **An Introduction:**

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2007 for the Garden Moth Scheme (GMS). This year has seen a rapid expansion from what used to be a West Midlands based GMS toward a national GMS scheme. There will be an expansion from the 50 gardens taking part in 2006 to over 100 in 2007. We now have strong local area and national GMS schemes based in Wales, South-East England and East England as well as the West Midlands. In addition we have recorders from across the rest of the country including Scotland, the Isle of Wight, Hampshire, Dorset, Cheshire, Northamptonshire, Durham and Cumbria.

No-one needs to send their 2007 records in until November, but any records sent in early help me with accumulating records for the whole of Britain and also help your country coordinator for Wales (GMS Cymru – Norman Lowe) and your area recorders 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). As each year of the GMS consists of 36 weeks then we ask people to send in their records after week 9 (end of April), week 18 (end of June) and week 27 (end of August), so that we can produce a newsletter with each set of records. So the more records that you send in then the more news we can get in the newsletter.

In future issues of GMS news then hopefully we will be able to get short articles of a couple of paragraphs on your garden and its moths. This can be your experiences as a total beginner or as an expert of several year's experience and you may have a massive rural garden or a tiny urban back yard – it is all interesting to other recorders. Also maybe our coordinators would like to give a round-up of what's happening in their area or Wales? So if you have any ideas then get them in to me as

soon as possible after the end of June – with the next newsletter out toward the end of July.

### So, what's the news in 2007, so far?

We've had records back from an excellent total of 84 gardens to date – well done to everyone who sent them in. What's the news and how does it compare with previous years. Rough comparisons can be made for West Midlands records for the first 9 weeks in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. 2006 spring, if you remember was exceptional by recent standards, being very cold and late starting and only 27 species had been recorded from 23 gardens compared with 43 species from 22 gardens the previous year. There was a dramatic increase to 56 species recorded in 2007, this happened at the same time as an increase to 38 gardens sending in records, but even so this marks a big increase on 2006 (more than twice the number of species!) and is probably an increase on 2005. This backs up subjective comments from moth-trappers in the field who suggest that 2007 is a record early year for moth emergence. All the 2005 species remarkable for their absence in 2006 were recorded again in spring 2007; Chinese Character, Small Phoenix, Garden Carpet, Lesser Swallow Prominent, Angleshades, Spectacle, and Shuttle-shaped Dart. Only 4 Light Brown Apple Moths and 1 Brimstones were recorded in 2006, but in 2007 there were 62 and 38 respectively. The Muslin Moth and Shuttle-shaped Dart even featured in the top ten commonest species for the spring. Is Spring 2007 a record year for the Muslin Moth? See the table below for a breakdown of figures for the last 4 years for the 10 commonest species. Readers from previous years will know we have referred to the Spring Big 5 Species; Common & Small Quaker, Hebrew Character, Clouded Drab and Early Grey. These again featured as the commonest species, with Twin-spotted Quaker a poor sixth.

		16 gardens	22 gardens	23 gardens	38 gardens
Position	Species	2004	2005	2006	2007
1	Common Quaker	372	431	482	1061
2	Hebrew Character	316	330	304	886
3	Small Quaker	n/a	258	252	818
4	Clouded Drab	155	176	127	301
5	Early Grey	102	154	121	194
6	Twin-spotted Quaker	52	63	35	114
7	Muslin Moth	n/a	n/a	0	90
8 =	Light Brown Apple	n/a	n/a	4	62
8 =	Shuttle-shaped Dart	n/a	n/a	0	62
10	Brindled Beauty	n/a	n/a	4	60

### So, what's happening in the different areas of GMS?

The following tables show the top 10 commonest species in each area. The top row in each table marked 'Nothing' is a measure of how many weeks there were when moth-trappers put their traps out and recorded no moths at all. So for instance 38 gardens in the West Midlands trapped for 9 weeks and had a total of 35 empty traps (ie an average of less than 1 week in 9 for each garden – the total would have been about 3 weeks in 9 for the cold spring of 2006!).

<u>West Midlands</u>		<u>38 Gardens</u>
<b>Species Number</b>	<b>Species Name</b>	<b>Total Recorded</b>
	Nothing	35
2187	Common Quaker	1061
2190	Hebrew Character	886
2182	Small Quaker	818
2188	Clouded Drab	301
2243	Early Grey	194
2189	Twin-spotted Quaker	114
2063	Muslin Moth	90
998	Light Brown Apple Moth	62
2092	Shuttle-shaped Dart	62
1927	Brindled Beauty	60

It is interesting to compare the commonest species between different areas, with the Spring Big 5 again being the commonest moths in Wales as in the West Midlands and in the same order. More interestingly the Red Chestnut and Shoulder Stripe feature in the top 10 for Wales, but are so scarce in West Midland gardens that they aren't even in the GMS!



**Red Chestnut – common only in Wales gardens?**

<u>Wales - Cymru</u>		<u>17 Gardens</u>
<b>Species Number</b>	<b>Species Name</b>	<b>Total Recorded</b>
	Nothing	5
2187	Common Quaker	1348
2190	Hebrew Character	1023
2182	Small Quaker	778
2188	Clouded Drab	353
2243	Early Grey	323
2139	Red Chestnut	182
2189	Twin-spotted Quaker	149
1862	Double-striped Pug	123
1746	Shoulder Stripe	121
1927	Brindled Beauty	108

In the East of England, the Top 4 are the same, but there isn't a 'Spring Big 5' with Early Grey dropping lower down the list. Also of interest is Powdered Quaker reaching seventh place, which is a species of national concern for its declines.



**The Spring Big 4?**

<u>East England</u>		<u>9 Gardens</u>
Species Number	Species Name	Total Recorded
	Nothing	10
2187	Common Quaker	249
2182	Small Quaker	241
2190	Hebrew Character	111
2188	Clouded Drab	56
2092	Shuttle-shaped Dart	33
2243	Early Grey	27
2186	Powdered Quaker	24
2189	Twin-spotted Quaker	19
1906	Brimstone Moth	15
998	Light Brown Apple Moth	13

The South-East list also only has a 'Spring Big 4', maybe the Early Grey is more of a northern species as a very common garden moth. Conversely, the Small Quaker is the commonest species in South-East England, could this be more of a southern species?

<u>South East</u>		<u>16 Gardens</u>
Species Number	Species Name	Total Recorded
	Nothing	10
2182	Small Quaker	1348
2187	Common Quaker	653
2190	Hebrew Character	477
2188	Clouded Drab	123
998	Light Brown Apple Moth	81
2189	Twin-spotted Quaker	62
2243	Early Grey	61
1862	Double-striped Pug	40
1906	Brimstone Moth	38
1930	Oak Beauty	38

## A Comparison of all Areas?

The commonest species for the 84 gardens of GMS up to week 9 are shown in the table below;

	<b>Gardens</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Sp. No.</b>	<b>Sp. Name</b>	<b>WM</b>	<b>CY</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Rest</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Nothing	35	5	10	10	2	62
2187	Common Quaker	1061	1348	249	653	81	3392
2182	Small Quaker	818	778	241	1348	11	3196
2190	Hebrew Character	886	1093	111	477	91	2658
2188	Clouded Drab	301	353	56	123	14	847
2243	Early Grey	194	323	27	61	15	620
2189	Twin-spotted Quaker	114	149	19	62	1	345
998	Light Brown Apple Moth	62	53	13	81	11	220
1862	Double-striped Pug	37	123	8	40	6	214
1927	Brindled Beauty	60	108	4	21	0	193
2139	Red Chestnut	n/a	182	n/a	n/a	n/a	182
1906	Brimstone Moth	38	68	15	38	8	167
2063	Muslin Moth	90	30	8	27	3	158
2092	Shuttle-shaped Dart	62	40	33	20	3	158
1663	March Moth	36	86	10	17	0	149
1930	Oak Beauty	n/a	98	n/a	38	n/a	136
1746	Shoulder Stripe	n/a	121	n/a	n/a	n/a	121
1917	Early Thorn	31	66	1	6	6	110
2258	Chestnut	24	43	0	32	3	102

The 'Spring Big 5' again feature at the top of the table, with Common & Small Quakers and Hebrew Character recording significantly higher numbers (all averaging close to 3000 moths!). Maybe there should be 'Spring Big 3' not a Big 5? Most other species in the list will be expected, but noticeable in the list are some of the late spring species such as Brimstone, Muslin Moth, Brindled Beauty and Shuttle-shaped Dart. Red Chestnut and Shoulder Stripe are in the list based on records from Wales, with no other areas recording these two species for GMS, because they are so scarce in English gardens. The Oak Beauty is an interesting case, as it features in the commonest species, but doesn't even get recorded in West Midlands and the East of England. This is a species which was thought to be borderline for inclusion in the GMS for these areas and was excluded. This table shows clearly that this species' status should be reviewed in winter 2007/8 and probably included in the recording list for future years for the West midlands and East England.

Total species recorded to week 9 were interesting with 56 recorded for West Midlands, 73 for Wales, 49 for East England and 60 for South East.

### The GMS Questionnaire:

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to fill in their GMS garden questionnaire. This is incredibly important to us in that it will collect habitat information about your garden which we can compare with population changes in moths. To date we have received the excellent total of 85 questionnaire forms returned. But, that means that there are at least 20 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 chatsite, or you can receive a copy from me or your area coordinator by email. Or you can receive a copy from me by post – just let us know if you need one.

A quick search through the 85 forms returned so far yields some interesting results. 30 people use a Robinson trap in their garden and all of these use a 125W MV bulb (except one who has a 125W black bulb and one who has a 250W MV bulb!). About a quarter of gardens are adjacent to a streetlight (20) and about a quarter are on acid soils (22). Most surprising to me was the high number of gardens that contained wild ivy (67) and buddleia (76). It's amazing that most gardens had these two key Lepidoptera nectar plants!

### **And Finally:**

Keep up with your excellent recording work, through the busy months of mid summer and keep your records coming in to myself and your area recorders. We would like your next set of records in after Week 18 at the end of June. Remember this is your newsletter – so if you want it to improve then send in your ideas for improvement and better still your ideas and stories about GMS recording, gardens and common moths, moth ID etc. This newsletter will be sent out by email wherever possible, so please try to arrange to receive it by email if you can. This then cuts down considerably on paper use for environmental reasons and cuts down on costs to GMS for postage, photocopying etc. and time for myself in addressing and filling envelopes. If you can not receive emails then we will of course send it out by post to you.

Remember also if you need any help with moth ID or equipment or just want to hear what other GMS people are recording then get yourself joined up to the GMS chatsite on the computer – this is a chatsite only for GMS members and no-one from outside the group. You can join the chatsite and listen to other people's comments, see their photos or you can contribute regularly or anything in between! Just contact our GMS chatsite 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 chatsite.

Keep up with your GMS recording and keep in touch if you need help.

Remember this is the most valuable new moth recording scheme, providing statistics on what is happening to our common moths and therefore the health of our environment and our gardens for wildlife. You are all doing your bit to help in this research, however few moths you see in your garden.

Best wishes

Dave Grundy

Birmingham

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

Pps don't forget to send your records in again after week 18 at the end of June and also send me notes, letters, articles etc that might be of interest to other GMS recorders.

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