

MOTH MUMBLINGS: JUNE 2024

RECENT REPORTS OF NOTE

Red-belted Clearwing (*Synanthedon myopaeformis*) is now flying (e.g., Harpenden, 2nd June, David Hunt) so presumably other species may also be out and about. Time to dust off those pheromone lures and, ideally, use the web site map to target areas where these beats have yet to be recorded.

A **Dorset Cream Wave** (*Stegania trimaculata*) was taken at Clapton, Middlesex on 2nd June with another on 3rd June 2024) by a very happy Harry Witts. The moth is a rare immigrant. **New to Middlesex.**



Dorset Cream Wave, Clapton, 2nd June 2024, Photo Harry Witts.

Crassa tinctella. (Oecophoridae) seems to be cropping up in a few places (e.g., Welwyn, 23rd May 2024, William Bishop). Is it having a good year? Is it spreading?

And one from next door ...

Robin Knill-Jones captured a **Banded Pine Carpet** (*Pungelaria capreolaria*) at Denham, Bucks, 23rd May 2024, just outside Middlesex. A rare immigrant species; there was a second example a couple of days later.

REPORT OF OUR TRIP TO THE HEXTON ESTATE (GRID REF TL 1029) ON 30TH MAY 2024

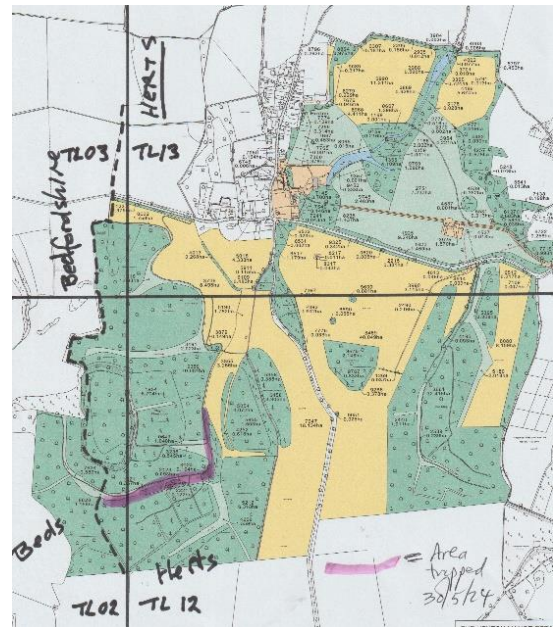
This was our contribution to Natural England's "Bioblitz" on this newly acquired land in the extreme north-west of Hertfordshire. The site now forms a part of the considerably larger Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

At the centre of the new area lies Hexton Chalk Pit, a county wildlife trust nature reserve for which we have many moth records. For the wider area, however, we have practically none – apart that is from a very few records of outstanding individual species such as the Striped Lychnis (*Cucullia lychnitis* = *Shargacucullia lychnitis* in some books). Look it up on our web site. This species is formally

classified as "Vulnerable" in the Hertfordshire Red Data List of larger moth species. See https://hertsmidxmths.uk/Herts_Red_Data_Moths_2024b.pdf.

Several people went "walkabout" in the daytime on 28th and 29th May. Lots of caterpillars of the Mullein Shark (*Cucullia verbasci*) were evident on Great Mullein plants; many scattered plants of Dark Mullein were also located and so we will be returning very soon to look for Striped Lychnis larvae. All these records will be bundled and sent to Natural England with individual recorders fully credited.

On Thursday 30th May, after "less than ideal" weather all week, seven of us arrived at the gate at around 19.00 hours to be greeted by Holly and Kirsty from Natural England. We split into groups and had a good hour looking at various different parts of the site – me in the Land Rover to assess accessibility of certain areas (turns out we can reach almost everywhere very easily). Reassembling in the southern area, we spread out approximately 10 lights (one of which was against a vertical white sheet), more or less along the driveable track as indicated in the map below and ran these from about from 21.30 to 00.30 hours.



We could have run a greater number, but the weather was judged threatening plus, in the experience of most attendees, the moths are so poor at the moment that extra effort might not be fully justified.

As it turned out, although the air was cool we were sheltered from the wind by the woodland. The rain held off and we were rewarded with a list of 68 species – surprisingly good for this particular year.

Three are worthy of mention. Ghost Swift (*Hepialus humuli*) males were found as the light failed, lekking over a grassland area; a female later came to the sheet. This species requires undisturbed grassland. Both the Valerian Pug (*Eupithecia valerianata*) and the Campanula Pug (*Eupithecia denotata*) are scarce in Hertfordshire (see maps on our web site). Their names reflect the larval foodplants in both cases. Valerian Pug is already known from Hexton Chalk Pit; Campanula was a rather nice surprise.

The full list of recorded species is as follows:

Hepialidae

Korscheltellus lupulina (Linnaeus, 1758) Common Swift

Hepialus humuli (Linnaeus, 1758) Ghost Moth

Adelidae

Nemophora degeerella (Linnaeus, 1758)

Nematopogon schwarziellus Zeller, 1839

Psychidae

Psyche casta (Pallas, 1767) caterpillar seen

Tineidae

Nemapogon cloacella (Haworth, 1828) Cork Moth

Glyphipterigidae

Glyphipterix thrasonella (Scopoli, 1763)

Oecophoridae

Endrosis sarcitrella (L., 1758) White-shouldered House-

Hofmannophila pseudospretella (Stt.1849) Brown House

Depressariidae

Agonopterix arenella ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775)

Tortricidae

Agapeta hamana (Linnaeus, 1758)

Hedya pruniana (Hübner, [1799]) Plum Tortrix

Celypha lacunana ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775)

Spilonota ocellana ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775) Bud Moth

Epinotia subocellana (Donovan, 1806)

Notocelia cynosbatella (Linnaeus, 1758)

Notocelia rosaecolana (Doubleday, 1850)

Lathronympha strigana (Fabricius, 1775)

Pyralidae

Dioryctria abietella ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775)

Crambidae

Udea olivalis ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775)

Scoparia ambigualis (Treitschke, 1829)

Scoparia pyralella ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775)

Eudonia pallida (Curtis, 1827)

Crambus lathoniellus (Zincken, 1817)

Parapoynx stratiotata (Linnaeus, 1758) Ringed China-mark

Geometridae

Idea trigeminata (Haworth, 1809) Treble Brown Spot

Xanthorhoe montanata ([D. & S.], 1775) Silver-ground Carpet

Campptogramma bilineata (Linnaeus, 1758) Yellow Shell

Epirrhoe alternata (Müller, 1764) Common Carpet

Thera obeliscata (Hübner, [1787]) Grey Pine Carpet

Colostygia pectinataria (Knoch, 1781) Green Carpet

Melanthia procellata ([D. & S.], 1775) Pretty Chalk Carpet

Perizoma flavofasciata (Thunberg, 1792) Sandy Carpet

Eupithecia tantillaria Boisduval, 1840 Dwarf Pug

Eupithecia valerianata (Hübner, [1813]) Valerian Pug

Eupithecia vulgata (Haworth, 1809) Common Pug

Eupithecia exigua (Hübner, [1813]) Mottled Pug

Eupithecia denotata (Hübner, [1813]) Campanula Pug

Aplocera plagiata (Linnaeus, 1758) Treble-bar

Biston betularia (Linnaeus, 1758) Peppered Moth

Menophra abruptaria (Thunberg, 1792) Waved Umber

Peribatodes rhomboidaria ([D. & S.], 1775) Willow Beauty

Hypomecis punctinalis (Scopoli, 1763) Pale Oak Beauty

Parectropis similaria (Hufn., 1767) Brindled White-spot

Cabera pusaria (Linnaeus, 1758) Common White Wave

Lomographa temerata ([D. & S.], 1775) Clouded Silver

Erebidae

Rivula sericealis (Scopoli, 1763) Straw Dot

Hypena proboscidalis (Linnaeus, 1758) Snout

Calliteara pudibunda (Linnaeus, 1758) Pale Tussock

Spilosoma lutea (Hufnagel, 1766) Buff Ermine

Spilosoma lubricipeda (Linnaeus, 1758) White Ermine

Eilema sororcula (Hufnagel, 1766) Orange Footman

Schrankia costaeirigalis (Steph.,) Pinion-streaked Snout

Noctuidae

Abrostola tripartita (Hufnagel, 1766) Spectacle

Autographa gamma (Linnaeus, 1758) Silver Y

Protodeltote pygarga (Hufn., 1766) Marbled White Spot

Charanyca trigrammica (Hufnagel, 1766) Treble Lines

Phlogophora meticulosa (Linnaeus, 1758) Angle Shades

Apamea crenata (Hufn., 1766) Clouded-bordered Brindle

Apamea anceps ([D. & S.], 1775) Large Nutmeg

Oligia latruncula ([D. & S.], Tawny Marbled Minor

Oligia fasciuncula (Haworth, 1809) Middle-barred Minor

Hada plebeja (Linnaeus, 1761) Shears

Axyليا putris (Linnaeus, 1761) Flame

Ochropleura plecta (Linnaeus, 1761) Flame Shoulder

Diarsia mendica (Fabricius, 1775) Ingrailed Clay

Anaplectoides prasina ([D. & S.], 1775) Green Arches

Xestia c-nigrum (L., 1758) Setaceous Hebrew Character

WEB SITE CORRECTIONS

All moth records so far uploaded via the direct recording function of the web site (at 4th July 2024) have now been downloaded and checked; all have now been added to the main database by me. Similarly, a number of small corrections and changes notified to me have also been dealt with in the main database.

However, none of this yet appears on the web site. This will happen soonish, when I next prepare and upload a Mapmate SYNC file for the update. Please save any repeat moans until after then (new moans are welcomed, of course, so I can fix things) – I will let you know when it is done.

A MESSAGE RECEIVED

The Countryside Management Service (CMS), part of Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside and Rights of Way Service is currently developing a new Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for Berrygrove Woods (2025 to 2030), on behalf of and in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council's Rural Estates. Berrygrove Woods are a network of woodland blocks, owned by Hertfordshire County Council and managed by the Rural Estates Team and located between Aldenham village and the eastern edge of Watford. This is the first of a two stage engagement process, the first being a Briefing Document. You can access the Briefing Document by following this link [Berrygrove Woods Greenspace Action Plan Briefing](#)

[Document 2025 - 2030 \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](http://hertfordshire.gov.uk) The Briefing Document is being sent to relevant local stakeholders and posters are available onsite to inform the visitors and give them an opportunity to comment on this document. We are contacting you and other relevant stakeholders to give you the opportunity to feed into the engagement process. Core aspirations of the plan include:

- Design, produce and install welcome and interpretation signage.
- Continue good maintenance of site infrastructure.
- Manage woodland habitats to improve their wildlife value and to contribute towards delivering the aims of HCC's Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy.
- Obtain funding to carrying out woodland management through Biodiversity Net Gain or Countryside Stewardship.

We would welcome any comments that you may have on the objectives proposed, or your thoughts on the future management of Berrygrove Woods. Should you have any questions, please get in touch with me using the contact details below. Responses to this briefing document should be submitted by Monday 1st July.

Kind regards

Elgan Adlard, Land Management Projects Officer, Countryside and Rights of Way, Environment and Transport, Hertfordshire County Council, Farnham House, Six Hills Way, Stevenage, SG1 2ST elgan.adlard@hertfordshire.gov.uk

I was delighted to receive the following very helpful article from Steve Palmer. I hope it may motivate others amongst you to make similar contributions.

COLEOPHORA CASES ON KNAPWEED AND THISTLES

Contributed by Steve Palmer

Searching for *Coleophora* larval cases on leaves (also on seeds) can be an enjoyable and satisfying pastime, particularly in the spring and autumn. It can also add many useful records and foodplant associations to a county database. About one-third, of well over 100 British *Coleophora* species, can be identified as a case (including those listed below). However, if you are new to this type of recording it will help your CMR if your record is accompanied by a good photo and a note of the correctly identified foodplant on which it was feeding. The other two-thirds will require breeding through to get adults.

The first thing to look for on leaves are the distinctive, often circular, whitish patches where the larva has fed or is still feeding. It usually consumes the central green part (mesophyll) of a leaf as far as it can reach without leaving its case, but leaving the outer surface (cuticle) in place on most occasions. Cases are mostly found on the underside of a leaf.

The feeding larvae will move around, so if you find the distinctive but small feeding hole in the lower leaf cuticle, but no case, keep looking around as they can move some distance before recommencing feeding.

Larval cases are expanded during their growth (by utilising plant material and/or silk) and these notes below refer to the final stage case. A very useful feature in identification, called the **mouth opening (m.o.)**, is detailed for the species below. This is the difference between the angle of the plane of the mouth opening in relation to the axis of the case. For example, in *C. paripennella* the m.o. is on average 10 degrees, meaning the case is held almost parallel to the leaf. A m.o. of 90 degrees means the case is vertical in relation to the leaf.

When checking for cases on Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and occasionally other thistle species (*Carduus* or *Cirsium*), there are up to three species to consider.

On Common Knapweed

[Note – *C. peribenanderi* has not been documented as utilising this foodplant nationally]

C. paripennella

Most widespread and frequent species on this plant across the British Isles. A straight, matt, blackish-brown case; m.o. **0-20 degrees**; up to **8mm** long. Most easily found in **April and May**.



Coleophora paripennella – Lancashire. Photo © Ben Smart.

C. conspicuella

Sole foodplant in Britain; found only in south-east England from Hampshire round to Norfolk and inland to Bucks. and Huntingdonshire (including both Herts. and Middx.). A partly glossy, slightly curved, blackish case with a clear ventral “wing” (of variable size); m.o. **c.45 degrees** (along the main portion of the case before the curve); up to **15mm** long. Most readily found in **April and May**.



Coleophora conspicuella – Hertfordshire, 2024. Photo © David Hunt.

On Creeping Thistle

[Occasionally on other species of thistle]

C. peribenanderi

The most widespread and frequent species on this plant across the British Isles. A straight, slightly streaky, ochreous case; m.o. **c.50 degrees** (this not overly obvious in the photo due to photo angle and curl on the leaf) up to **12mm** long. Most easily found in **September and October**, much less frequently in spring.

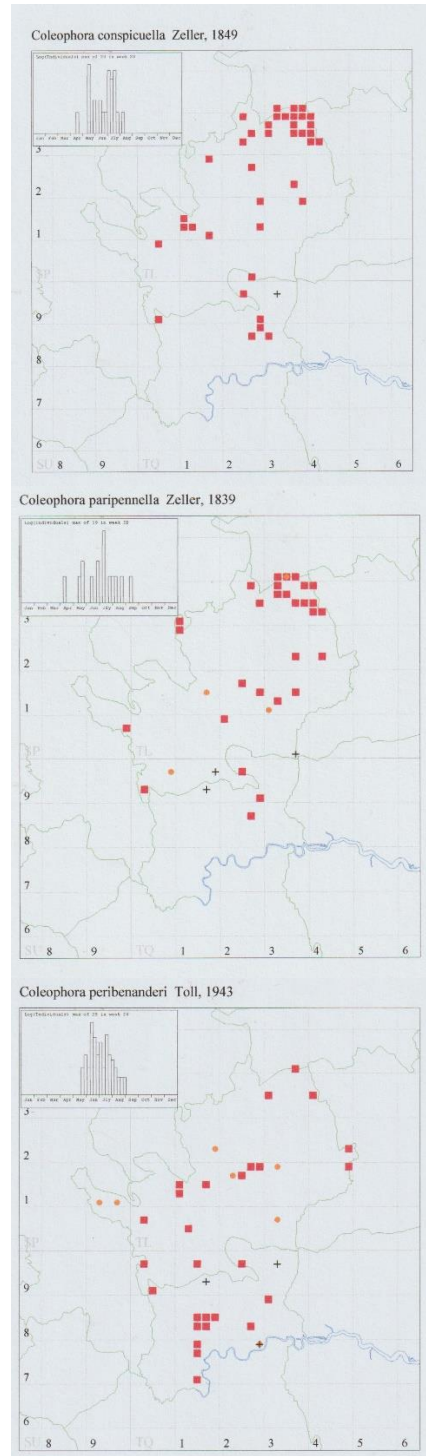


Coleophora peribenanderi – Lancashire. Photo © Ben Smart.

C. paripennella

Less frequently used than Common Knapweed – see details above. The case size, shape, colour, m.o. and (usually) time of year, separate this species from *C. peribenanderi*.

EDITORS NOTE: All three species can be found in both Hertfordshire and Middlesex – current distribution maps on the right, here. All are widespread and probably common, but only sparingly reported, so I look forward to hearing the results of your efforts.



That's all folks – keep me posted of any discoveries.

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