

MOTH MUMBLINGS: MID-FEBRUARY 2024

WELCOME

ON-LINE RECORDING VIA WEB SITE:

A CLARIFICATION

Several of you are asking if you can upload all of your moth records via the web site – as opposed to keeping and sending to me at the end of the year. **The answer is YES** – but please read on.

Now that this dinosaur has got his head around the system there should be no problems – but there are two issues: first, you must not expect your lists to appear as updates immediately and second, we need to work together to avoid duplication of records.

County Moth Recording is a non-Galilean exercise. *The County Moth Recorder is the centre of the Universe* not the sun. The moon and the stars and the sun all revolve around him (i.e., me!). Long may this continue, but it does mean that I have to make time to download all the records submitted to the web site, check them all, and then add them to the main database here before uploading the corrected data back to the web site. This latter bit involves using the Map Mate *sync* process (which also recognises and deals with corrected records, deleted errors etc). This cannot be by-passed.

So – we have only one database – the one I keep here. The web site works from a copy of this, updated as and when by me using your records. Fine in February – but I may slow down in July?

Please feel free to:

- Upload nightly lists the morning after trapping, or
- Upload weekly.
- Upload monthly.
- Upload annually,
- Upload when you remember/can be bothered – and always
- Upload odd sightings that may otherwise get forgotten about.

The “flying tonight” and associated pages of the web site will only start to properly work as more and more current data are entered. As long as I can keep up, then the web site will rapidly catch up and become more user-relevant.

WHEN WILL UPDATES TAKE PLACE?

An imminent update is in the wind. This is because in the two weeks that the site has been operational, a few errors and duplications have been spotted, plus a few annual lists that missed the deadline for the launch of the web site are now, gradually, reaching me. So – I plan to

make the very first site update in about 10 days’ time- at the end of February. If you upload data (or send it direct) before then I will hopefully include it.

Thereafter, the proposal is to update monthly, though extra updates may take place if there is a reason for it (e.g., a sudden influx of rare immigrants).

This gives **you** greater flexibility over submitting records. You can do it as you go or save it for one hit in December. As has always been the case! You can still submit records direct to me. In all cases, records are still checked by me and I may get back to you with questions. I remain ready to look at specimens and/or photos to assist with identification.

SO WHAT’S THE PROBLEM

Simple ... it is the risk of duplication. Duplicated data confuses the analyses, upsets the flight charts and generally causes me stress.

If you upload a moth record to the web site then please do not also send it to me direct or, if you do, make sure it is annotated as a duplicated record.

I accept that you will wish to keep your own list at home as well as regularly updating the website. At the end of the year there maybe the odd record in your own spreadsheet that has not been uploaded to the web site – and of course I want this record! If you choose to now send me the entire spreadsheet direct that is fine, but do first of all annotate those records already uploaded with the words “*Web done*”. If using my template “Ideal Data Format” annotate each relevant line in column N. Please use the term “*Web done*” as standard. This will allow me to sort spreadsheet columns alphabetically and then ignore data already uploaded. Easy- peasey ... for both of us.

And finally, a word about iRecord. You should not be using this unless you are a complete outsider/member of the great British public/etc. Data from iRecord reaches me on average 18 moths after the event, when it is far too late to scrutinise. It is not a separate system – it is an additional way of capturing stray records from people outside the circle of those who know. There is no other person looking at iRecords – it comes back to me. So please send your records to me direct.

PHOTO-PLAGIARISM

One is distressed and disappointed to discover that one amongst you has been uploading photos *taken by other people* to our web site and *claiming themselves to be the photographer*. This is straightforward plagiarism and is not acceptable. By default, putting incorrect data labels on such images, claiming them to be from somewhere in our area, simply puts dodgy records into

our system – we have no alternative but to assume that all your records are “incorrect” and delete them.

Photos of moths, especially those at rest on vegetation, present quite literally hundreds of minute details within the image that make fakes immediately spottable. I am significantly miffed at having to deal with this sort of thing as well as everything else I do. Be warned, if we catch him/her or anyone else doing this again, the guilty party will be named and shamed in this newsletter. Whilst the web site remains accessible by all comers, it is no effort at all for us to use your log-on details to bar you from uploading records and/or photos.

MOVING SWIFTLY ON ...

The following e-mail has been received: Contact Iona direct if you feel motivated (I already do preserve all my parasitic wasps and I would encourage everyone else to participate – at least for one complete year even if you then stop.

Dear Colin,

My name is Iona Cunningham-Eurich, and I am a second-year PhD student at the Natural History Museum (NHM), London, and University College London (UCL), under the supervision of Dr. Gavin Broad (NHM) and Prof. Seirian Sumner (UCL). My research focuses on parasitoid wasps, specifically comparing generalist and specialist species.

I am reaching out to you to as the county recorder for Hertfordshire & Middlesex to find out if you (and/or any of the local moth-trapping community) would be interested in helping to collect wasp specimens.

We are aiming to collect geographically well-distributed nocturnal parasitoids belonging to the genera *Netelia* and *Ophion* between May and September of this year (2024). These wasps are attracted to light, including moth traps, and are easily recognisable given that they are relatively large and orange (see attached photos for some examples). For this reason, I am reaching out to experienced moth trappers across the UK to help collect these wasps.

Examples of *Netelia* and *Ophion* parasitoid wasps



Ophion variegatus
Ichneumonidae, Ophioninae
© Malcolm Storey, Biorimages, BF 102, SA

Netelia cristata
Ichneumonidae, Tryphoninae
© Malcolm Storey, Biorimages, BF 102, SA

Netelia melanura
Ichneumonidae, Tryphoninae
© Malcolm Storey, Biorimages, BF 102, SA

The aims of this project are twofold: (1) to create a snapshot in time of the diversity and distributions of UK nocturnal parasitoids (information that is largely lacking) and (2) to perform a molecular genetics project.

The collection process would proceed as follows: we will send packs of tubes containing 70% ethanol to participants (the specimens must be collected in ethanol for genetics). After sampling, participants would send the tubes back to the Natural History Museum every month or so. All equipment

and postage will be provided. Once we receive the wasps, we will identify them and they will be integrated into the NHM Hymenoptera collections (with credit to the collector). Some will also be used for the genetics study.

We would like to hear from anyone who is interested, but particularly from people who trap multiple times a month in one or multiple woodland sites between May and September.

Even if you are not personally interested in helping, please feel free to share this email with other expert moth-trappers who fulfil the above criteria and may be interested. However, please note that due to limited funding, participation may need to be capped.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions. Thank you for your interest and I hope to hear from you soon.

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AFTER ALL THAT, SUMMER IS HERE

Richard Ellis caught a **Least Black Arches *Nola confusalis*** last Friday night, 16th February 2024, at his new location in south-west Hertfordshire. Look it up on the web site – you will see that the earliest records in the database, until now, are from the last week of March.

Finally, as I calm down from my rant about plagiarism, I just got an e-mail from Les Evans-Hill to report that the tottrix ***Pammene giganteana*** is already on the wing ... he had a male yesterday, 20th February 2024, to the MOL pheromone lure he was operating at Putney Heath in south-west London. Web site shows previous earliest in second week of March.

In my garden, my Hazel catkins have been and gone; the Robin is starting to build a nest and my Bluebell buds are about to burst. Common Brown Plumes (*Emelina monodactyla*) are regularly disturbed from the vegetation. So, it will probably snow by the weekend!

Traps out – pheromone lures out - eyes open!

Colin

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