

# WARWICKSHIRE BRANCH MOTH EQUIPMENT

## 2004 - THE FIRST YEAR



Alan Prior & Val Weston

## **INTRODUCTION**

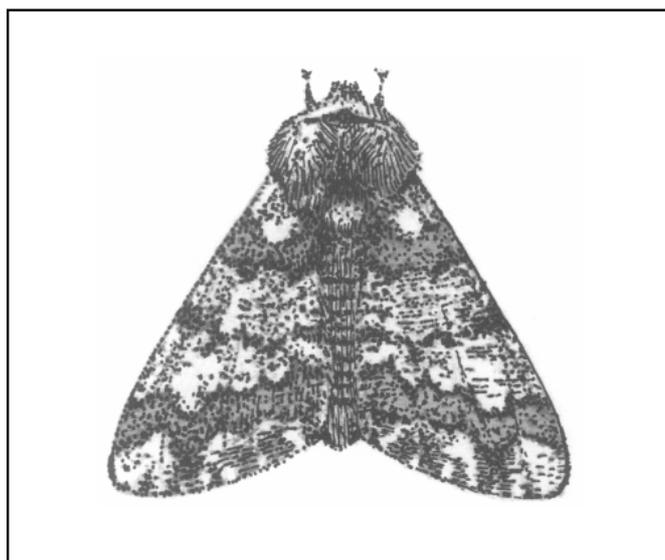
With the branch making such a large investment over winter in buying some moth recording equipment, we felt it was only right that members were informed of how it has been used in its inaugural year.

A very busy year it's been too, with the equipment being used on over 70 occasions. Not all of those have been in the county but, thanks to Warwickshire Branch's foresight, several other areas will also benefit from the records produced.

The equipment arrived in late February. Thanks must go to Dave Grundy who ferried it back from Norfolk for us. After it was all checked and prepared it was time for the big test. Would it work?

## **MARCH**

In mid March a trip to Crown East Wood near Worcester was arranged for the test. This was a private site that we had been recording at once a month since May 2003. It was also in the process of being sold, so we thought it important to continue recording and try and complete a full year in case it was acquired by unsympathetic owners. We'd managed to gather some help for the evening namely, Phil & Kim Westwood (the current wood owners), Jeff Rush, Dave Grundy and Nigel Stone and all were waiting for the grand switch on. It didn't turn out that grand as only one of the bulbs came on! It was discovered that the equipment wasn't at fault but Alan's dodgy wiring was! Well, he never had claimed to be a good electrician! With everyone's help the problems were quickly sorted out and the wood was aglow. A couple of heavy showers managed to give us a good soaking but, it made the hot drinks and sandwiches, kindly provided by Phil & Kim, even more welcome. With the weather as it was we were not expecting to be overwhelmed by moths but were pleasantly surprised to record 18 species and some in good numbers. For example, we had 18 March Moth, 118 Small Quaker and 49 Common Quaker. Other nice species were Oak Beauty and Pale Brindled Beauty; overall, a successful first venture.



*Oak Beauty by John Reeve*

Three days later and the weather proved to be perfect for mothing. Alan made a last minute decision to go back to Crown East and have another go. While setting up, it was discovered that one of the baffles that had had a crack in it had snapped. After switching on the trap (came on first time, yippee!) a wander over to Phil & Kim's cottage was made. Having super-glued the baffle, and managing to unstick his fingers, Alan returned to the traps. They were all full of moths. The difference a good bit of weather can make was amazing. The number of species had only risen from 18 to 19 but the individuals had gone through the roof! The decision to start packing up was taken around midnight and two and a half hours later the job was completed! With all the moths released and the car loaded up it was time to tally the three traps. Over 600 moths had been counted including 42 Small March Moth (*Diurnea fagella*), 22 Oak Beauty, 94 Common Quaker and 328 Small Quaker (205 were in just one trap!). Shoulder Stripe, Water Carpet and Early Thorn were amongst the other species seen. The equipment was running well after its second outing.

Saltwells, in the heart of the Black Country, was the next venue. It was for a meeting of people, generally from the modern West Midlands County, to chat moths. This extremely informal group was about to get a name the "Moths In The Middle Group". As the West Midlands County covers various old vice-counties it was thought appropriate. Dave Grundy was the inspiration for this group. It's always a lot of fun and anyone and everyone is invited to attend meetings. We only took the actinic trap that night, as it's not always safe to leave your trap unattended away from the Centre. Now, Mr. Grundy's favourite pastime at this time of year is shaking Sallow trees to see what falls out onto the sheet carefully positioned below. Tonight something unexpected landed on the sheet. Dave had climbed up to give the tree a good shake. Unfortunately, the branch he chose was rotten and he came crashing down with it! The odd cut and bruise was the result of the fall. This was followed by hysterical laughter and requests for a slow motion action replay! As for the moths, it was a pretty cold night and ten species were recorded with Small and Common Quakers again being most numerous.

The following weekend we finally got some recording done in Warwickshire. A last minute arrangement with Nigel to go to Old Nun Wood was made. The toughest part of this evening was dragging Val out of the pub so she could join us! We managed to arrive at the same time as Nigel and after a quick look around the site we set up. A superb night was had with 26 species being recorded. Yellow Horned, Lead-Coloured Drab and some excellent micro-moths were found.

Opportunities for going out were now getting more frequent. An invitation from Patrick Clement, of the Halesowen Wildlife Group, to go to Uffmoor Wood was accepted. A very muddy but good evening was spent with 22 species recorded. Yellow Horned and Shoulder Stripe were among them. The evening had finished relatively early as Alan had agreed to drive Dave Grundy to Oversley Wood the following morning.

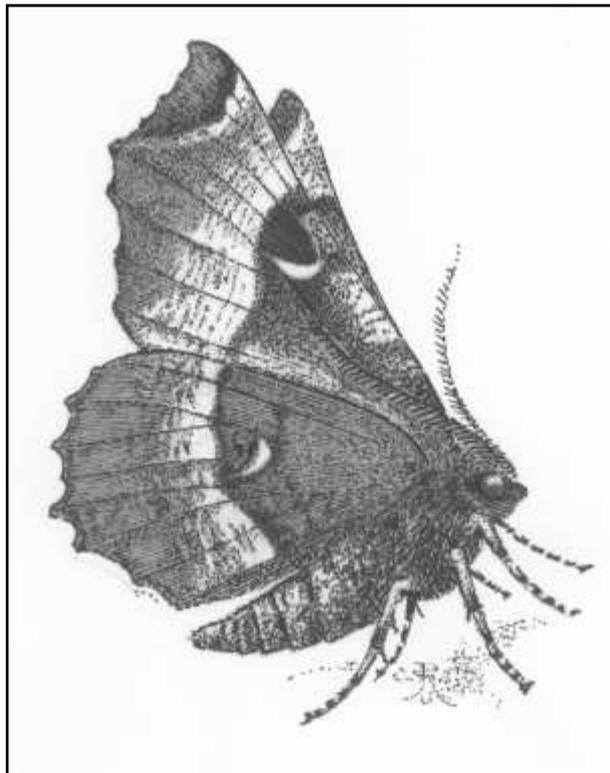
It came as somewhat of a shock for Alan to see bright sunshine and cloudless skies. Daylight is best avoided in his general opinion! However, some moths do fly by day and the chance of a new one, and a Nationally Notable B one at that, couldn't be resisted. Dave Brown met us at Oversley to show us around and the best places to put traps for certain species. It was a real education. Mr. Brown's wizardry with a net was a joy to behold. How he managed to catch the very nippy Light Orange Underwings I'll never know. A fantastic looking moth they are too, well worth the early start! The wood was alive with butterflies everywhere, especially Brimstone and Comma, and numerous birds of prey circling above. Dave G. and Alan stayed and had another look round in the afternoon. Their netting technique however was abysmal and they didn't come close to getting either Orange Underwing! Having been inspired by the days events, plans were made to return for a mothing session that evening. The evening proved worthwhile even with the dropping temperature. Another 26 species recorded with The Streamer, Pine Beauty and, after a long chase, Tawny Pinion being seen.

## APRIL

With a good end to March now behind us, April opened its account with what would become a regular event. An absolute soaking! West Midlands BC branch had arranged a trip to a private site near Evesham to search for the rare Barred Tooth-Stripe. The habitat looked excellent; the weather though was the opposite. After much searching and a possible sighting we decided to call it a night with only ten species seen.

A miserable weekend was capped off the following night with a visit to Penorchard Farm, a Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Reserve. Access though to some parts of the Reserve is awkward. It took us several journeys to get everybody's equipment to the site over fields, ditches, gates and barbed wire fences. On a really cold, frosty night with a full moon only nine species were recorded from eight traps! Alan did get a good view of a Woodcock in flight though. Surely things would improve?

The next weekend started with the monthly trip to Crown East Wood. Events had moved on with the sale of the site and we were to be in the company of the future new owners. So, Dave Grundy, Nigel, Richard & Philip Stone and ourselves were all on our best behaviour. Richard and Carol arrived as we were in the process of setting up. They had no idea what to expect from a moth recording session. Not many people do until you've actually been to one. A very sociable night ended up with the excellent tally of 35 species and a nice range of moths for us to show off. They included Chinese Character, Frosted Green, Purple Thorn, Waved Umber, Chocolate-Tip and Blossom Underwing.



*Purple Thorn by John Reeve*

The following night a trip to Ribbesford Woods with Dave Grundy was made. A night that was looking good went downhill as when the traps went on the clouds parted. It wasn't as bad as last week and 22 species were found. A spectacular form of *Acleris cristana* and Mottled Grey, Brindled Beauty and The Herald were recorded.

Mid April arrived, and one of the most memorable trips to the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge we have ever had. Unfortunately it was for the wrong reasons. Last year we

met Centre Manager, Neil Woodward, a couple of times at his public events. He's a keen mother and was grateful we had taken our trap down for those nights. He said then that if we would like to trap at the centre then just give him a call. This we did, and Nigel decided to join us too. We arrived to overcast skies but it was dry. Neil suggested that we go out near the salt marsh as that had never been trapped before. So we followed him out to the site in our cars. As we were setting up, Neil said he better inform Lady Scott that she may see some bright lights from her window! So, he had to leave us as he was also looking after his two sons. Then soon after we had switched on the traps it started to rain. It proceeded to rain and rain and rain. Yep, we got another soaking. It was truly horrendous. Just around midnight, we saw Neil's Land Rover heading our way. We quickly got out of the car we had been sheltering in and looked busy. It was difficult, as we'd managed to catch half a dozen soggy moths in FIVE traps. After packing up we headed back to the Staff Room to dry out. The ground was now completely sodden and on the drive back Alan managed to go down a dip that ripped the trim off the front of the car. Luckily, Neil managed to find a bit of rope and with some deft knots tied it back on. After some hot drinks and trying to wring out our clothes, Neil said he knew where we might find some moths. He took us the isolation block where a light is on most of the time. There were a lot of moths in there and our tally shot up to 17 species. It was under cover and we did enquire why we couldn't have sat in there all night! It was just one of those nights we can look back on and laugh at now, even with the unexpected repair bill to the car!

23rd April saw the first Wyre Forest Moth Group meeting of the season. It was completely opposite to the Slimbridge night with near perfect weather, lots of people and lots of good moths. The great habitat produced 49 species. Amongst these were Scarce Tissue, Puss Moth and the ever impressive Great Prominent.

Next was the Whitacre Heath day and night event which has been covered in a recent Branch newsletter.

## **MAY**

May started with a return trip to Oversley Wood. Dave Grundy, Jeff Rush and Martin Kennard were with us tonight. The woods looked spectacular covered in Bluebells but the weather wasn't great. Alan, ever the pessimist, said he'd be happy to get ten species between us. He was only just wrong as 46 were seen! One of these will always be remembered by one of the group. We had been teasing Dave about one moth in particular for about a year as he'd never seen it. As we arrived at one trap Jeff swiftly put his hand over a moth on the outside and said confidently, "You don't want to see that, Dave". After much laughter and some persuasion Jeff removed his hand to reveal Dave's 'bogey' moth, a Silver Cloud. We saw another three after that which made Dave very happy. As is the norm, it was around 4 a.m. when we set off for home.

The following night Dave had returned from the 'Silver Clouds' to lead a public event at Lodge Hill in the Wyre Forest. Some of the regulars and quite a few newcomers thoroughly enjoyed their tour of traps but people do miss a lot when they leave early. A good tally of 53 species was recorded with Broom-Tip, Lobster Moth and Nut-Tree Tussock among the most impressive.

With more doubts about the weather it was with little hope that we ventured to the small bit of Wyre Forest that's in Staffordshire with Dave Grundy. Although Seckley Wood is now in Shropshire, for moth recording it's in Staffs. All very confusing isn't it?! Tonight's good news - weather changed for the better, the bad news - a big black dog appeared from nowhere and followed us around all night. Very annoying. We managed 40 species some of which were new county records.....for Staffordshire. Barred Hook-Tip, Clay Triple-Lines and May Highflyer were recorded, along with Great Prominent.

10<sup>th</sup> May and another trip to the Wyre Forest; this time to an area of orchards with Dave Grundy, Patrick Clement and Mervyn & Rose Needham. This site is a little disjointed and it was a bit of a trek across a cow filled field to one part. On quite a cold night over 40 species were found including Alder Kitten, Marbled Brown and Pale Tussock. After packing up we had a bit of a communication breakdown. Profuse apologies were made later for the mix-up. Finally, the equipment returned to Warwickshire with a last minute trip to Hay Wood. Nigel was the other stalwart with us and we had a good night adding to the few records for the site. An excellent 60 species were recorded with Sandy Carpet, Ochreous Pug and Brindled White-Spot being highlights.

An afternoon phone call from Dave Grundy meant a trip to Uffmoor Wood that evening; Patrick Clement again being most important as he's the key holder. Dave had also mentioned it to a few other people but no-one had arrived by the appointed time so, off we went to set up. Just after we'd set up and switched on a familiar face joined us. Richard Southwell had wandered up the track to find us. He was having such a good time he reluctantly left to pick up his wife from work. However, he did threaten to return! We were not sure if he would but when we came across an Orange Footman in one of the traps, we hoped he would. Richard was lucky enough to get one of these moths in his garden last year as they are spreading northwest at the moment. He wouldn't have believed us if we'd told him that we'd got one. So, it was with a little relief when saw him striding back up the track. We pointed him in the direction of the moth (now in a pot) and waited for his reaction. It didn't come a total surprise when he uttered "Bloody hell, it's an Orange Footman, I don't believe it!" Much laughter followed and he was happy he'd decided to return. 52 species were recorded before we set off for home in the early hours. Barred Umber and our first sightings of Poplar Hawk-Moths for the year were other highlights.

With the following day being National Moth Night and Nigel being leader of a public event, it was decided to try and impress 'the public' with some moths in case of early departures or dodgy weather. A return to Old Nun Wood was the venue of choice and Martin Kennard joined us. On a particularly cold night we did well to get 22 species. Martin's trap was the only one to be alive with moths; unfortunately they were all one species - Green Carpet! In the end we did manage to get a decent range of moths, from Cream Wave to Lime Hawk-Moth to Green Silver-Lines.

National Moth Night is always something to look forward to. However, the surprise this year was that Warwickshire's trip would be to the Arctic! Sorry, the National Herb Centre, it just felt like we were lot further north that night. So many people, so much effort and so few moths. It was a great shame about the weather as the site was very interesting and promised much. It was either a very brave or stupid moth that flew on such a freezing night. We thanked every one, individually, for making the effort, as a very poor 18 species were seen, the Nutmeg and the Lychnis being two of them.

Around the end of May, Alan had to travel down to Essex to help his mum with a few odd jobs. Naturally a trap made the trek too. Over the three nights, he did pretty well adding to his mum's garden list - Firethorn Leaf Miner, Muslin Moth and The Sycamore being new ones.

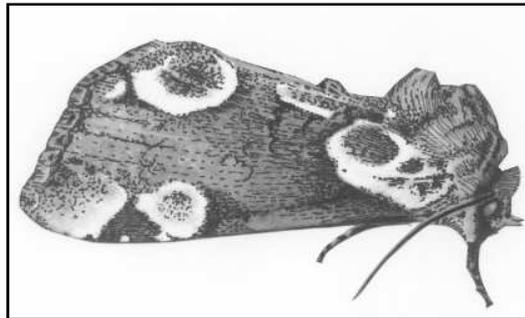
The end of May proved a very busy time. First a trip back down to Slimbridge with Nigel, Richard and Philip proved a bit more successful than last time. The decision to trap the Reed Bed Filtration System area proved a good one as we amassed 57 species. We had some real crackers among them too. For example Eyed Hawk-Moth, Dog's Tooth and Obscure Wainscot. The 3 a.m. departure time was earlier than usual!

With Crown East Wood officially in new hands, we were invited by Richard and Carol to continue our monthly sessions. Nigel, Richard and Philip were again on hand to help on

quite a busy night with another 50+ species recorded. Highlights were the incredibly colourful micro *Mompha raschkiella*, Maiden's Blush and Scorched Wing.

## **JUNE**

The first outing in June was to Close Wood. This site has very few records and so it's an important place to trap. The evening got off to an inauspicious start as a turning was missed on the way and a long detour had to be made. On arrival, Nigel, Richard and Philip were waiting and then came the tricky job of actually getting into the wood. The barriers are substantial to say the least. Once inside and sorting out where set the traps, another problem arose as the generator kept cutting out. Finally, the reason was found. Not enough oil in it. After refilling with oil it was found that all the messing around had blown one of the bulbs; it always pays to carry a spare. Eventually, everything was up and running. The weather was excellent; cloudy, humid with a light drizzle. The occasional round of wiping the traps saved the moths from getting too damp until the drizzle stopped. At the end we'd managed 82 species with Gold Swift, Peach Blossom, Small Yellow Wave, Poplar Kitten, Alder Moth and Bird's Wing being some of the highlights.



*Peach Blossom by John Reeve*

The following night was a bit different. We headed off to Batsford Arboretum in Gloucestershire to do some trapping. This all came about due to Val having the idea of a 'Mothing Breakfast' to help get people interested in moths. It was originally suggested for Crown East Wood, but with the change of ownership the facilities were no longer available there. However, Roger and Shella Wasley, who are regular visitors to our sessions, had taken to the idea and decided to organize one themselves. There aren't too many other trappers in their part of the world so they decided to try and convert some birding friends. We met Roger, Dave Grundy and Nigel Stone in the Arboretum car park and then had a look around see where to set the traps. Once everything was sorted, we had had an excellent night with plenty of moths and some surprises. The breakfast was held at Roger's house a few miles away. Unfortunately, for us, the attendees wouldn't surface from their slumbers early enough for us to go and get home safely. As Dave was going to be going to help at Roger's, we decided to pack up his traps first. In one of them was an enormous moth and we all went, WOW! - a Privet Hawk Moth. None of us had ever seen one before. It certainly was spectacular. That was just one of the moths we potted hoping that would impress at breakfast. After Dave and Roger had left for a couple of hours sleep, Nigel and we set about packing up ourselves. We narrowly missed recording a hundred species which was a minor disappointment compared to the success of the event. It even made it into the pages of "Butterfly", BC's National Magazine. Next time, Roger will insist that the lazy birders conform to our time scale so can get some breakfast too!

The 7th June, 2004 will long be remembered by Alan. Dave Grundy had phoned to say it was back to Oversley Wood tonight. They were joined by Bob Cox and Bill Creeby for a quite extraordinary night. The sheer volume of moths that night was unbelievable. At present, 183 species have been confirmed with more still to be identified. At least two were new for Warwickshire; the Pyralid moth *Salebriopsis albicilla* and Little Thorn. The rare *Sciota hostilis* was also recorded. Dave and Alan were still counting moths at 5.30 a.m.! What a night-morning or whatever! The icing on this particular cake was Alan even got to see the transit of Venus across the Sun, an event he thought held be sleeping through! After recovering from the Oversley experience it was back to the Wyre Forest for the monthly trap. The Clay Road area was selected tonight. We were a bit late setting up due to the Health & Safety chat before entering the forest. It always needs doing as there's always new people coming on these events. The weather had turned cold again and a very poor 66 species were recorded. This was a poor tally as in June in such fantastic habitat you should get over a hundred easily. Anyway, some good moths were found namely Satin Lutestring, Lilac Beauty (Val's favourite), Orange Moth, Grass Wave and Common Fan-Foot (NOT common at all!).

The following night it was a return to Oversley Wood with Dave Grundy and Martin Kennard. Another good night was had with a lot earlier finish! A species tally of 117 was a bit down on last time but still very good. Small Elephant Hawk-moth, Clouded Brindle and Beautiful Hook-Tip were among the highlights.

Next it was a trip up north. A nightmare of a journey up the dreaded M6 saw us almost give up. We were trying to get to the Rugby League match between Widnes and St. Helens. With the 8 p.m. kick-off time approaching and us on the M62 we still had to get our tickets from a friend's house en route. We got there about 7.50 and so didn't have time to set up the moth trap before getting a lift to the stadium. We could not believe that we'd finally made it to the game and saw the kick-off. After the game we had to wait for our friend, Helen, to finish working in the hospitality suites before we could get a lift back to her house and finally put up the trap. It was a really cold night and in a couple of hours we only managed to get 6 species. We did get 24 Heart & Dart though; they didn't seem to mind the cold!

It wasn't any warmer the following night when we went to Burton Dassett Hills Country Park with the rest of the Warwickshire moth group. With everyone really spread out we only managed to see 26 species. We did manage to find a healthy population of the uncommon moth, in Warwickshire, Heart & Club.

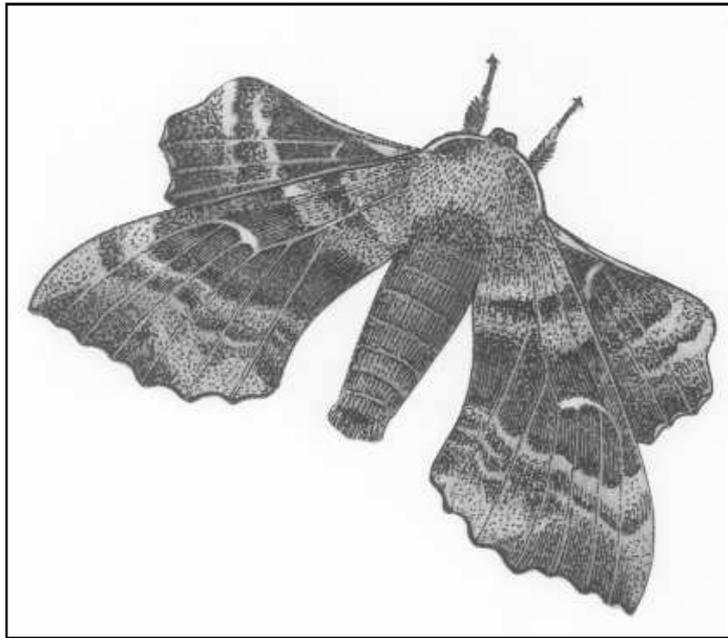
Another go at Oversley Wood was next with Nigel and Dave Grundy. We decided to trap in a different part of the wood this time. The night started well but the skies cleared and it got chilly. However, 78 species wasn't a bad night. They included The Phoenix, Satin Beauty and Yellow Tail.

Another Friday evening trek up the M6 proved more successful than the last one. We were off to another friend's house for some chat and moth trapping. We had quite a cool night last year and so were invited back to see if we could do better. On arriving in deepest, darkest Cheshire we found the weather a lot better than last year. A very sociable evening was enjoyed and 45 species recorded. As our hosts have three kids they were unable to stay up until our regular finish time so, we ended the night early but put some Elephant Hawk-Moths and an Eyed Hawk-Moth in some pots for the kids to see in the morning. We later learned that the kids had taken them to school where their teachers asked "what country do they come from?!" They were amazed find out that they were from their garden. It makes you wonder who is educating who sometimes!

## JULY

July began with the Warwickshire event at Draycote Water. Due to the unexpected early finish time we only managed to see 49 species. A bit disappointing for what could be an interesting site. Timothy Tortrix, Blue-Bordered Carpet and Lunar Spotted-Pinion were maybe the best on the night.

Another invitation to return was taken up as we spent two nights trapping at some friends' house in Cirencester. The first night was spent trying to trap during the worst July storm on record! Amazingly we still got 17 species despite the howling gale and torrential rain. The second night was slightly better and we managed 23 species. The good news was that we got both Poplar and Elephant Hawk-Moths together with the Buff-Tip; so some really nice moths to show our hosts.



*Poplar Hawk Moth by John Reeve*

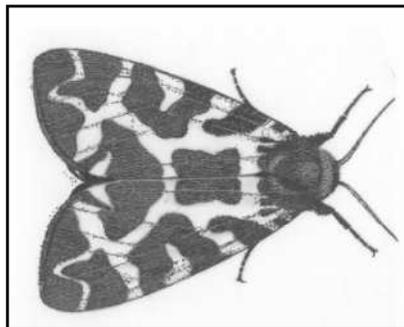
Alan's birthday was spent in the Wyre Forest at the usual monthly event. Our site tonight was reached along possibly the worst track we have ever driven on; bumpy, muddy, slippery, narrow, and with a long drop at one side. It certainly tested your driving skills and how long you could hold your breath! Anyway, once there we decided to make the best of it as it would be our only visit! With the traps set up, Val laid out a birthday spread on the bonnet of the car. Everyone appreciated and enjoyed that. Another relatively cool evening produced 83 species with our first sighting of Large Emerald for the year being a highlight. Also, good moths were Lead-Coloured and Bilberry Pugs. The drive back was just as bad and was met with a big sigh of relief when we were back on terra-concrete!

The following night was certainly a lot less stressful as we met Nigel at Waverley Wood. Apparently, no one had trapped here since we were last here in May 2003. A good evening seemed to be passing without incident until it came to packing up. We'd put one trap in the open and it didn't do that well compared to the others. That was until we arrived back at it after having done all the other traps. It was full of moths! It contained half a dozen Poplar Hawk-Moths which seemed to have appeared from nowhere. After thinking we were going to get a reasonably early finish, it took over an hour just to count this one trap. The tally reached 90 species with highlights, apart from the Poplar Hawk-Moths, being the Pyralid *Phlyctaenia perlucidalis* and Slender Brindle.

This very busy period continued with the fourth consecutive night spent in a different county. It was Staffordshire tonight and Alan's favourite place to trap - Hednesford Hills. Last year Dave Grundy did some survey work on the hills for the local council as they are trying to manage the heath land with grazing. Luckily, he invites others along occasionally as they don't have to stick to the heath land and so a more comprehensive list of species for the site is made. Alan always does a little bit of woodland and for some reason it's absolutely brilliant for the moths. The sheer volume here is astounding. It regularly takes anywhere between 2 and 3 hours to count the two traps. It's really hard work sometimes but thoroughly rewarding. Tonight 105 species were recorded. A small selection of them:- 39 Map-Winged Swift, 10 Plain Wave, 5 Grass Emerald, 30 Scarce Footman, 44 Large Yellow Underwing, 125 True Lover's Knot, 6 The Suspected, 157 Dark Arches and 3 Pinion-Streaked Snout. It doesn't matter how hard you try it's always after 4 a.m. when we leave here!

After such a great night, it was really disappointing the night after when Alan went to help Dave catch some good moths for an I.D. course he was running the following day at the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Headquarters. The coldest July night anyone could remember produced a pitiful 51 species from 7 traps. Normally, Dave would ask you to pot some colourful or difficult species for the course, tonight he said "pot everything!" as there were so few flying. In all this though the funniest thing was when Alan was helping Dave set up the traps and on shaking out a plastic bag to cover the electrics he got one hell of a shock when a frog jumped out! Dave must have packed it last night by mistake! Well it was 4 a.m.! At least there's plenty of water around the Trust's HQ for the lively amphibian to lose itself in. That wasn't the only surprise though as even with so few moths Alan managed to get himself two new species. An odd looking Pyralid called *Donacaula forficella* and Round-Winged Muslin.

The disappointment of the previous night was soon forgotten as it was back to Hednesford Hills for another superb night. Nigel joined Dave and Alan this time. In the short time since the last visit some species had exploded in number. The Map-Winged Swifts were up to 67, Scarce Footman 129, Large-fellow Underwing 76, True Lover's Knot 239, and The Suspected 13. Everyone packed up and counted their own traps and kept anything new. Everyone had a special moth to show the others Nigel had Puss Moth, Dave had a Bordered Sallow and Alan had a rare Garden Tiger, amongst a total of 151 species. A brilliant night.



*Garden Tiger by John Reeve*

After a couple of nights off, it was back to Crown East Wood for the monthly trap. Martin Kennard joined us tonight for what, and for the rest of the year, was a regular battle to identify moths and not get stung by Hornets! A warm and humid night passed by quickly with plenty of moths to record. A very good 122 species was the tally as we packed up the final trap as dawn was breaking. Wax Moth, Black Arches, Copper Underwing, Scorched Carpet and Waved Black were amongst them. The main incident of the night was when setting up the traps Martin spotted a large moth flapping away on the ground. When he

went to pick it up move it off the path he found it was in the beak of a juvenile Robin! He managed to free the moth (A Drinker) from the Robin's grasp. However the bird was none too pleased with losing his supper and kept tutting away in the undergrowth for quite a while. We did say to the Robin that he should come back at breakfast and he could have it then as we'd have counted it by that time!

The next night we returned to Warwickshire for the annual event at Windmill Hill. After enjoying the B-B-Q it was time to set up the traps. There seemed to be traps all over the place and we never did get round to see them all. The public appeared to be very interested and enjoyed themselves on their wander around the traps. Over 120 species were found with the highlight being the first Juniper Pug found in Warwickshire for ten years!

Another trip to Oversley Wood was next with Dave Grundy and Nigel Stone again in attendance. After sorting out a couple of bulb problem all the traps were on and running well, until one of Dave's started to fill up with wasps rather than moths. He does seem to have rather a knack for finding stinging insects! Nigel did find his first ever Glow-worm that night, so that was a bonus. Apart from the wasps it was a very good night with 147 species recorded. Slender and Maple Pugs, Brown-Tail and Scarce Silver-lines were amongst tonight's list.



A very busy end to July got underway with two consecutive nights with Dave at Hedgesford Hills. The first night Dave had invited a person new to mothing to join us, Mick Richardson. I think his head was spinning as he struggled to cope with so many unfamiliar moths all at the same time, (something Alan has experienced in the past!). It can get as if you don't know where to start. Patience and familiarity can become great qualities in mothing. Some of the figures from that night may give you an idea of why Mick had a tough time. Species 143 recorded, 12 Oak Eggar, 27 Plain Wave, 69 Narrow-Winged Pug, 313 Scarce Footman, 114 Large Yellow Underwing, 660 True Lover's Knot, 51 The Suspected and 206 Dark Arches! Martin Kennard joined us on the second night and as he wanted to run two traps Alan only did one instead of the normal two. Incredibly the species count went up to 164 overnight! Even more Large Yellow Underwings 292 and Dark Arches 272 were recorded. An astounding count of 265 Broad-Bordered Yellow Underwing was made. Of the others, Dark Spectacle was probably the best record. After looking at our trap, Alan decided it would probably take until Christmas to count all the moths in it so, only a species list would be done. There were 109 species found to be in it! Another 4.15 a.m. departure from this fantastic site!

The last day of July was to be a social one as we went to a Warwickshire BC Members birthday B-B-Q in Water Orton. She wanted to find out what moths were in her garden as well, so what better than to take the traps, have some food and drink and wait for them to arrive. With plenty of friends and family around we were kept busy getting some good public relations done for the moths. Guests were amazed at what was flying around without them realising. On the coolest night for a while we managed a respectable 59 species with good ones to show off being 'The Rabbit Moth' (a micro with the Playboy bunny design on its back.), Chinese Character and the colourful Dusky Sallow. A very good night was enjoyed by all and we'd done our bit to spread the word.

## **AUGUST**

August started with some of us Warwickshire BC Members helping out the West Midlands branch by doing one of their listed events, the original leader having recently moved from the area. We were helping ourselves too as we wanted to go to Tiddesley Wood near Pershore as it looked a promising wood for moths. Arrangements were made for access and just before we set off Dave Grundy informed us that we had a target species that night. We didn't have a clue we would be looking for anything specific especially a moth we'd never seen before. This could turn into quite an adventure. We met the person with the key at the appointed time and Martin Kennard arrived as well. We waited to see if anyone else would turn up, but no one did. Then we drove into the wood and set up the traps. We were also informed that Hornets were found in the wood for the first time last year. So, we were not surprised to find the first thing in the traps were Hornets! Luckily, we didn't get too many and we enjoyed an excellent night. 121 species, and as for the target well, we only managed to see 58 of The Mocha, a Nationally Notable B moth. It's a shame nobody else showed up to enjoy a great nights recording. We were finally on our way home by 5 a.m. as it took us 4 hours to count the traps!

Another couple of nights on Hednesford Hills were next. This time things didn't go to plan as, the first night the weather was absolute horrendous. It did stop raining briefly and Alan did manage to get the generator chained to his normal tree but, that was as far as he got. After waiting for a couple of hours in the hope the rain would pass the decision to give up and have another go tomorrow was reluctantly taken. A wander down to inform Dave of this decision found him in a bit of a state as he couldn't get one of the traps to work. He'd tried everything but no luck. Alan said he was giving up so do you want to borrow one of the Warwickshire traps. He almost ripped his hand of saying thanks! As Dave traps in the same five positions every time the loss of a trap would invalidate his survey for that night. As he didn't really have another date free to repeat he was grateful that we were able to help. The only price Dave had to pay was to let Alan out of the site. The next night was completely different and things were back to normal. Nigel joined us again and so did the site Ranger who is very pleased with how things have been going. By this time the number of moths got down to a more manageable level although some are still counted in the hundreds. 137 species recorded with some really nice ones such as Neglected Rustic, Beautiful Yellow Underwing, Gold Spot and the very weird looking Anomalous. As usual, we departed at 4.15 a.m.!

Mid August and the regular Wyre Forest session. The site tonight straddled the two counties of Worcestershire and Shropshire. We were in the latter this time. A lot of traps and people with us tonight and it took ages to get round all of them. On a brief return to the car Val spotted a couple of nice moths on the outside of one of the traps. She quickly potted them and left them there before rejoining the others. Later Dave Grundy had managed to get up to the trap and asked who'd potted them and why hadn't they told him? Val said she didn't know what they were so couldn't tell anybody! One turned out to be a Cloaked-Carpet, a moth rarely seen in Wyre Forest. Val seems to have a knack of finding things in this bit of Wyre as she'd discovered Devon Carpet there last year! The Devon

Carpet's are still there as we saw some more but it wasn't such a surprise as last year. In total 125 species were seen including our first live Dark Marbled Carpet, Dusky Thorn, Barred Chestnut, Large Ear and Small Purple Barred.

The next night is was back down to Slimbridge to help Neil Woodward with the first of his two public events. We'd also talked Dave Grundy, Martin Kennard, Nigel Stone and Jeff Rush into coming as well. Between us we managed to have the most number of traps on one night ever at Slimbridge - 13. It's all very civilised on these nights as first there is a slide presentation followed by hot drinks and biscuit. Then you can either go around the traps or stay and wait for moths to be potted and brought to you. By around 1 a.m. generally, the public have gone and it's left to us to entertain ourselves. Some can entertain better than others! On this particular night it was Nigel's turn. Jeff had decided to put his five traps out on the salt marsh. It was a bit of a trek and as it was getting on Alan and Martin decided to pack up while Val, Dave and Nigel were driven out to see what was in Jeff's traps. Now walking along a bank with steep sides down to an estuary in the middle of the night is bound to have its drawbacks. While wandering to the traps Val and Dave suddenly realised that Nigel had disappeared. Yes, down the bank he'd gone into the muddy Severn. Jeff, Dave and Neil managed to retrieve a mud splattered figure from the six foot drop still holding his torch - switched off of course! By the time everyone had stopped laughing and packed up it was 5.30 a.m. and time to head for home. 101 species had been recorded with Magpie Moth, Bordered Beauty, Southern Wainscot, Saltern Ear and Red Underwing the other highlights apart from Nigel the Mudskipper!

The following Saturday it was off to Ufton Fields for another Warwickshire moth group event. Another cool night produced 72 species with Orange Swift, 'The Rabbit Moth' and Pale Eggar amongst the highlights. It's been a real shame that these Warwickshire nights have been plagued by bad weather this year. Nothing you can do about it but hope for better luck next year.

The August Bank Holiday weekend saw us start down at Slimbridge for the second of the public events. It was just us this time as we don't think anyone could take any more 'entertainment' like last time! A cold night saw only 64 species recorded. It was noticeable that some of the early Autumnal species were about. Such as Centre-Barred Sallow and Frosted Orange together with the odd migrant like Rusty-Dot Pearl.

Two nights later and we were at Crown East Wood for the monthly session. A showery night saw us end up with more Hornets (35) than species of moth (32). The new owners, Richard and Carol, had come along to see how we were getting on. At least we did get some interesting moths for them to see, Dusky Thorn, Centre-Barred Sallow and Feathered Gothic being examples. We waited for one final shower to pass before packing up and then letting all the Hornets go that we potted as they arrived.

## **SEPTEMBER**

September got underway with a return to Close Wood with Nigel and Martin. It was a relatively slow night but some interest was generated by seeing a Smooth Newt scampering around Martin's trap! Things moth wise did pick up towards the end and we managed 46 species with Wax Moth, Autumnal Rustic, Brown-Spot Pinion and Orange Sallow being some them.

The last Wyre Forest Moth Group field Meeting of the year was next with a trip to the very unusual Hartlebury Common. After setting up and switching on everyone gathered for a chat and to start looking at the traps. We were just passing a trap near the car park when an almighty shower hit and everyone dashed to their vehicles for cover. It didn't last too long and we were all soon back out doing the rounds. Amongst the 49 species we saw

were some of this habitat's specialties such as the Pyralid - *Crambus hamella*, White-Line Dart, Heath Rustic and Hedge Rustic.

With things slowing down a bit Alan took the opportunity to go back down to his mum's in Essex to do those end of summer (Ha! what summer I hear you ask.) jobs. During his two night stay, 34 species the first night and 19 the second were recorded. Included in those were Feathered Ranunculus and Dusky Lemon Sallow.

Then it was back to battle with the Hornets at Crown East Wood. Nigel won the battle that night by getting 18 to our 16! If only we'd had that many moths! A disappointing 18 species, however, a superb Vapourer and spectacular Barred Sallow were seen.

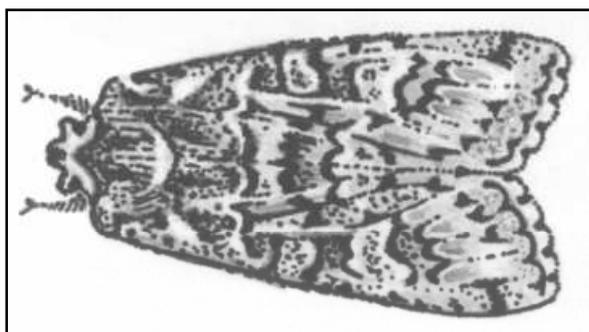
With September drawing to a close and Val on holiday, we decided to take a chance and head to west Wales. Ynys-Hir has always been one of our favourite places and so we went for the afternoon. We asked in the Visitor Centre if we could set up a couple of traps for the evening. They said it would be fine as long as we let them know what we got. No problem there then. We had a good wander round the reserve and Val saw her favourite, Peregrine, on our way. By the time we got back to car it was almost dark and so time to put the traps up. It had been raining on and off all afternoon but now it wasn't and we had lots cloud so we were hopeful of getting something. In the end it was a very strange evening as one of the first moths in the trap got ignored a looked like a Blair's Shoulder-Knot and turned out to be a Pale Pinion on closer inspection later. Then we had the shock of finding that the moth Alan had netted flying around the trap was a Buff Arches! We managed 15 species in the end with Pink-Barred Sallow being one of them. Another surprise was on the drive home when Alan saw a Polecat run across the road in front of us. Val managed to miss it as she was dozing. All in all, well worth taking the chance.

The last day of the month saw us make a last minute decision to return to Whitacre Heath. A cold evening produced 7 species including another Pink-Barred Sallow. Not many moths but the good news was that they were all newly recorded for the site.

## **OCTOBER**

October began with a visit to Slimbridge. A good wander around in the afternoon was followed by a really cold evening. We only bothered setting up one trap in the car park but yet another surprise was in store. Only 7 species again but one of them was a pristine Swallow-Tailed Moth. You just never know what'll turn up!

Mid October and a last minute decision to go to Crown East Wood on our way back from our final visit to the National Bird of Prey Centre at Newent turned out to be a good one. It didn't look too promising and Alan managed to fool Val into believing all the pots he was putting in the car were filled with Hornets. When she found they were full of moths, it was just as well she was sitting down already! We managed a very good 15 species including the one we were after. It's worth going out of your way to see the Merveille Du Jour as it such a spectacular moth and we got three that night - an enjoyable and successful day and night.



*Merveille Du Jour by John Reeve*

The end of October and a visit to Meriden Shafts on a very cool evening produced only six species but again all new for the site. Nigel had forgotten his cables and so I finally had to undo one of the lengths of wire on the traps. I'd managed to avoid doing that for so long. Things will never be the same again!

## **NOVEMBER**

November began with an excellent nights recording at Oversley Wood. Nigel and Martin managed to make this one and it was well worth it. We got 17 species, including the target of Pale November Moth. Thanks to Nigel it was confirmed that we had 41 of them. We also got another Merveille Du Jour and The Sprawler.

With the weather still pretty mild, we went back to Close Wood with Nigel. A good evening produced 9 species including December Moth, worth going for on it's own in our humble opinion, Winter Moth and a variety of superb Mottled Umber.

The weather remained good into the following week and so another trip was planned, this time to Waverley Wood. However, one of the padlocks had recently been changed and access was impossible. A short discussion with Nigel saw us end up at Ryton Wood just round the corner. Another thoroughly enjoyable few hours recording led to 11 species being seen. Good numbers of Scarce Umber and December Moth being highlights along with a new species for Ryton, The Sprawler. Winter and Northern Winter Moth were also seen.

With the weather about to go Arctic-like, Alan decided to take a chance and have one last go at Crown East Wood. As he was on his own this time, setting up before dusk wasn't a problem. It also proved well worthwhile as after a few hours the wind got up and started to blow through the wood. With the lack of leaves left on the trees shelter was difficult to find. Considering the conditions, a very creditable 8 species were recorded, with four of them being new for the wood. The most surprising was a very late second generation example of The Snout.

Luckily, the Arctic blast only lasted a couple of nights and things got back to above normal temperature wise. This led to another trip out. This time it was to Meigh's Wood with Nigel. It was about as good as you can get at this time of the year weather wise and we managed a very good 23 December Moths. Also recorded were The Chestnut, a new record for the 10 km square, and Dark Chestnut among the six species.

The final recording event was at Chaddesley Wood in Worcestershire on the 25th of November. Mervyn Needham (Wood Warden) and Patrick Clement also came along. Again six species were recorded with 20 Winter Moths being spread across the five traps a good tally.

## **CONCLUSION**

So, with the weather now against us and only the hope of seeing the odd moth here and there during the next couple of months it's time to reflect on what's been an incredibly busy (and damp) year. Nigel informs us that the Warwickshire Butterfly Conservation Moth Equipment has contributed to around 15,000 moth records this year. We feel that a reasonable return on such an investment! Even though members have, on the whole, not wished to use the equipment it has been far from idle. We hope this account reflects that and that all members will be pleased that the Branch took such a step. What does 2005 have in store? That's the beauty of Moths, nobody knows; unless you take the plunge and go and find out for yourself.

Thanks must go to all those poor souls who had to put up with us during 2004. We hope they'll still be sane in 2005!

**QUICK REFERENCE**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Site</u></b>	<b><u>Species</u></b>
13/03/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	18
16/03/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	19
22/03/2004	SALTWELLS WOOD, Staffordshire	10
27/03/2004	OLD NUN WOOD, Warwickshire	26
29/03/2004	UFFMOOR WOOD, Worcestershire	22
30/03/2004	OVERSLEY WOOD, Warwickshire	26
03/04/2004	HIGH CLERE, Worcestershire	10
04/04/2004	PENORCHARD FARM, Worcestershire	9
11/04/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	35
12/04/2004	RIBBESFORD WOODS, Worcestershire	22
16/04/2004	SLIMBRIDGE, Gloucestershire	17
23/04/2004	WYRE FOREST, Worcestershire	49
25/04/2004	WHITACRE HEATH, Warwickshire	29
01/05/2004	OVERSLEY WOOD, Warwickshire	46
02/05/2004	WYRE FOREST, Worcestershire	53
08/05/2004	SECKLEY WOOD, Staffordshire	40
10/05/2004	THE ORCHARDS, Worcestershire	40
14/05/2004	HAY WOOD, Warwickshire	60
15/05/2004	UFFMOOR WOOD, Worcestershire	52
21/05/2004	OLD NUN WOOD, Warwickshire	22
22/05/2004	NATIONAL HERB CENTRE, Warwickshire	18
23/05/2004	WEELEY, Essex	14
24/05/2004	WEELEY, Essex	44
25/05/2004	WEELEY, Essex	27
29/05/2004	SLIMBRIDGE, Gloucestershire	57
30/05/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	51
03/06/2004	CLOSE WOOD, Warwickshire	82
04/06/2004	BATSFORD ARBORETUM, Gloucestershire	99
07/06/2004	OVERSLEY WOOD, Warwickshire	183+
11/06/2004	WYRE FOREST, Worcestershire	66
12/06/2004	OVERSLEY WOOD, Warwickshire	117
18/06/2004	WIDNES, Cheshire	6
19/06/2004	BURTON DASSETT HILLS C.P, Warwickshire	26
21/06/2004	OVERSLEY WOOD, Warwickshire	78
25/06/2004	CONGLETON, Cheshire	45
03/07/2004	DRAYCOTE WATER, Warwickshire	49
07/07/2004	CIRENCESTER, Gloucestershire	17
08/07/2004	CIRENCESTER, Gloucestershire	23
09/07/2004	WYRE FOREST, Worcestershire	83
10/07/2004	WAVERLEY WOOD, Warwickshire	90
11/07/2004	HEDNESFORD HILLS, Staffordshire	105
12/07/2004	STAFFS WILDLIFE TRUST HQ, Staffordshire	51
13/07/2004	HEDNESFORD HILLS, Staffordshire	151
16/07/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	122
17/07/2004	WINDMILL HILL, Warwickshire	146
20/07/2004	OVERSLEY WOOD, Warwickshire	147
26/07/2004	HEDNESFORD HILLS, Staffordshire	143
27/07/2004	HEDNESFORD HILLS, Staffordshire	164
31/07/2004	WATER ORTON, Warwickshire	59
07/08/2004	TIDDESLEY WOOD, Worcestershire	121
10/08/2004	HEDNESFORD HILLS, Staffordshire	137
13/08/2004	WYRE FOREST, Worcestershire	125
14/08/2004	SLIMBRIDGE, Gloucestershire	101
21/08/2004	UFTON FIELDS, Warwickshire	72
27/08/2004	SLIMBRIDGE, Gloucestershire	64
29/08/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	32

04/09/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	46
10/09/2004	HARTLEBURY COMMON, Worcestershire	49
22/09/2004	WEELEY, Essex	34
23/09/2004	WEELEY, Essex	19
25/09/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	18
27/09/2004	YNYS-HIR, Wales	15
30/09/2004	WHITACRE HEATH, Warwickshire	7
01/10/2004	SLIMBRIDGE, Gloucestershire	7
16/10/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	15
26/10/2004	MERIDEN SHAFTS, Warwickshire	6
01/11/2004	OVERSLEY WOOD, Warwickshire	17
08/11/2004	CLOSE WOOD, Warwickshire	9
16/11/2004	RYTON WOOD, Warwickshire	11
17/11/2004	CROWN EAST WOOD, Worcestershire	8
23/11/2004	MEIGH'S WOOD, Warwickshire	6
25/11/2004	CHADDESLEY WOOD, Worcestershire	6

#### Trips by County

Ceredigion	1
Cheshire	2
Essex	5
Gloucestershire	7
Shropshire	1
Staffordshire	9
Warwickshire	25
Worcestershire	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>

**Total moth records (by all traps) 15,000**



*Elephant Hawk Moth by Keith Warrington*



Cartoon by Rita Ruban

Booklet produced by  
**Warwickshire Branch of Butterfly Conservation**

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