

Moth summary for VC37 Worcestershire 2018.

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Macromoths:

There were four species recorded in 2018 that were new to the county:

On 8/6/18 Pete Smith caught a Geometrid moth at light at Dodford SO936731 which was confirmed by Martin Honey and Peter Hall to be a Petite Wave *Scopula minorata* (Boisduval) (01). This is a Mediterranean species only once previously recorded as imported into the UK. It was thought it might have come from a nearby plant nursery rather than being a primary migrant.



01. Petite Wave *Scopula minorata*.

A Yarrow Pug *Eupithecia millefoliata* Rossler was caught at light in Wyre Forest SO753765 by Patrick Clement on 8/7/18. One had occurred in Herefordshire in 2017. A resident species in south-east England for many years it now seems to be spreading into the West Midlands and, feeding on Yarrow, may be expected to become commoner and more widespread.

Another moth spreading from south-east was a Toadflax Brocade *Calophasia lunula* (Hufn.) (02) which came to Alan Prior's moth trap in Hall Green SP10478292 on 24/7/18. A species of scantily vegetated coastal sites feeding on Yellow Toadflax which has now been spreading, feeding especially on Purple Toadflax, on brownfield sites around the London area.



02. Toadflax Brocade *Calophasia lunula*. Alan Prior.

An L-album Wainscot *Hyphilare L-album* (Linn.) was recorded at light at Abberton SO99536 by Gavin Peplow on 8/10/18 (03). This species has been spreading from the south-west over recent years.



03. L-album Wainscot *Hyphilare L-album*. Gavin Peplow.

Micromoths:

Five species new to the county were recorded:

First Mike Southall caught an *Eligia similella* (Zinck.) at light at Norchard SO847685 on 27/5/18 (04). This oak feeding Pyralid is resident locally in the south-east of England but is also occasionally noted as a probable migrant, and this moth occurring outside of oak woodland was presumably one of those.



04. *Eligia similella*. Mike Southall.

On 3/6/18 Alan Prior had a male *Schoenobius gigantella* (D. & S.) to light at Hall Green SP10478292 (05). Resident in the south and east of England this species has occurred in nearby Warwickshire recently and as with many of the reed feeding moths they are prone to wander well away from their usual habitats in hot weather, which is the case with this record.



05. Male *Schoenobius gigantella*. Alan Prior.

A small Gelechiid in Patrick Clement's garden moth trap in Halesowen SO948836 turned out on dissection to be a female *Monochroa hornigi* (Staud.) (06) which feeds in *Persicaria* and *Polygonum* species, and is another moth with a south-eastern English distribution.



06. Female *Monochroa hornigi*. Patrick Clement.

The Oecophorid moth *Metalampra italica* Balducci whose larva feeds under the dead bark of various trees has been spreading rapidly in England since first being recorded in Devon, and had occurred in neighbouring counties in the past few years. There were three records in Worcestershire in 2018. Mike Southall had one at light at Norchard SO847685 on 6/7/18; Stephen Palmer one on Penny Hill Bank SO754616 on 15/7/18; and Dave and Jane Scott on a lighted window at Astley Burf SO808677 on 1/8/18. (07)



07. *Metalampra italica*.

As reported in *Worcestershire Record* (November 2018 number 45, p.24) a Summer Fruit Tortrix *Adoxophyes orana* (F. von R.) (08) came to my (Tony Simpson) garden moth trap at Eastham SO66696850 on 27/7/18 and another on 30/8/18. Another was caught at light at Lodge Hill in Wyre Forest SO758766 by Darren Taylor on 3/8/18 (and I understand was recorded for the first time in Staffordshire the same night). It is another species probably spreading from the south-east.



08. Summer Fruit Tortrix *Adoxophyes orana*.

Other notable records:

Cadra figulilella (Gregson) Alan Prior had two (on 18/7/18 and 1/8/18) in a skinner trap at Hall Green SO10478292. The only previous record was from specimens in Worcester Museum dated 30/5/1888. This is a synanthropic species usually on stored vegetable products and the source of these outdoor but urban records is unknown but possibly from bird food or similar material.

Dichomeris alacella (Zell.) (09) is said to feed on lichens on tree trunks and there have been two records of this uncommon moth in recent years. Martin Skirrow had one at Carpenter's Farm SO770330 on 1/7/18 having had a previous record there in 2011. Mary Singleton and others recorded at least a dozen at light traps at Old Country House, Mathon SO72724460 on 9/7/18 in an area of old orchard.



09. *Dichomeris alacella*

Schiffermuelleria grandis (Devignes) One of these beautiful little moths was found on his kitchen window at Great Witley SO750666 on 30/5/18 by Ian Wright. Other records are in Ribbesford Wood, Wyre Forest and Shrawley Wood and one in Monk Wood by Steve Whitehouse last year. It may be spreading as it was recorded in Shropshire for the first time in 2018.

Ethmia dodecea (Haworth) (10) was recorded by Oliver Wadsworth in Tiddesley Wood SO92985408 on 6/7/18. Previous records in Abberton area and Pendock but still no larvae yet found in the county but breeding close by in Gloucestershire.



10. *Ethmia dodecea*. Oliver Wadsworth.

Stigmella aceris (Frey) This maple feeding leaf miner has now spread right through the county from the south up to the Shropshire and Staffordshire borders and only seems absent from the far north west beyond Great Witley at present.

Parectopa ononidis (Zell.) (11) a specimen of this beautiful little moth appeared in Martin Skirrow's house at Carpenter's Farm SO770330 on 13/7/18. Previous records in Worcester, Malvern and on Old Hills, larva a leaf miner in clovers.



11. *Parectopa ononidis*.

Box-tree Moth *Cydalima perspectalis* (Walker) there were three more records of this recent arrival in the UK after the first record in Malvern last year; Jason Waine in Redditch SP027668 on 13/8/18, Neil Gregory at Coney Green Drive, Birmingham SP01937827 on 21/8/18, and Ian Machin in Bewdley SO776755 on 16/9/18.

Dave Smith recorded a Mullein Wave *Calothysanis marginepunctata* (Goeze) (12) at Wollaston-Stourbridge SO884838 on 11/8/18. This mainly coastal moth also occurs on and around brownfield sites and has previously been recorded in Sparkbrook in VC37.



12. Mullein Wave *Calothysanis marginepunctata*. Dave Smith.

2018 was notable for the number of larval records of Small Eggar *Eriogaster lanestris* (Linn.) found in the south of the county as reported in the *Worcestershire Record* of November 2018 number 45 p. 49-50. Four webs were found on the same hedge between 28/5 and 4/6 at Hill Court Farm SO825351 by Andy Warr, and a single larva nearby between Guller's End and Longdon by Sarah Loaring on 10/6; a larval web by Steve Whitehouse at Longdon Marsh SO825352 on 3/6, Wendy Carter a single larva at Defford SO9182743792 on 10/6, and more larval webs by Mel Mason at Hardwick Green Meadow SO811324 on 20/6, and Harry Green at Little Comberton SO96374327 on 5/6. It seems likely that there may have been many more unreported in the same general area. It is interesting to compare with the Lackey *Malacosoma neustria* (Linn.) formerly a much more common species, of which there was a single larval web and two imagines only recorded in 2018. Perhaps the ova of the Lackey being laid in batches attached to twigs over the winter are often destroyed by hedge flailing whereas Small Eggars are in cocoons in the hedge bottom before emerging in February and March.

A Heath Rustic *Xestia agathina* (Dup.) no doubt a stray, was recorded at light at Carpenter's Farm SO770330 by Martin Skirrow on 2/9/18.

Cypress Carpet *Thera cupressata* (Geyer) has now spread widely in the county feeding on garden conifers as had previously Cypress Pug *Eupithecia phoeniciata* (Rambur).

Pine Hawk-moth *Sphinx pinastri* Linnaeus was found in small numbers again at Defford and, for the first time, at Tiddesley Wood.

Migrants:

2018 was such a warm year with often southerly air streams and wall to wall sunshine that it is amazing that it was so poor for migrant moths, in fact one of the worst of recent years. The last really hot summer in 2006 in comparison was very good indeed. There were quite a number of unusual records of resident species emerging at the "wrong" time of year and some normally univoltine species had second broods. For example *Oliodia schumacherana* (Fabr.) had a normal emergence in June and July and then a second brood of small almost half sized specimens emerged in September.

Amongst the migrants only Humming-bird hawk-moths *Macroglossum stellatarum* (Linn.) occurred in good numbers with over forty records widely across the county but with the usual concentration in the Malvern area. Silver Y *Autographa gamma* (Linn.) were only moderately common with just over 400 records and Diamond-back Moths *Plutella xylostella* (Linn.) with 189. There were only four Pearly Underwings *Peridroma saucia* (Hubner) and twelve Dark Sword Grass *Agrotis ipsilon* (Hufg.). There were two Convolvulus Hawks *Agrius convolvuli* (Linn.); Mike Southall with his usual one at Norchard SO847685 on 20/8/18, and A. Gowing with one at Oak Tree Lane in Birmingham SP04218119 on 30/8/18. There was only one Small Mottled Willow *Spodoptera exigua*, one *Palpita vitrealis* and three Rusty Dot Pearls *Udea ferrugalis*.

Other News:

We received over 32000 records for the year of 1089 species; a significant increase in records from last year, due partly to the exceptional weather during the summer but also an ever increasing number of recorders. Variety was down very slightly.

Dave Smith continued his regular monthly surveying of the Kinver Edge, this time concentrating of the part that is in VC37 Worcestershire. Other irregular trapping was carried out in the Wyre, Monkwood, Tiddesley Wood and many other sites. The Worcestershire Biological Records Centre's (WBRC's) 'Finding rare species in the Malverns' project ran two moth nights at Ravenshill Wood and Old Country Farm. However, the bulk of the records come from those individuals who run traps in their gardens, some almost daily. These traps also produced the majority of the

new and notable finds this last year. You never know what will turn up in the garden trap.

Butterfly Conservation West Midlands has funded the design of a new website for the West Midlands counties. At time of writing it is not quite ready, but should be on line shortly. It is a 'live' distribution atlas that will get its underlying data refreshed annually and remain reasonably up to date. More details will be posted as soon as possible on the Hereford and Worcester moths blog at: <http://herefordandworcestermoths.blogspot.com/>. The blog is open to all so do feel free to post about your recent sightings and any ID queries you might have.

A growing number of people are using the online iRecord system to keep their records. It can be found at <https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/>.

Many thanks to all those who sent in records for the county database this last year. The data is sent on to the National database held by Butterfly Conservation.

Images

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