

## Worcestershire moth review for 2021

Tony Simpson and Oliver Wadsworth

### New species to VC37 in 2021

There was only one new Macromoth; the rare immigrant Radford's Flame Shoulder *Ochropleura leucogaster* (Freyer) (01). Peter Holmes had one in his light trap in Malvern Wells SO773420 on 10/10/21 and Mike Southall had another at Norchard SO847685 on 11/11/21. These unusual inland records were associated with a major influx of this species into the UK the previous autumn.



01. Radford's Flame Shoulder *Ochropleura leucogaster*. Norchard 11.11.21. Mike Southall.

Four new Micromoths were recorded:

*Phyllonorycter distentella* (Zeller) (02).

Ian Machin caught one at light in Kingsford Country Park SO826822 on 05/06/21. There are previous Herefordshire records though none recently. The larva is a leaf miner on oak and otherwise only known from Kent.



02. *Phyllonorycter distentella*. Patrick Clement.

*Phtheochroa schreibersiana* (Frolich) (03).

Berkeley-Pendesham SO883570 one at light on 13/06/21 (Steve Whitehouse). Rare nationally with some recent records in urban and suburban areas possibly associated with new tree planting. Larva is said to spin leaves and bore in shoots, live in aphid galls and under bark of elm, bird cherry and poplar but life history needs confirmation.



03. *Phtheochroa schreibersiana*. Berkeley-Pendesham 13.06.21 Steve Whitehouse.

*Triaxomasia caprimulgella* (Staint.) (04).

Mike Southall used a clothes moth pheromone trap for a domestic infestation indoors at Norchard SO847685 from 06/06/21 and found, as well as clothes moths, a dead moth attracted to it which was identified later by dissection by Patrick Clement as this species. The late Michael Harper showed me (Tony Simpson) several living in and flying around inside an old hollow field maple tree in Ledbury Park some years ago. This species has been turning up at clearwing pheromone traps after being thought of as a rare and is certainly a rarely recorded species in UK.



04. *Triaxomasia caprimulgella*. Norchard. Patrick Clement.

(05). *Cydia amplana* (Hubn.)

Although thought of as mainly an immigrant species it is probably now breeding in UK, mainly in acorns, and spreading northwards. It was expected to reach us sooner or later and arrived in 2021. Recorded at light in Abberton SO995536 on 07/09/21 (Gavin Peplow), Norchard SO847685 on 08/09/21 (Mike Southall), and Redditch, 09/09/21 (Rob Wardle).



05. *Cydia amplana*. Norchard 08.09.21. Mike Southall.



**Other interesting and significant records:**

**Macromoths:**

Emma Beasley found a Death's-head Hawk-moth *Acherontia atropos* indoors at Great Witley SO755662 on 23/09/21. It was thought that it was attracted by honey bees nesting in the chimney.

A photo of a Bee Hawk-moth turned up on social media taken by non-entomologist Tony Armstrong. It was probably Narrow-bordered *Hemaris tityus* found in a garden in Wichenford SO7860 on 15/06/21. Source unknown but not far from Monk Wood.

There have been increasing numbers of Pine Hawk-moths *Sphinx pinastri* recorded right across the county including a larva found on the ground near the River Teme at SO798526 by Carrie Randell on 19/09/21.

Festoon *Apoda limacodes*. Malvern SO8047. One at light on 05/06/21 (Ian Duncan) is the only modern record west of Severn away from the Trench Wood – Grafton Wood - Abberton area.

Peter Holmes had two Cloaked Pugs *Eupithecia abietaria* at light on 11/07/21 and 04/08/21, and a Yarrow Pug *Eupithecia millefoliata* on 21/07/21 at Malvern Wells SO773420. Both species confirmed by dissection. Only second county records.

Great Oak Beauty *Hypomecis roboraria*. One at light in Upper Welland SO783405 (Ian Duncan) on 16/06/21 is very unusual away from Wyre Forest area.

Light Knot Grass *Acrionicta menyanthidis* (06). One at light at Berkeley-Pendesham SO883570 on 17/06/21 (Steve Whitehouse) is second county record of a vagrant probably from north and west.



06. Light Knot Grass *Acrionicta menyanthidis*. Berkeley-Pendesham 17.06.21. Steve Whitehouse.

Dewick's Plusia *Macdunnoughia confusa*. One on 07/10/21 at Evesham SP043453 (Lee Taylor) was either a migrant or recent resident example of a species which is spreading into the west midlands.

White-point *Mythimna albipuncta*. Another formerly rare migrant which is now occurring more frequently in the midlands and

possibly becoming resident. Abberton SO995536 on 01/09/21 (Gavin Peplow), Darkham Wood SO738299 on 11/09/21 (Ric Benson-Bunch), Norchard SO846684 on 05/09/21 (M. Southall), Evesham SP043453 on 01/07/21 (Lee Taylor) and Stourport SO803728 on 02/08/21 Ian Machin.

Kent Black Arches *Meganola albula* (07). This species had only been recorded in the extreme south west of the county, but is clearly now becoming more widespread. Penny Hill Landfill Site SO751615 (Oliver Wadsworth) on 20/07/21, Abberton SO995536 on 30/7/21 (Gavin Peplow), as well as still in Welland SO793403 on 17/7/21 (N. & L. Harris).



07. Kent Black Arches *Meganola albula*. Oliver Wadsworth.

Dark Crimson Underwing *Catocala sponsa*. One at light at Norchard SO847685 on 09/09/21 (Mike Southall)

Blue Underwing/Clifton Nonpareil *Catocala fraxini* continued to be found across the county with over 25 recorded.

Bedstraw Hawk-moth *Hyles gallii*. One to light at Redditch SP038656. 02/08/21. (P. Taylor).

**Clearwings:**

Increasing use of attracting pheromones in 2021 confirmed that many species are widespread and fairly common and were under-recorded previously without the benefit of lures. It seems though that Orange-tailed Clearwing *Synanthedon andrenaeformis* has undergone a change in numbers and distribution probably associated with feeding on alternative viburnums and possibly other shrub and tree species. White-barred Clearwing *S. sphecoformis* and Large Red-belted Clearwing *S. culiciformis* do seem to be local and mainly confined to the greater Wyre Forest area.

**Micromoths:**

Brian Harley made the second county record of *Nemapogon variatella* (Clem.) when one was attracted to a VES clearwing pheromone lure near Defford Airfield SO897445 on 17/07/21. It has been increasingly noticed that these lures attract other moths as well as clearwings, especially some Tineidae and Tortricidae. Anyone using them should look out for these and please keep specimens to be identified later if possible.

The small ermine moth *Yponomeuta evonymella* (Linn.) is well known from regularly turning up in moth traps in variable numbers every year, but is only known to feed on bird cherry which is not native in Worcestershire. It is however being planted here mainly as an amenity tree, but despite looking on it for larval webs, until this year I had never found any. The moth was therefore assumed to be only a migrant either from upland areas to north and west or possibly from abroad. In 2021 however I (Tony Simpson) found many larval

webs on planted bird cherry in Stoulton Woods SO909494 on 03/06/21 and bred moths from these, so can confirm this species is now definitely breeding here.

*Agonopterix propinquella* (Treits.) We have only a few records of this moth in the county so it was nice to get a record and photo from Neal Gregory of a hibernating imago disturbed from inside the mushroom house at Hanbury Hall SO94256371 on 30/12/21.

*Elachista stabilella* Staint. I found two of these pretty little moths, as usual flying amongst a clump of the grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* which seems to be its usual foodplant, on 16/06/21 at Hipton Hill Orchards SPO29484. Our only other site is not far away on the other side of Avon Valley on Windmill Hill.

*Commophila aeneana* (Hubn.) Kevin McGee photographed this beautiful moth at Penny Hill Landfill Site SO752616 on 05/06/21. This is the first record away from the Lias Clay area in south east of the county, this time on a calcareous Silurian grassland site.

*Pammene ignorata* Kusnetov Tony Simpson had a female of this uncommon species at light at Eastham SO66696850 on 5/6/21. Confirmed by dissection. Two were more were seen at Dodford by Pete Smith on 09 & 15/06/21. Life history unknown.

*Oncocera semirubella* (Scop.) Following the first records in 2020 at Penny Hill Landfill Site SO751615 Oliver Wadsworth and Patrick Clement had three more there on 20/07/21, confirming it is resident.

*Euzophera cinerosella* (Zell.) Roger Scase had one of these at light in Tibberton SO90645791 on 15/07/21. An uncommonly recorded moth in the county whose larva feeds in roots of wormwood. Ian Machin also recorded this species on 01/07/21 at Stourport (SO803728).

*Catoptria margaritella* ([D. & S.]) there was third county record of this peat bog Crambid at Dodford SO936731 on 02/08/21 (Pete Smith). Undoubtedly a migrant here in VC37.

### Migrant moths.

Numbers of migrant moths were generally low as has often been the case in recent years. A summary of species usually considered as migrants in the UK follows (Table 01). Of note is the total of 74 Box-tree Moths *Cydalima perspectalis* (08) compared to the previous year's (2020) total of just seven. There is now some local breeding of this species in the county as reported by Gary Farmer in Redditch.

Code	Taxon	Vernacular	Totals
18.001	<i>Plutella xylostella</i>	Diamond-back Moth	142
28.008	<i>Metalampra italica</i>		20
49.343	<i>Cydia amplana</i>		3
62.067	<i>Cadra cautella</i>		1
63.031	<i>Udea ferrugalis</i>	Rusty-dot Pearl	11
63.048	<i>Palpita vitrealis</i>		2
63.052	<i>Nomophila noctuella</i>	Rush Veneer	14
63.054	<i>Cydalima perspectalis</i>	Box-tree Moth	74
69.004	<i>Agrius convolvuli</i>	Convolvulus Hawk-moth	3
69.010	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>	Humming-bird Hawk-moth	1
69.014	<i>Hyles gallii</i>	Bedstraw Hawk-moth	1
70.047	<i>Nycterosea obstipata</i>	Gem	1
73.015	<i>Autographa gamma</i>	Silver Y	1
73.076	<i>Helicoverpa armigera</i>	Scarce Bordered Straw	383
73.297	<i>Mythimna albipuncta</i>	White-point	1
73.307	<i>Peridroma saucia</i>	Pearly Underwing	5
73.327	<i>Agrotis ipsilon</i>	Dark Sword-grass	4
73.330	<i>Ochropleura leucogaster</i>	Radford's Flame Shoulder	24

Table 01. A summary of species usually considered as migrants in the UK with totals from 2021.





08. Box-tree Moth *Cydalima perspectalis*. i- caterpillar, ii- pupa, iii- pre-emergence pupa, iv- adult moth. Gary Farmer.

**Caloptilia species on the move.**

A recent paper, published in the Entomologists Record (Vol. 134 part1), by Colin Plant has drawn attention to a number of *Caloptilia* species that have recently been seen in the UK, as rare but increasing residents, migrants or recent colonists. Others are spreading in Europe and likely to turn up here before long. Most are visually very similar to some of the more regularly seen resident species and are likely to be overlooked.

*C. hemidactylella* is resident and, after an absence of records for many years, appears to be increasing and spreading. It has been recorded from Gloucestershire and Warwickshire in recent years. *C. honoratella* is resident in the south east.

These *Acer* feeding species can be variable in appearance as can the more familiar *C. semifascia* (09) giving us a problem with reliable identification. No reliable differences have been found in the larval feeding habits either, so mines and cones on *Acer* species cannot now be reliably identified to species and need to be bred out. In the same issue, *C. fidella* is mentioned as now resident in Suffolk. The adults, again, show some variation and could be confused with *C. stigmatella*, *C. alchimiella* and *C. robustella*.

This genus seems to be particularly prone to population expansions and local population fluctuations. Flight periods are changing with more species producing extra generations in good weather and it seems that irregularly marked individuals are becoming more common (09).

The upshot is that many *Caloptilia sp.* moths encountered in traps will not be able to be determined with certainty. It is recommended that any moths of this genus that differ from the 'regular' forms of our common species should be retained for genitalia determination.

**Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all recorders who have sent in their records for this last year. The total is only slightly shy of 42,000, a county record and a sure indicator of the continued rise in the numbers of those taking an interest in moths. 1,036 species were seen.

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Moth blog site is still active and is a useful place to report sightings of interesting moths and ask for ID help if needed. It can be found at: <https://herefordandworcestermoths.blogspot.com/>

The West Midlands Moths Website has now been online for about a year. Distribution data for all moth species recorded in the four West Midland counties are available there. The site is a great resource and a way in which recorders can see their data added to the wider county context. It also serves as a convenient way to check local status of species and if photographic or other voucher evidence may be needed to substantiate records of rarer or difficult to identify species. Subscribing to the site, for a small donation, helps with running costs and gives access to more detail on the maps. The website can be found at: <https://westmidlandsmoths.co.uk/>

All the records that you send to us are ultimately passed on to Butterfly Conservation for inclusion in the national database after going through additional checks. The website draws its data from here. *Recorders should be aware that their name is associated with their records and will be visible on the website. If anyone is concerned about this please let us know and we can remove your records if needed.*

The 2021 data will be added to the site before long. The website's data policy is available here: [https://westmidlandsmoths.co.uk/West\\_Midlands\\_Moths\\_Data\\_Policy.pdf](https://westmidlandsmoths.co.uk/West_Midlands_Moths_Data_Policy.pdf).

**References**

Plant, C. The status of *Caloptilia honoratella* and *C. hemidactylella* in Britain. *The Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation*. 134. Pt.1: 21-39.  
 Watson, Raymond A. & McLennen-Warnock, Helen. 1922. *Caloptilia fidella*: Further studies in East Suffolk. *The Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation*. 134. Pt.1: 40-42.



09. *Caloptilia semifascia* showing examples of variation within a single species of *Caloptilia*. Oliver Wadsworth.

**Images**

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