

*Cotesia gastropache* (Bouché, 1834) (Hymenoptera: Braconidae) parasitising Fox Moth *Macrothylacia rubi* (L., 1758) (Lepidoptera: Lasiocampidae) at Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire (VC33 SO92).

P.F. Whitehead

Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 3EH. Email: [paul@thewhiteheads.eu](mailto:paul@thewhiteheads.eu)

The braconid wasp genus *Cotesia* is speciose (Mason, 1981) with perhaps 2000 species worldwide, many of which were previously placed in the genus *Apanteles*. One, *Cotesia glomerata* (L., 1758), is well-known as an endoparasitoid of butterflies of the genus *Pieris*. On 7 September 2014 at Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire (51°93'N 2°02'W SO92 268m O.D.) I observed a mature wandering larva of a Fox Moth *Macrothylacia rubi* (L., 1758) (01) carrying a load of nine larval *Cotesia* which can be ascribed to *C. gastropachae* (Bouché, 1834), a view kindly supported by Dr Mark Shaw (*in litt.*, 17 September 2014).



01. Larva of Fox Moth *Macrothylacia rubi* (L., 1758) with two recently emerged larvae of *Cotesia gastropachae* (Bouché, 1834). Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire, 7 September 2014.

Although *M. rubi* is a regionally localised species this host-parasitoid association is not rare and probably occurs widely in Europe. The purpose of this short note is to aid the future recognition of this association.

The larvae of *C. gastropachae* are not ectophagous and once they have cut their way out of the host (which eventually dies) more or less immediately begin to construct a silken cocoon (02). The cocoon silk is rotated by the larva around it at high speed. Unlike some of their congeners which construct cocoons close together or conjoined the larvae of *C. gastropachae* construct their cocoons in isolation from other larvae. Adult *Cotesia* are small often largely black braconids which may be difficult to identify without specialist knowledge. The overview of Braconidae by Shaw & Huddleston (1991) provides a highly readable account of the group.



02. Larva of *Cotesia gastropachae* (Bouché, 1834) constructing its silken cocoon, 8 September 2014.

#### References

- Mason, W.R.M., 1981. The polyphyletic nature of *Apanteles* Förster (Hymenoptera: Braconidae): a phylogeny and reclassification of Microgastrinae. *Memoirs of the Entomological Society of Canada* 115:1–147.
- Shaw, M.R. & Huddleston, T., 1991. Classification and biology of braconid wasps (Hymenoptera: Braconidae). *Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects* 7:1-126. Royal Entomological Society of London.

#### Images

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02. Larva of *Cotesia gastropachae* (Bouché, 1834) constructing its silken cocoon, 8 September 2014. P.F. Whitehead