



DEVON MOTH GROUP

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NEWSLETTER 2015 ISSUE 6 (November)

The amazing run of moth immigration that has been such a prominent feature of 2015 has continued unabated since the last newsletter and even now, a week into November, shows no sign of stopping. The most recent highlight was a *Chrysodeixis acuta* Tunbridge Wells Gem caught by Phil Barden on the coast near Noss Mayo on 7.10.2015 (image below). This is the first Devon record of this rare migrant, which has only been recorded on 20 occasions ever in Britain and Ireland prior to 2015! Another good record in the same spell was a *Catocala fraxini* Clifden Nonpareil that Graham Davey found in his Tavistock garden moth trap on 9.10.2015.

A new pulse of migrant moths arrived at the end of October and beginning of November, bringing an *Utetheisa pulchella* Crimson Speckled caught at light by Jenny Garne at Raddon in Exe Valley, north of Exeter. On the night of 1.11.2015, Kim Leaver at Talaton, near Ottery St Mary, trapped a *Leucania loreyi* Cosmopolitan, along with two *Palpita vitrealis*, three *Rhodometra sacraria* Vestal and assorted *Nomophila noctuella*, *Udea ferrugalis* and *Autographa gamma* Silver Y. The following night (2.11.15) Barry Henwood had *Helicoverpa armigera* Scarce Bordered Straw, *Mythimna vitellina* Delicate, *Mythimna albipuncta* White-point and Vestal in his garden trap at Abbotskerswell, near Newton Abbot. I had a *Nycterosea obstipata* Gem in the same village on 3.11.2015.

Aside from these late season migrants, Roy McCormick made the very exciting discovery of what is surely a resident population of *Dichonioxia tenebrosa* Sombre Brocade at Holcombe (see article overleaf), flying alongside the *Dryobota labecula* Oak Rustic previously discovered at the same place and a *Tiliacea citrigo* Orange Sallow.

Exciting times! Don't forget that subscriptions for 2016 are due from 1 January and that bookings are needed soon for the Christmas meal (see p.4).

Richard Fox



Tunbridge Wells Gem new to Devon (Phil Barden)

**Members of Council: Richard Fox (Chairman) Nicola Bacciu (Membership & Distribution) Roy McCormick (Secretary/Treasurer)
Rob Wolton (Conservation) Barry Henwood (County Moth Recorder)**

www.devonmoths.org.uk

Sombre Brocade: new resident moth for Devon

On 16.10.2015 Roy McCormick caught a single *Dichonioxia tenebrosa* Sombre Brocade at light in Holcombe, on the coast between Teignmouth and Dawlish. This moth is shown in the image (right) and is the first Sombre Brocade recorded in Devon. A few days later, on 21.10.2015, Roy, accompanied by Colin Hart, ran traps again at Holcombe and caught a second Sombre Brocade, together with two *Dryobota labecula* Oak Rustic. Colin Hart caught another one on the following night. It seems clear that Sombre Brocade is well established at the site and is now resident in Devon.

Sombre Brocade is a southern European species that has only recently started to be seen in the British Isles. The first record was on Guernsey in 2006, followed in 2008 by the first on mainland Britain, at Durlston in Dorset. Subsequently, it became apparent that the species had established breeding populations at both localities, and it has since been found elsewhere in southern coastal England.

The larvae of Sombre Brocade feed on Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*), as do those of Oak Rustic, and this is assumed to be the foodplant at Holcombe. However, the offspring of British Sombre Brocades have been reared successfully on Pedunculate Oak (*Q. robur*) in captivity. Richard Fox



The first ever Sombre Brocade caught in Devon
(Roy McCormick)

Indoor Meeting Report: Autumn Meeting, the Kenn Centre, Kennford, 29.10.2015

Getting Britain Buzzing – how we can help our pollinator populations to recover, by Andrew Whitehouse, Buglife.

Andrew gave a fascinating account of pollinating insects. The public tend to think of domestic insects e.g. the honey bee with regard to pollination. However, wild bees do a good job, as do hoverflies, beetles (although less important), wasps and Lepidoptera. There are over 4,000 species in the UK with a pollination function. Most pollination is done by wild insects. Over half of the bee species have declined in 50 years and six out of the 25 bumblebees have declined by over 80% in 50 years. The BAP list has over 250 pollinators on it. Four bee species have become extinct in Devon in the last 40 years and 13 are under threat of extinction. Buglife has a manifesto for pollinators based on seven principles:

1. All pollinators are valued for the service they provide
2. Our pollinator populations properly monitored and understood
3. Pesticide use that harms pollinators reduced
4. Wildflower-rich landscapes restored – B-lines established
5. Declines in rare and threatened pollinator species reversed
6. Places for pollinators planned around people
7. Wild pollinators protected from imported parasites and diseases

Neonicotinoid pesticides are relatively new and widely used. Lab studies show sub-lethal harmful effects on pollinators via the pollen. In 2013 a partial ban was introduced in the EU for two years, however, in July 2015 the UK government agreed to a partial lifting of the ban for use with Oilseed Rape.

Wildflower rich landscapes need to be restored in keeping with the Lawton principles of ‘more, bigger, better connected’. A network of B-lines is proposed – a highway for bees. It should be a national network of wide continuous lines of permanent wildflower rich habitats. The vision in Devon is to connect wildflower rich areas from east to west; towns to countryside and Dartmoor to the coast. The Plymouth Buzzing project has planted areas in Plymouth with pollen rich plants and meadows have been created in the city. Reduced mowing in areas has resulted in increased a natural increase in Cuckooflower, which has resulted in more Orange-tip butterflies. Marbled Whites have moved into a new meadow. Another project is similarly planned for Torbay.

Devon has some important bee species. The Long-horned Bee is largely now restricted to the coast. The Six-banded Nomad Bee is a parasite of it and is Britain's rarest bee. It is found at Prawle Point. The Tormentil Mining Bee has been found on Dartmoor after an absence of 40 years. It too has a parasitic bee, the Tormentil Nomad Bee, which has not been seen in Devon for a long time. There is a need to find the large Scabious Mining Bee.
Barry Henwood

Pheosia tremula Swallow Prominent larva, from a different perspective

On 5 September we were searching Aspen by the railway line at Laggantygown, which is between Aviemore and Boat of Garten, in Inverness-shire, in an unsuccessful attempt to try to rediscover two species of Microlepidoptera, *Leucoptera sinuella* (Lyonetiidae) and *Gypsonoma nitidulana* (Tortricidae), that were only known from the Aviemore–Boat of Garten area in the British Isles and whose larva feed on the leaves of Aspen. Neither species has been recorded for at least 60 years.

Nevertheless we found larvae of other species feeding on the leaves including *Pheosia tremula* Swallow Prominent. We collected a few because they were quite variable in colour and shape, with one in particular (unfortunately not photographed) being brown and having a rather 'knobbly' appearance that closely resembled the shape and colour of the Aspen twigs.

One grew much more slowly than the rest and so we suspected that it was parasitized. In due course our suspicions were confirmed when on 16 September the larva was no more than a mere 'shell' attached to a leaf of its foodplant.

This was then photographed and the image sent to Dr Mark Shaw at the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh. He identified the parasitoid as *Aleiodes albitibia* (Herrich-Schäffer, 1838), a species in the Braconidae that mummifies its host. He kindly provided the following information: It is commonest in Scotland but widespread in Britain. Its hosts are both *Pheosia tremula* Swallow Prominent and *P. gnoma* Lesser Swallow Prominent, as well as *Notodonta* spp. In due course the front part of the mummy shrivels up and separates, and eventually the back part falls off its leaf to the ground or to water below (it is often found in more or less wet places) where the mummy, with its balloon compartment, floats. The parasitoid will not emerge until the following year.

Although over the years we have reared a number of parasitoids from larvae, we have never seen such a curious transformation. You never know what unexpected and fascinating, if gruesome, discovery might result from collecting larvae.

Stella Beavan and Bob Heckford



Mummified Swallow Prominent larva
(Bob Heckford)

Forthcoming events (see www.devonmoths.org.uk for more details)

Saturday 12 December 2015 Christmas meal at the Welcome Stranger, Liverton (www.thewelcome.co.uk) at 19.30.

Thursday 28 January 2016 Annual General Meeting and Winter indoor meeting at the Kenn Centre, Kennford (www.kenncentre.co.uk) 19.30 for 20.00 start. Illustrated talk by Richard Fox, Butterfly Conservation entitled *The Secret Lives of Butterflies and Moths*.



Christmas Menu 2015
£23 per person (£3 steak supplement)



- Roasted Butternut Squash, Parsnip and Fennel Soup – *delicious winter warmer*
- Tasty Pork Pate – *a rich buttery pork pate, served with toast and curried peach chutney*
- Smoked Salmon and Prawn Cocktail – *finest smoked salmon and large juicy prawns with homemade marie-rose sauce and fresh lime*
- Creamy Garlic Mushrooms – *mushrooms sautéed with onions in a delicious cream sauce, topped with crispy bacon*
- Fruit Juice – of your choice

All served with warm bread



- Succulent Roast Turkey – *served with stuffing, pigs in blankets and smothered with rich tasty gravy*
- Finest Roast Beef – *served with Yorkshire pudding and smothered with rich tasty gravy*
- Slow Cooked Belly Pork – *served on a bed of buttery mashed potato and a savoury sage and onion gravy*
- Fillet of Seabass – *poached and served with a lightly spiced masala and tiger prawn butter sauce*

All the above main dishes are served with fresh vegetables and potatoes

- Tagliatelle – *tossed with a mushroom, sun-blushed tomato, fresh basil and fresh spinach sauce topped with parmesan and served with dough ball bites.*

(please see normal menu for a choice of other vegetarian dishes)

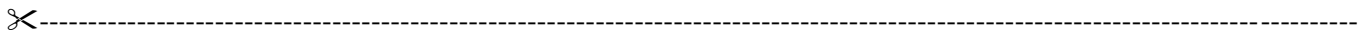
- Prime 8oz Rump Steak – *cooked to your liking and served with mushrooms, onions, tomato, chips, peas and a delicious creamy peppercorn sauce (£3.00 supplement)*



- Christmas Pudding – rich and moist with brandy sauce
- Individual Raspberry Pavlova – drizzled with raspberry coulis
- Profiteroles – drizzled with Belgian chocolate sauce
- Sticky Toffee Pudding – with butterscotch sauce and clotted cream
- Selection of Ice-cream and Sorbet



Coffee and Warm Mince Pies



**Christmas Event at the Welcome Stranger, Liverton
on Saturday 12th December 2015. 19.00 for 19.30 start**

I would like to bookplaces @ £23 per head (£26 if having steak)

Please give your choices of meal(s) also state if you have any allergy or dietary requirements. If choosing steak indicate how you would like it done:

Please make cheques payable to Devon Moth Group. Please reply by **30 November 2015** to:
Barry Henwood, 6, Lakeland, Abbotskerswell, Newton Abbot. TQ12 5YF.