



**Lancashire & Cheshire Entomological Society
Newsletter**

Incorporating



The Cheshire Moth Group Newsletter

February 2004

Number 1010

The newsletter is available to download in colour from the NWMoths group pages at www.yahoo.com

Welcome!

Let me begin by wishing all our readers a happy new year. The weather last week (late January) was dreadful – freezing conditions and lots of snow did not fill one with enthusiasm for the coming season. However, only a few days later and the snow has gone and mild temperatures have returned. Last night the moth trap contained a single Spring Usher – let's hope it really is an usher of spring and an omen for an excellent season this year.

In this issue we have a couple of articles on orders other than moths in the form of Bush Crickets and Bumblebees. Many thanks to the authors for these excellent contributions. The newsletter can only be as varied as you, the readers, want it to be. If your favourite group is under represented in these pages then why not put pen to paper and send me some copy.

Finally, a reminder of the exhibition meeting which will be held at the Frodsham Community Centre on the 6th March from 2:00pm. This is always a superb afternoon and is an excellent opportunity to meet up with friends, both old and new, to reminisce about seasons past and look forward to the months ahead. Hope to see you all there.

Adrian Wander, Newsletter Editor

Northern Drab in VC58

At the October indoor meeting of the Society I exhibited a specimen of the Northern Drab from the North Norfolk coastal marshes and commented that we appeared to have no recent records of this specie for VC58. Alan Creaser brought two records to my attention from the Wirral; 21.iv.63 Wallasey and 27.iv.83 Leasowe. If you are aware of any more recent records please let us know.

Adrian Wander

Oak bush-crickets in Cheshire

On 25th June 2003 I spent eight hours searching and beating for insects at Moss Lane Plantation by Manchester Airport, SJ827840, VC.58. I had been dealing with one plant species at a time, and it was with my last energy in the last few minutes of my visit that I beat the hawthorn boundary hedge from the road. It was with surprise and pleasure that I found two specimens of the Oak Bush-cricket (*Meconema thalassinum* (DeGeer)) in my beating tray.

In Marshall, J.A. and Haes, E.C.M., 1988, Grasshoppers and allied insects, it states that 'South of a line drawn between the Dee and Humber estuaries, *M. thalassinum* is one of the most common and widely distributed bush-crickets, probably present in almost any well-wooded locality'. Manchester Airport lies on this line, and being on its limit, it is no surprise that *M. thalassinum* appears restricted at the Plantation to the sheltered sunny roadside hedges. As it is a primarily insectivorous bush-cricket, the significance of the hedge probably lies with its structure and microclimate, rather than a preference for *Crataegus* as food.

There are a few records of *M. thalassinum* in Lancashire, and I have frequently found it in Shropshire and North Wales; the photograph is of a specimen from Ffridd Fawr, Montgomeryshire, SH853032 on 2nd August 2003, but this is the first I have found in Cheshire. Steve Hind recorded it at Old Lane, Poulton, Cheshire, SJ3959 on 11th August 2000, but Paul Hill, who wishes to collate Cheshire Orthoptera records, and rECOrd have been unable to provide me with any other Cheshire

record, though I feel there must be more from southern parts of Cheshire. I will be pleased to receive and pass on any other records that are given to me.



Ian Smith

Atlas of VC58 Lepidoptera

Plans for the atlas of VC58 lepidoptera are progressing. Currently we are anticipating a cutoff date for records of 31/12/05 – just two seasons away. Lets get out and make these two years count.

Bumblebee Recording in Cheshire

Introduction

There are 17 species of Bumblebee (*Bombus*) and six species of Cuckoo Bumblebee (*Psithyrus*) in the British Isles and of these 11 have been recorded in Cheshire. Six species *B. terrestris*, *B. lucorum*, *B. lapidaries*, *B. hortorum*, *B. pratorum* and *B. pascuorum* can be considered widespread and common. Numbers of all species have declined in recent years.

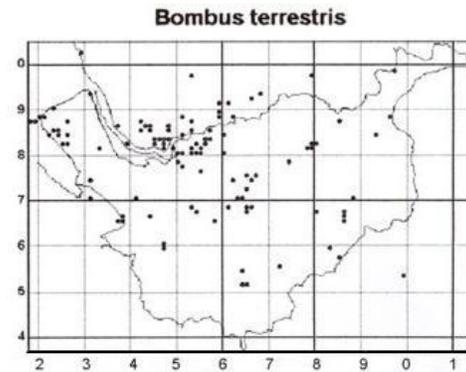
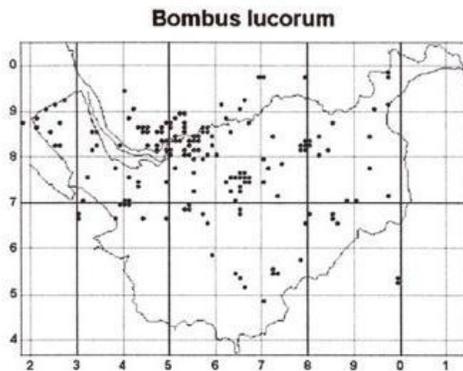
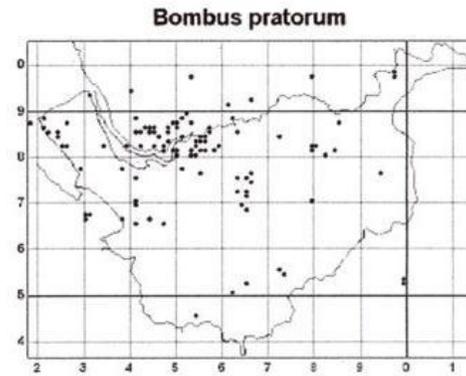
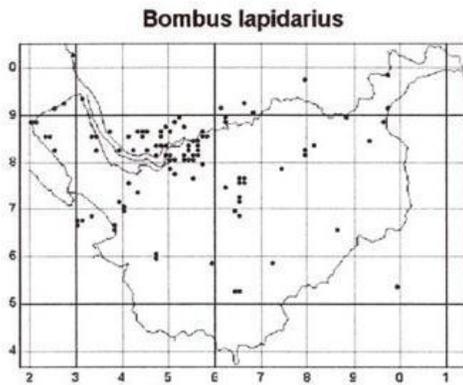
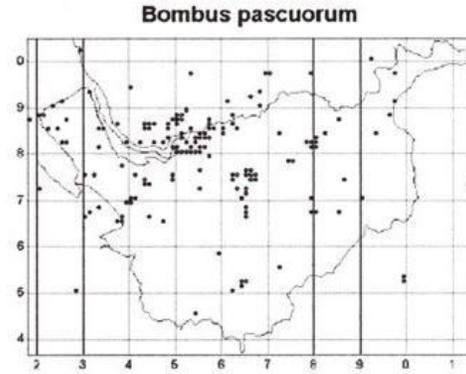
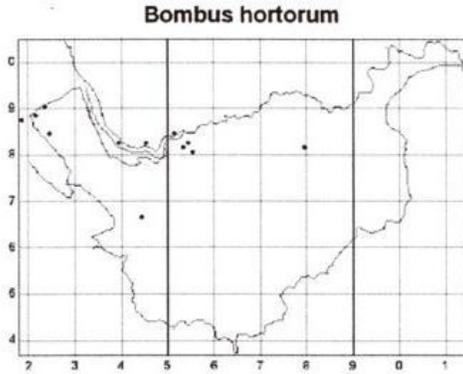
Five species are the subject of the United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan; *Bombus distinguendus*, *B. humilis*, *B. ruderatus*, *B. subterraneus* and *B. sylvarum*, none of which occur in Cheshire and of these, two species can be considered extinct. Bumblebees are large insects which allows for most species to be identified in the field although some worker castes of certain species are very difficult to separate. Bumblebees have a long flight period, lasting from February to November and they are active in all suitable weather conditions throughout the day, hence their usefulness as pollinators.

Aims

The project is based at Liverpool Museum, but it also has support from Halton Borough Council and rECOrd. Staff at Chester Zoo and Norton Priory Museum have also been involved with both sites having hosted workshops.

The main aim of the project is to encourage recording of Bumblebees in the Cheshire region and to make the findings available through the production of an atlas and via the project web site. The project also aims to raise awareness of Bumblebees and their conservation through public events e.g. slide shows, nest-box building, guided walks and attendance at conferences etc.

Obviously improved recording will require good identification skills and to this end a simple key has been produced, a small laminated chart showing the common species which can be readily used in the field. A number of workshops were held at Norton Priory and Chester Zoo



Current Distribution Maps of Bumblebees (*Bombus*)
Data from rECOrd

during 2003, using a format consisting of an indoor introductory session followed by an outdoor recording session, weather permitting. Similar programmes can be held virtually anywhere provided there is a suitable venue and sufficient interest. Further details can be obtained by contacting the project organisers. A simple recording form is available which allows for species seen and their estimated abundance to be recorded, along with supplementary information, such as habitat details and foodplant preferences. Such information will be necessary especially in managing habitat for bumblebees and in advising landowners.

On the practical side the project attempts to increase the population by providing artificial nest sites, both for bumblebees and solitary bees, which can also form the basis for public events arranged with local groups and countryside ranger services.

Educating the public about bumblebees, especially amongst the gardening fraternity, will be particularly important, especially with regard to bumblebees as pollinators, hence encouragement of bumblebee-friendly gardening.

Finally there is the increasing importance of long-term monitoring of species to ascertain the effects of climate change on local wildlife. It is thought that bumblebees will be ideal indicators of any such change.

Carl Clee and Tony Parker

(Members interested in starting to study Bumblebees may want to look at the Naturalist Handbook 6 – Bumblebees by OE Prys-Jones and SA Corbett – it is an interesting and cheap(!) introduction to the group – Ed)

LCES Publication for sale

Macro-moths in Cheshire 1961 to 1993 by C.I.Rutherford, 1994, 89pp, paperback £8 inc. p&p.

Please send cheque, payable to LCES, with order to; LCES Secretary, I.F.Smith, 12 Fernhill, Mellor, Stockport, SK6 5AN

Provisional Matrix for Macro-moths in VC58 (Cheshire)

For some time I have been intent on producing a document which will allow moth recorders in Cheshire to view the current species list both for the County and for their own 10km square. It is essential as County Recorder that I provide all recorders with regular feedback confirming that the data kindly provided by the recorders is being put to a good use. Paper-based reports are especially important for those recorders that do not have the benefit of computer/internet and email access.

For the period between 1961 and 1993, this information was well covered by Ian Rutherford et al, in the book - Macro-moths in Cheshire 1961 to 1993 (hereafter referred to as 'Macro-moths in Cheshire'). We are continuing this work by adding all the known records to the electronic database. This is a massive task and is thankfully being shared by other recorders in the County. Thanks to the efforts of recorders past and present, we already hold around 38,000 macro-moth records on the system for VC58. There are large numbers of historical paper-based records yet to check and enter as appropriate. Needless to say, further offers of help from people with access to either Mapmate (the program we use for the database) or converting paper records into excel files will be greeted with open arms!

This work will take quite a while to complete and I therefore felt it was of value to 'bite the bullet' and update recorders at this point, thus providing a snapshot of the current position.

Some of the records detailed within Rutherford's book have yet to be entered and a summary of the species missing from the list is incorporated within this paper. These records will be entered over the new few months and by the time the next update to this matrix is produced, it is expected that the data behind 'Macro-moths in Cheshire' will be represented more completely.

It is important to point out that some of the records contained within this paper may yet be the subject of further enquiry and/or confirmation, hence its provisional nature. For example, it is possible that Small Emerald records may actually relate to miss-named specimens of Little Emerald. Triple-spotted Pug has been recorded from several sites but according to the records, this difficult species has never been confirmed via genitalia dissection. The sole record for Triple-spotted Pug on the matrix relates to the discovery of larvae. Readers should note that there has also been another report of Nut-tree Tussock in the Nantwich area and this will hopefully be documented more fully when the records for 2003 from Nantwich Natural History Society are provided to me after the production of their annual report.

Turning to the chart (*presented as an appendix to this newsletter –ed*), readers will note that there are columns for each 10km square within VC58. Some of these squares are only partially within the County and recorders searching in those areas are often rewarded with species which are unusual/uncommon in the County as a whole. An example of this is Light Knot Grass which appears to be restricted to the hillier areas of the County adjacent to VC57.

On the last page there is a key explaining the codes at the head of the columns and the reasons for different levels of shading. Hopefully the way these have been represented will make it easier to see trends in each species or 10km square. The date ranges are based around ‘Macro-moths in Cheshire’ as follows - pre 1961, 1961-1993 and post 1993. When future matrices are produced I hope to include a pre-1900 and post 2000 split of records.

Species missing from the current matrix and included within the systematic list in ‘Macro-moths in Cheshire’ are as follows:

Clay Triple-lines	Small Eggar	Wood Carpet	Goat Moth	White-barred Clearwing
Grass Eggar	Pretty Chalk Carpet	Scarce Tissue	Pale November Moth	Waved Carpet
Barred Umber	Grey Scalloped Bar	Bedstraw Hawk-moth	Marbled Brown	Black Arches
Gypsy Moth	Crescent Dart	Portland Moth	Fen Square-spot	Great Brocade
Silvery Arches	Double Line	White Point	The Delicate	The Wormwood
Brindled Ochre	The Sycamore	Small Marbled	Marbled White-spot	

There are also another 62 species referred to in ‘Macro-moths in Cheshire’ which form a list of moths not recorded after 1961. Whilst there is not adequate space to individually list these here, I can confirm that the records will also be assessed and added to the database prior to the issue of the next matrix.

Hopefully this document will provide useful information to recipients of this newsletter and I would welcome feedback on ways in which future issues can be improved. In the next newsletter we intend to produce a similar document for the micro-moths.

References

Rutherford C.I. 1994, *Macro-moths in Cheshire 1961 to 1993*
Cheshire Moth Group database

Shane Farrell, VC58 (Cheshire) Macro-moth Recorder

National Moth Night 2004

Britain's annual celebration of moths and moth recording takes an unusual twist in 2004. As there are some interesting day-flying species on the wing at this time of the year, in a break with tradition, the event has been extended to cover the daytime period of Saturday 22 May. It is the first time National Moth Night has been held in May and it comes at a time of year when moth-trap catches are particularly varied and colourful. The potential variety of species and presence of those crowd-pleasing hawk-moths should make National Moth Night 2004 popular with the public. A variety of scarce species are also on the wing at this time of year, which should ensure plenty of scope for adding to our knowledge of UK moth distributions.

Target species for 2004 are Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth, Netted Mountain Moth and False Mocha. Whilst the chances of coming across any of the target species in Cheshire is slim to nil, the date of the event does give us an opportunity to target some of our own lesser recorded species. Day flyers such as Burnet Companion, Mother Shipton and Chimney Sweeper should all be on the wing and I would encourage any participants in National Moth Night to extend their day and look for these species. A brief perusal of MapMate for Cheshire records of the three species resulted in just 15 records of Burnet Companion, 39 of Mother Shipton and just 250 Chimney Sweeper records.

Further information about National Moth Night can be found on www.nationalmothnight.info

Paul Hill

Pale Brindled Beauty Study

Would anybody trapping Pale Brindled Beauty's over the coming weeks please make a note of the incidence of melanic forms. If you are at a site and are catching multiples of the moth please note the numbers of normal and melanic forms. Please also include the name & grid ref of your trap site and indicate whether the location is rural, suburban or urban/industrial.

Your results will be used by a sixth form student in Runcorn studying melanism in Pale Brindled Beauty and matching the proportions of melanics to location.

All results are worthwhile but if you are trapping in excess of thirty PBB's from any given site then these locations will be key sites.

Please send any results via e-mail to birderjeff@ntlworld.com

Jeff Clarke

Contacts and Web Sites

- The Lancashire and Cheshire Entomology Society (LCES) can be found at:
<http://www.consult-eco.ndirect.co.uk/entomol/lces>
- Lancs. & Chesh. Ent. Soc. can be contacted through The Hon. Sec., Ian Smith, 12 Fernhill, Mellor, Stockport, SK6 5AN. Tel. 0161 427 3887. or at ifsmith@onetel.com or, for subscriptions and membership, through The Hon. Treasurer, R.W. Whitehead, Haulfryn, Graigfechan, Ruthin, Denbs., LL15 2HA or at robaud@haulfryn99.fsnet.co.uk

- **rECOrd** – The Local Records Centre for Cheshire, Halton, Runcorn, Warrington and the Wirral can be found at: <http://www.record-lrc.co.uk>
 - All records of macro and micro moths for Cheshire (VC58) should preferably be submitted to the Cheshire Moth Group Data Officer, Shane Farrell shane.farrell@ntlworld.com or via snail mail at 15 Westover, Romiley, Stockport, Cheshire SK6 3ER
 - Records of micros in Cheshire can also be sent to Steve Hind at: steve@hind1.fsnet.co.uk
 - Records from Shropshire should be sent to Peter Boardman, 7 High Street, Weston Rhyn, Shropshire, SY10 7RP or e-mail at peperouda@btinternet.com
 - Submission of all biological records can be made to **rECOrd** at: manager@record-lrc.co.uk
 - Butterfly Conservation can be found at: <http://www.butterfly-conservation.org>
 - The Lancashire Moth Group now has a web page at <http://www.lancashire-moths.org>
 - The Cheshire Moth Group also has web pages at <http://www.consult-eco.ndirect.co.uk/lrc/cm/cmg.htm>
 - I can be contacted regarding field trips, items for the next newsletter etc. at: a.wander@dl.ac.uk or by snail-mail at 16 Bramhalls Park, Anderton, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 6AH
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