



Huntingdonshire Moth & Butterfly Group



Please pass any items of interest for the newsletter to the new editor: Nick Greatorex-Davies, 28 Old pound Close, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdon PE28 9DY, Tel: 01480 301 685, email: ngd@ceh.ac.uk.

----- Newsletter Editor -----

In 2002, after seven years of producing the HMBG newsletter, Andrew Booth expressed his desire to hand over this task to someone else. He produced his last newsletter in September. As no-one else has come forward to volunteer for this, after consulting with Barry Dickerson, I have decided to take it on. On behalf of the group we would like to express our thanks here to Andrew for producing an excellent and informative newsletter for so long and helping to maintain a sense of HMBG being alive during the summer months.

National Moth Night 12th April 2003

This year the group met at Hinchingsbrooke Park where two moth traps were operated in the woodland. The event was well publicised and fully booked with 22 members of the public attending on what turned out to be a rather clear and moonlit evening. Few moths turned up at the traps - just 14 of 9 species. Despite this the event was a success as considerable interest was expressed by those who came including a possible two new members for HMBG. Interest was expressed by several in coming to future events. Six traps at 5 other sites in the county only produced 28 moths of 8 species. Total species was 14.

Pyrenean Trip

This year Peter Rowlings is leading the European trip from 15th-22nd July to the French and Spanish Pyrenees, taking six other HMBG members with him. Flying to Pau they will then travel by hire-cars to Andorra and into the Spanish Pyrenees and then on to the Cirque de Gavarnie on the French side. On a similar trip in 1998, Peter and Matthew recorded 121 butterfly species and 71 species in 2 hours at a single location!

Grizzled Skippers in Hunts

This butterfly is continuing to decline nationally as suitable areas of habitat become fewer and increasingly isolated. It still occurs in Hunts. but only a few known colonies exist. Most are in the Monks Wood area.

This year, in May, Grizzled Skippers appeared in reasonable numbers in the fields outside Monks Wood along its south edge and around the buildings of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Monks Wood with up to 12 being seen on a single foray. However none was found during searches in East and West Fields within the wood where colonies have been present in the past. The management of the fields have changed in recent years from annual September cutting to late summer and autumn cattle grazing. However some of the areas formerly used by the Grizzled Skipper still appear suitable (short vegetation with patches of bare ground with abundant larval host plants - in this case *Tormentil*), but recent wet winters may have made the fields unsuitable for overwintering pupae

Elsewhere small numbers were seen at Woodwalton Marsh and at Conington Railway Ballast Tip (opposite Five Arches WT reserve). A singleton was seen in the railway cutting at Wennington Bridge. All are known locations for this butterfly.

Sightings

Orange Underwings

Both the Orange Underwing and the Light Orange Underwing were seen in Monks Wood and Bevill's Wood during April this year. They are seen most years but seemed to be in higher numbers this year. There were also quite a few reports on the egroups ukmoths and UK-Leps

Another bumper year for Painted Ladies?

Painted Ladies have been reported from all over the Britain & Ireland with large numbers seen in the south. The last time this occurred was in 1996 a year which produced the largest numbers ever recorded in Britain.

Clouded Yellow

A single Clouded Yellow was seen by Peter Rowlings at the old airfield at Warboys on 15th June

Humming-bird Hawks

Several recent reports of this species in Hunts. (e.g. Great Gidding on 25th June - John Chance)

Small Eggar

Andrew Booth reports a single (no nest) fully grown larva near St Neots near the county border.

● The next newsletter is planned for September. Please send any items for inclusion to Nick G-D.

Woodwalton Fen trapping: July 25th start 8.30, Aug 22nd 6.30, Sept 19th 5.30 & Oct 17th 5.00. Contact Barry Dickerson beforehand to check that it is still on (or postponed) or if you are likely to be late. Bring a good torch, warm clothes, a sleeping bag (sleeping in the bungalow) and something to eat and drink for a night cap and for an early breakfast.

[May 30th 96 species recorded, very high for May. June 20th was dry but cold with a poor night for moths with <100 species recorded].

Butterfly Monitoring Scheme results for 2002 indicate that it was a poor season for butterflies in general (5th worst since start of BMS in 1976) but slightly better than 2001. The *Grizzled Skipper*, *Orange Tip* and *Speckled Wood* fared well nationally, but the *Grayling*, *Small Heath* and *Wall Brown* continue to decline.

Winter schedule update

The venue for 2003-4 will continue to be the smaller meeting room at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. At the moment the meetings planned are as follows

Wednesday 1st October: Barry Dickerson. *Leafminer identification*

Wednesday 3rd December: Nick Greatorex-Davies. *Butterflies of Bulgaria (trip 08-22 June 2003)*.

Wednesday 11th February: To Be Announced

Wednesday 8th April: Members evening and quiz night, this time to be set by Nick Greatorex-Davies the 2003 quiz winner! Bring slides, specimens and other items of interest.