

Silver-washed Fritillary – Eddie John



Newsletter No 28

Huntingdonshire Moth & Butterfly Group

Bedstraw Hawkmoth – Brian Stone 07/2005



October 2005

Please pass any items of interest for the spring 2006 newsletter to the current editor: Nick Greatorex-Davies, 28 Old pound Close, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdon PE28 9DY, Tel: 01480 301 685, email: ngd@ceh.ac.uk. This newsletter is produced 2 or 3 times a year – this is the second and last for 2005.

----- Generally poor year for migrants but some goodies! -----

Migrant butterflies and moths have generally been in short supply in Huntingdonshire and indeed nationwide for most of the season so far. Both **Red Admirals** and **Painted Ladies** have been scarce, though **Red Admirals** have been seen more frequently during the past two to three weeks. Small numbers of **Clouded Yellows** have been reported in southern Britain, especially in the south-west. Several have been seen in Cambridgeshire including one at Fen Drayton gravel pits (Vince Lea, 28th Aug.) just outside the vice-county (Huntingdonshire VC 31) boundary.

On the moth front, however, there have been several interesting sightings. Brian Stone trapped a **Bedstraw Hawkmoth** (*Hyles galii*) in Elton in July. Brian also Recorded **Convolvulus Hawkmoth** (*Herse convolvuli*) in Elton on 10th and 20th Sept. Another was reported in the Peterborough Evening Telegraph, seen and photographed by Jake Baxter in Stilton on 10th Sept. Several **Hummingbird Hawkmoths** (*Macroglossum stellatarum*) were reported on the egroup **Cammoths** (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cammoths/>) over the past two months including two seen by Brian Stone in his garden at Elton feeding on *Buddleia* on 28th August. Additional species recorded include A **Pearly Underwing** (*Peridroma saucia*) and a **Delicate** (*Mythimna vitellina*) both trapped by Kevin Royles at Old Weston on 7th & 22nd September respectively.

2005/2006 Winter meetings have been arranged as follows:

Wednesday 5th October: **Peter Rowlings**: 'The butterflies of North Africa'

Wednesday 7th December: **David Evans**: 'The moths of Somerset'

Wednesday 8th February: **Peter Hall**: 'What is that butterfly doing anyway', (on butterfly behaviour)

Wednesday 8th April: **Members evening and quiz night**, this time quiz to be set by the 2004 quiz winner! Bring slides, specimens and other items of interest.

Don't forget subs are due **October 1st** (£5 single, £6 joint) – please post if not attending the October meeting

Meetings are held at the **Hinchingbrooke Countryside Centre** in **Hinchingbrooke Country Park** and start at 8.00pm

Other events:

AES Annual Exhibition: Kempton Park, October 1st (already happened when you receive this!!)

BENHS Annual Exhibition: Imperial College, London, November 12th (ask Barry or Nick G-D for details)

(AES = Amateur Entomological Society, BENHS = British Entomological and Natural History Society). **Both are excellent events!**

National Moth Night 2006: 23rd September 2006 (details for local venue nearer the time)

Contributions (long or short) for the **Annual Report** need to be sent to Barry Dickerson by the end of January.

This might sound a long way off, but it is a good idea to think about what you might write now. Please consider contributing. Short half-page notes or observations are also perfectly acceptable.

New vice-county Records -2005

Eidophasia messingiella (Yponomeutidae) at **Eynesbury** on 23rd June, trapped by Barry Dickerson. A distinctive local micro.

Amblyptilia punctidactyla (Pterophoridae) at **Duloe Brook** on 27th June, trapped by Barry Dickerson. This is a widespread plume moth.

Elachista subocella (Elachistidae) in **Monks Wood** on National Moth Night - 9th July, recorded by Barry Dickerson.

Kent Black Arches (*Meganola albula*) at **Earith** on 14th July, trapped by David Griffiths. A local southern species.

Synaphe punctalis (Pylalidae) at **Eynesbury**, St Neots on 15th July, trapped by Barry Dickerson. Normally associated with chalk downland and coastal areas in the south.

Horse Chestnut Leaf-miner (*Cameraria ohridella*) (Gracillaridae). Found at **several sites** in the vice-county, see separate account.

Feathered Ranunculus (*Eumichtis lichenea*), **Old Weston** on 8th September, trapped by Kevin Royles

More records of interest

Gold Spot (*Plusia festucae*) at **Elton**, nr Peterborough, on 9th July, trapped by Brian Stone.

Small elephant Hawk-moth (*Deilephila porcellus*), more records than usual this year including at **Woodwalton Fen**, **Earith**, **Elton** and **Abbotsley**.

A very late **Lime Hawk-moth** (*Mimas tiliae*) at **Alconbury** on 28th July, trapped by Barry Dickerson.

- The next newsletter is planned for April 2006. Please send any items for inclusion to Nick G-D.

Moth trapping events in 2005

Woodwalton Fen NNR As was reported in the last newsletter, April and May trapping sessions had to be cancelled due to bad weather. Weather conditions were again poor for the next trapping session on June 10th. Despite this the event went ahead but few moths were trapped. By contrast weather conditions were ideal for the July 1st session and an excellent tally of over 200 species was recorded. August 9th was a cooler night but a reasonable tally of over 100 species were recorded.

This is the final year of organised HMBG trapping events to be held on Woodwalton Fen for the time being.

Holme Fen NNR All proposed early trapping events were cancelled due to bad weather. The first event to be held was on July 12th. At the single light operated over 100 species were recorded. Highlights included several **Ear Moth** (*Amphipoea oculaea*) and several **Rosy Footman** (*Miltchrista miniata*). On August 9th again just a single light was run and again over 100 species were recorded. These sessions were arranged at short notice - so many thanks to those who came.

National Moth Night this year was on 9th July and the HMBG event was held in Monks Wood NNR. Just six members came but we ran 9 traps in various locations in the wood. The night was fairly cool and a mist set in after midnight making conditions even less favourable for moths (or people!). Catches were poor for July. However an **Elachista** proved to be a new Vice County record.

Horse Chestnut leaf-miner arrives in Hunts.

The **Horse Chestnut Leaf-miner** (*Cameraria ohridella*), was first discovered (new to science) in Macedonia in 1985, has been spreading across Europe in recent years at an alarming rate causing unsightly damage to many Horse Chestnut trees in the wake of its spread. The leaf-miner can be so abundant on leaves of Horse Chestnut that it causes whole leaves to turn brown and in cases of extreme infestation trees shed most of their leaves prematurely. However this may not do lasting damage to the tree.

It was first recorded in the UK in London in July 2002 and has now been recorded as far north as Chester. It was first recorded in Huntingdonshire by Joan Childs in Great Gransden. It has also since been found in Abbotsley by Barry Dickerson. On 24th September at least a dozen were found after a short search on Horse Chestnut trees in the grounds of Hinchingsbrooke School in Huntingdon by Nick G-D. This is the furthest north it has been found in Hunts. so far. Also found in Hemingford Grey on 2nd Oct. (NG-D). It is expected that it will be common throughout Hunts. within a year or two. For further information see e.g.:

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/INFD-68JJRC>

BAP news:

Barred Tooth-striped search planned for 2006

A **Barred Tooth-striped** (*Trichopteryx polycommata*) hunt is planned for the spring in Monks Wood NNR. It will be held when the moth is on the wing, sometime between mid-March and early April. The moth was last recorded in Monks Wood in 1997, and used to be recorded most years in the Rothamsted trap there until 1991. Privet and Ash (its main foodplants) are still abundant in the wood and in places Privet grows in the open situations needed by the caterpillars of the moth. The search will take place at dusk and after dark by torchlight. Some have already expressed an interest in coming. Nick G-D will contact members nearer the time with details of date, time and where to meet.

Square-spotted Clay recorded in north of Hunts

A **Square-spotted Clay** (*Xestia rhomboidea*) was trapped at Stibbington, west of Peterborough, by Brian Stone on 1st August. This is the most northerly Hunts. record.

----- HMBG website update -----

Little progress has been made on completing the website, this has simply been due to lack of time over the summer months. However we are aiming to have the website, at what ever stage we have reached, up and running by April. Don't forget to let me (NG-D) know if you have pictures of moths you would be willing for us to use on the website.

Summer Butterfly trips

The visit to Thrift Wood in Suffolk on 26th June to see **Heath Fritillary** was successful and several were seen. The weather was cool with fairly extensive cloud cover but this meant the butterflies were relatively inactive and so allowed good photo opportunities for all.

The visit to Buxton Heath to see **Silver-studded Blue** on the morning of 31st July was unsuccessful as the weather deteriorated before the group arrived. Consequently none were seen. The visit to Winterton NNR in the afternoon to see **Dark Green Fritillary** was abandoned.

Single **Silver-washed Fritillaries** were seen in Brampton Wood on 17th and 22nd September and a **Large Copper** at Stanground (Peterborough) on 22nd September.

These are very late dates and these were undoubtedly releases, but the sources are unknown!

-??- Any microlepidoptera for Barry? -??-

Barry Dickerson is *very keen* to have any unidentified or unconfirmed microlepidoptera you might have collected over the past year. Please contact him on **01480 475689** and he will arrange to come and pick them up from you!

Butterfly report: It is too early to get a proper assessment from Butterfly Monitoring Scheme data so what follows are just a few personal impressions of the situation locally. The weather has been very mixed this season. Though there have been some periods of good weather it seems to have been generally a poor year for butterflies (and moths!), but fortunes have been mixed. **Holly Blue** numbers have remained high in the summer after good numbers in the spring. **Black Hairstreak** had another good year in Monks Wood and Brampton Wood, and **Small Heath** seem to be holding on to their recovery of the previous two years (85 counted walking down the edge of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme grass field adjacent to Ridley Lane at Woodwalton). Conversely the Vanessids have not done well and **Peacock** and **Small Tortoiseshell** numbers have been unusually low. **Meadow Brown** & **Marbled White** numbers also seem to have been depressed. I have yet to see a **Small Copper** in Huntingdonshire this year. **Brown Argus** numbers have dropped sharply after a good year in 2004 and **Common Blue** numbers also seem to have been quite low.

Many thanks to Barry Dickerson for his major contributions to this newsletter and also to Henry Arnold who read through the text and made some corrections.