

MOTHS OF DORSET

NEWSLETTER NO 1

1 FEBRUARY 1994

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first newsletter for recorders of Dorset's moths. Some of you will have been expecting this, but for others it will have appeared out-of-the-blue. To the latter group, our apologies; we wished to get the newsletter distributed before the start of the mothing season and we have not had time to contact all of you individually.

The idea behind the recorder network for Dorset is to put recorders in touch with one another, help distribute information, collate historic records and guide future recording. We are hoping that with your support we can publish a Moths Of Dorset book in about five years time. One of our primary aims is to establish, for as many species as possible, a true picture of their distribution and abundance throughout the County and to put forward a conservation status for each.

To date we are aware of some 35 individuals who live in Dorset who have amassed records in the past and/or intend to amass records in the future. In addition, we are aware of a further 13 people who live outside Dorset and who have Dorset records. Approximately one third of all individuals have been contacted to date. We have included the current list of all potential contributors as an appendix to the newsletter.

DATA

A number of you by now will be aware that the task of assessing the frequency and range of Dorset macro and micro lepidoptera is well under way. To date we have received the following data:

- o Jim Fradgley (Ashington near Wimborne) - 8 years of macro records
- o Roy and Sue Eden (West Bexington) - 5 years of macro records
- o Roy and Sue Eden (The Kingcombes) - 1 year of macro records
- o Peter Davey (Gaunts Common) - 6 years of micro and macro records
- o Peter Davey (St. Aldhelm's Head) - macro records spanning 22 years, micro records spanning 8 years
- o Peter Davey (Studland) - 3 years of micro and macro records
- o Peter Davey (Durlston) - 4 years of micro and macro records

- o Maureen Spencer (Dorchester) - 1 year of macro records
- o Stephen Hales (Hooke Park) - 1 year of macro records
- o Nigel Webb (Furzebrook) - 6 years of macro records
- o John Langmaid (various sites) - macro records spanning 30 years, micro records spanning 18 years
- o Dougie (+ Mark and Phil) Sterling (various sites) - sporadic macro records since 1930s, micro records spanning 13 years
- o Brian Pickess (Arne) - 25 years of micro and macro records

In addition to the above a further seven have pledged their records, so data capture progress is excellent. In the next newsletter a map of Dorset will be included depicting those locations that we have records for and those which we hope to have records for by the end of 1994. This will give an indication of areas which are potentially under-recorded and which may need to be covered in the future.

It is our intention to pass on all records we receive to the Dorset Environmental Records Centre as the County's repository of environmental data. Please let us know if you either do not wish us to, or if you would wish any of them to remain confidential.

RECORDER ISSUES

In this newsletter we are giving everyone the opportunity to give us feedback on what you may need to assist you in recording. This could be anything from equipment issues - eg. the optimum lighting to use, availability of moth traps, to expertise issues - eg. where to look for what and when, assistance with identification, the need to retain or kill specimens, optimum weather conditions etc. We also need to have a good idea of what services individual recorders can provide. Attached to this Newsletter is a Recorder Requirements form that we would like you to fill in to give us some idea of your needs or conversely what you can provide (should you not wish to be part of the recorder network please let us know). We would even like you to fill in the form and send it to us to let us know if you want nothing and have nothing to give. Once we receive all the forms we can then attempt to put all needy people in touch with the relevant givers. Your timely co-operation would be greatly appreciated at this early point in the project. In future, we would welcome contributions to newsletters.

IDENTIFICATION OF MOTHS

Macros

A number of macro species can prove rather difficult to identify in the field. The authors have devised a list which is attached to this Newsletter to assist you with your identification. The authors are also working on a set of photos which will provide visual backup for you should you require it, but be patient - this may take a little time to procure. If these aids fail or the insect in the list has the word RETAIN by it, we recommend that you keep the insect in question for identification by experts. For those species that need to be kept and appear in some numbers at the trap (eg. Common Rustic/Lesser Common Rustic; November/Pale November/Autumnal), up to, say, six individuals should be retained on any given night to enable us to assess the proportion of species represented in your area. For photographic

enthusiasts who have the ability to take good close-up (extension tube) photographs of those species that do not have the word RETAIN by them, but nevertheless are tricky to identify, please photograph the insect in question and let us have the photos by the end of the year - Pugs are good candidates.

Micros

If you record micros, or are interested in starting, please let us know on the Recorder Requirement form. We would be delighted to receive specimens for identification and we can advise you on how best to prepare and send them. We hope to be able to arrange field trips to develop your recording of micros, should there be a demand.

MACRO MOTHS THAT CANNOT BE OBTAINED BY LIGHT TRAPPING

Although the frequency and distribution of a large proportion of the macro-moth species will be determined from moth trap records, there are many other species that either fly during the day or are not easily attracted by light traps.

For those species that fly during the day, notably Clearwings, Burnets and Foresters we need recorders to be on the look out for all such species within these three families. If you do come across any of the Burnets or Foresters on country walks, please note down the locality and date, and let us know. In the case of Clearwings, possibly the most under recorded of all the British macro moths, make use of the tips at the end of the Difficult Species list enclosed. You will find that most of the Clearwing species have very specific habitats and we will be extremely pleased should you manage to locate any of them in your travels - perhaps the Sallow Clearwing will be the best to start off with (you have from now until the middle of March 1994 - the next opportunity will be between January and March 1996!); the Currant Clearwing will be one of the easier ones later on. Another day flying species is the Orange Underwing (Birch woods) and its close cousin the Light Orange Underwing (associated with Aspen - a rare tree, and consequently a rare moth) which will be flying in March and April - keep an eye out for these. A further species that might well be on the wing before Newsletter Number 2, is the Argent and Sable - this moth occurs in birch localities and can be seen flying during the day in May and June. Good luck!

Peter Davey and Phil Sterling

RECORDER REQUIREMENTS FORM

NAME -

NEED

(1)

(2)

(3)

CAN GIVE

(1)

(2)

(3)

MICRO MOTH RECORDING (please delete as necessary)

INTERESTED / NOT INTERESTED / WOULD LIKE TO BE IN DUE COURSE, MAYBE

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

