NO:9 FEBRUARY 2024

MOTH NEWS

FOR DERBYSHIRE 2024

Derbyshire Moths Facebook Group **(DMFG)**

Derbyshire Moths Facebook Group

VC57

February Moth News - From the DMFG pages.

Throughout this bulletin and future bulletins, English names for micro-moths will be as per the second edition of, **A Field Guide to the Micro-moths of Great Britain and Ireland** by Sterling, Parsons & Lewington.

A few mild days in early February gave some lucky Derbyshire Moth Recorders a kick start into the Moth Year 2024.

Dave Evans got the month underway with 6 moths of 5 species (6/5) from his Belper garden moth trap on 1st , with **Early Moth**, **Satellite, Spring Usher, Oak Beauty** and 2 **Pale Brindled Beauty.** A great start to his year. Clive Ashton had a single **Chestnut** in Cromford on 1st. Steve Thorpe had 4 moths of 2 species on 2nd, 3 **Common Quaker** and ***Amblyptilia acanthadactyla*** **(Beautiful Plume)** from Breaston, and a very early **Hebrew Character**, from Clive Ashton's 20W actinic in Cromford on 2nd.

Early Moth - Dave Evans

Oak Beauty - Dave Evans

Common Quaker - Steve Thorpe

Spring Usher - Dave Evans

February Moth News - continued.

Brian Hallam from his Findern moth trap on 2nd had 2 **Pale Brindled Beauty,** 2 **Oak Beauty** and a **Clouded Drab**. The mild weather was certainly bringing out some early moth records. Some of these species are not normally on the wing until March.

Clouded Drab - Brian Hallam

Oak Beauty - Brian Hallam

Clive Ashton recorded a rather heavily marked **Pale Brindled Beauty** from Cromford on 4th, and Martin Roome appeared to be the first person to venture out, and ran a field trap at South Wood on 4th/5th, catching 5 ***Tortricodes alternella*.**

Tortricodes alternella - Martin Roome

Pale Brindled Beauty - Clive Ashton

February Moth News - continued.

I ran my garden 20W Actinic trap for the second time this year and overnight of 9th had 5 **March Moth**, 2 **Common Quaker** and singles of **Oak Beauty**, **Pale Brindled Beauty**, **Hebrew Character** and ***Tortricodes alternella*.** Quite a bumper trap for the time of year.

Tortricodes alternella - Tony Davison

Oak Beauty - Tony Davison

Hebrew Character - Tony Davison

March Moth - Tony Davison

Also overnight on 9th Brian Hallam's Findern garden trap recorded 6 moths of 4 species - **Common Quaker**, 2 **Pale Brindled Beauty**, 2 **Dotted Border** and a **Chestnut.**

Dotted Border - Brian Hallam

February Moth News - continued.

John Turner from New Mills recorded an ***Agonopterix heracliana agg*** and a **Chestnut**, overnight on 10th, and Steve Thorpe, also overnight on 10th from his Breaston garden, had 2 **Common Quaker**, **Oak Beauty**, **Dotted Border** and an early **Grey Shoulder-knot**. On 11th an **Early Moth** came to Graham Pollock's kitchen window at Quarndon.

Grey Shoulder-knot - Steve Thorpe

Oak Beauty - Steve Thorpe

Dotted Border - Steve Thorpe

14th, Brian Hallam had 14/6 from his garden moth trap at Findern, including a bright green ***Acleris literana***, a **Dark Chestnut** and **Clouded Drab**.

Acleris literana - Brian Hallam

Steve Thorpe caught an ***Acleris cristana*** from his overnight moth trap on 15th/16th at Breaston.

Acleris cristana - Steve Thorpe

Brian Hobby had a good selection from his garden moth trap at Kirk Hallam on 15/16, with 20/8 including 2 **Oak Nycteoline** and an ***Acleris notana/ferrugana.***

February Moth News - continued.

I fired up my garden light trap for a third time on 16/17, in Melbourne, and had 3 **Oak Beauty,** 2 **Dotted Border**, 2 **Hebrew Character**, 3 **Common Quaker** and a **March Moth**.

Oak Beauty - Tony Davison

Oak Beauty - Tony Davison

Common Quaker - Tony Davison

Dotted Border - Tony Davison

Steve Thorpe and Anthony Pooles held a very successful, and first of the new moth season, field trapping session at High Leas, near Matlock. Running 2 traps produced a good selection of early moths including **Red Chestnut**, **Satellite** and ***Tortricodes alternella*** - 49 moths of 13 species. All are welcome at these trapping sessions and they are run one every month.

High Leas Moth Trapping - Steve Thorpe

Red Chestnut - Steve Thorpe

February Moth News - continued.

Meanwhile many moth traps in the county were recording **Oak Beauty**, **Dotted Border**, **Common Quaker**, **Hebrew Character** and **Clouded Drab** with regularity. A few surprises included a **Pale Pinion** at Allestree overnight on 16th by Stephen Plant, ***Ypsolopha ustella*** by John Turner, at New Mills overnight on 18/19, a **Grey Shoulder-knot** and ***Acleris literan***a, by Martin Roome at Chaddesden also 19th.

Grey Shoulder-knot - Martin Roome

Pale Pinion - Stephen Plant

Sid Morris, with several fellow moth recorders from Markham Vale, set-up their first field moth trap of the year on 19th (18:00 - 21:30), running 3 x 20W actinic, one black light, and 1 x 125 MV. The rewards were excellent, with 27 moths of 9 species being recorded, including the first records for the year of **Yellow Horned** and **Water Carpet.** In addition there were, 3 **Pale Brindled Beauty,** including one of the form ***Monachria*****.**

Markham Vale set-up - Sid Morris

Yellow Horned - Mark Radford

February Moth News - continued.

As the month came to a close, a few relatively cool nights presented further opportunities to light trap. Various recorders across the county were catching **Oak Beauty**, **Common Quaker**, **Hebrew Character**, **Dotted Border, Clouded Drab**, and the odd early micro, including ***Agonopterix alstromeriana***.

It is always pleasing to see newcomers to "Mothing" joining this group, and submitting their recordings. Anthony Pooles ran his very first light trap in Chaddesden on 24/2/2024, producing a single **Common Quaker**, but a great start on his mothing journey.

Clive Ashton light trapped at his Cromford garden overnight on 29/2/2024 and caught one of my favourite spring-time moths, the **Yellow Horned,** along with a **Common Quaker** and a **Dotted Border**. A fine way to end the month of February.

Yellow Horned - Clive Ashton

Yellow Horned - Clive Ashton

Common Quaker - Anthony Pooles

Dave Evans has written the following article entitled – "Moth Photography Tips"

Here are a few photographic tips to help aid with identification of micro moths, leaf-miners and caterpillars. Admittedly, none of the below are easy subject matters to photograph and there are lots of factors to take into account. This is just a short guide to hopefully point you in the right direction.

Micro moths:

One of the main issues here is two-fold, firstly, they don't often rest still enough and long enough to photograph them and secondly, they are, as the name suggests, small in nature. Most cameras these days have a macro function built in and this is often the best way to try and capture those finer details that can quite often, make all the difference when it comes to identification. Capturing the right type of photo is also important and many micro moths can only be identified from images taken from a side-on aspect. There are numerous exceptions but generally speaking, this is a good photographic method to adopt. However, it is also a recommendation to capture images from all aspects.

You can see the side-on aspect of this ***Pammene fasciana***

Pammene fascina - Dave Evans

Also this ***Argyresthia goedartella***, a group of micro moths that really do benefit and require a side-on aspect, as do many 'Grass moths' such as this ***Crambus pascuella.***

Argyresthia geodartella - Dave Evans

Crambus pascuella - Dave Evans

Micro moths with wings that are spread and held flat require a different type of photograph, shown as such by this ***Acleris laterana/comariana***.

Also this ***Lozotaenia forsterana*** is a classic example of the type of species that requires a photo taken directly from above.

Acleris laterana/comariana - Dave Evans

Lozotaenia forsterana - Dave Evans

Caterpillars:

These work in a similar way to micro moths where detailed photos of a side-on aspect can really help with identification. However, there are many species that also benefit from photos taken from above, showing such features as sublateral lines. This is probably a far more tricky group than micro moths, as so many species tend to be green in colour. There are also many "**instar**" stages within each species and they can look completely different from one stage to the next. Unless the identification is obvious then it might help if photos of different anatomical areas of the caterpillar are photographed. Such as, **Poplar Hawk-moth** showing the Anal plate.

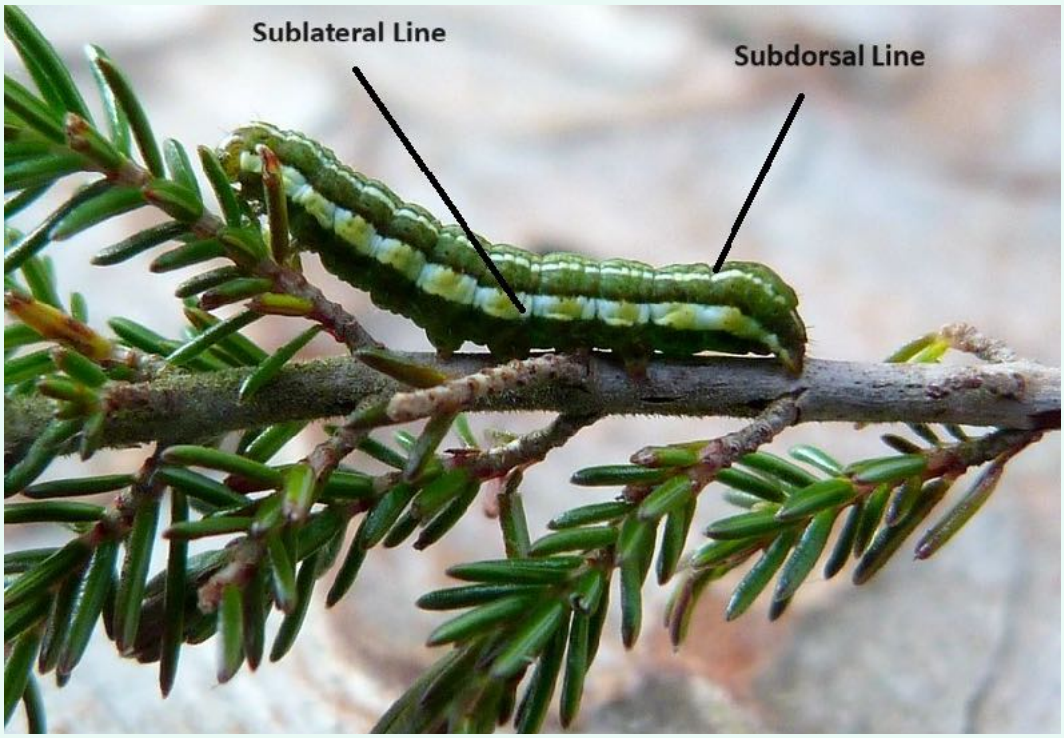
In this case, an **instar** is a development stage of the caterpillar, which occurs between each moult, or shedding of the skin (ecdysis), until it reaches a point where it begins to pupate.

Poplar Hawk-moth caterpillar - Dave Evans

Poplar Hawk-moth showing the oval spiracles which are openings into the exoskeleton to allow air into the trachea.

Poplar Hawk-moth caterpillar - Dave Evans

Heath Rustic caterpillar showing the sublateral and sub-dorsal lines.



Heath Rustic caterpillar - Dave Evans

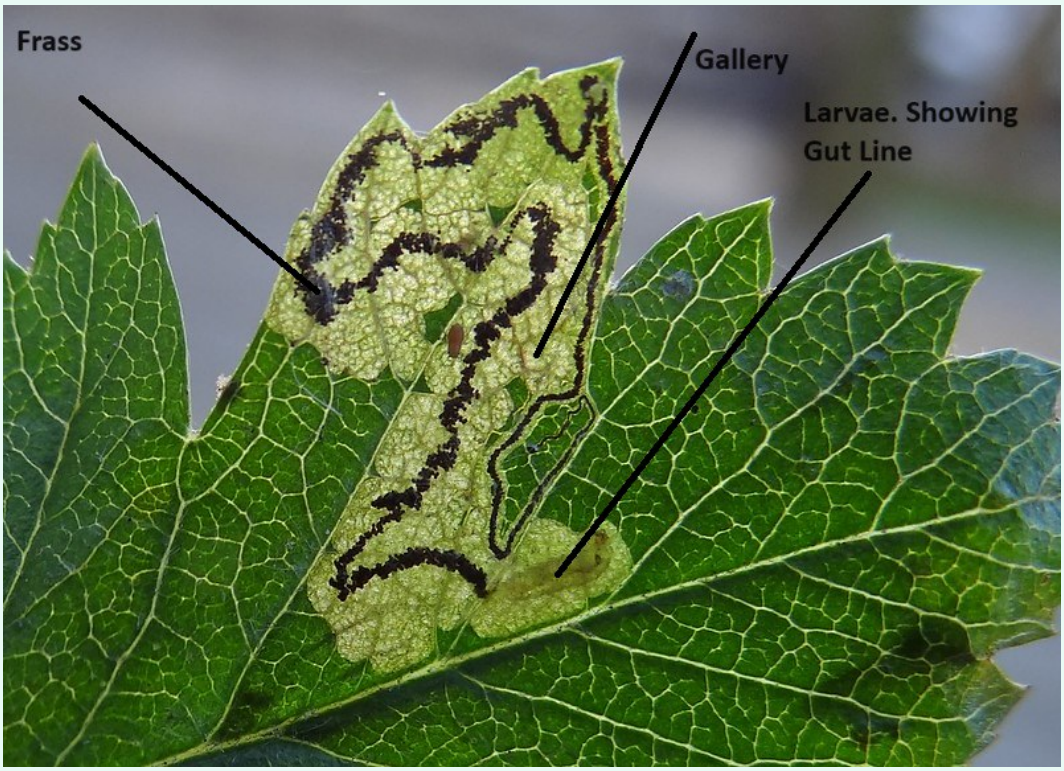
Leaf-miners:

At last, something static to photograph I hear you cry! **Leaf-miners** open up a whole new world to moth recording and the more you look for them, the more addictive it becomes, as you search out those silvery patterns woven into leaves as larvae munch their way out on their way to adulthood.

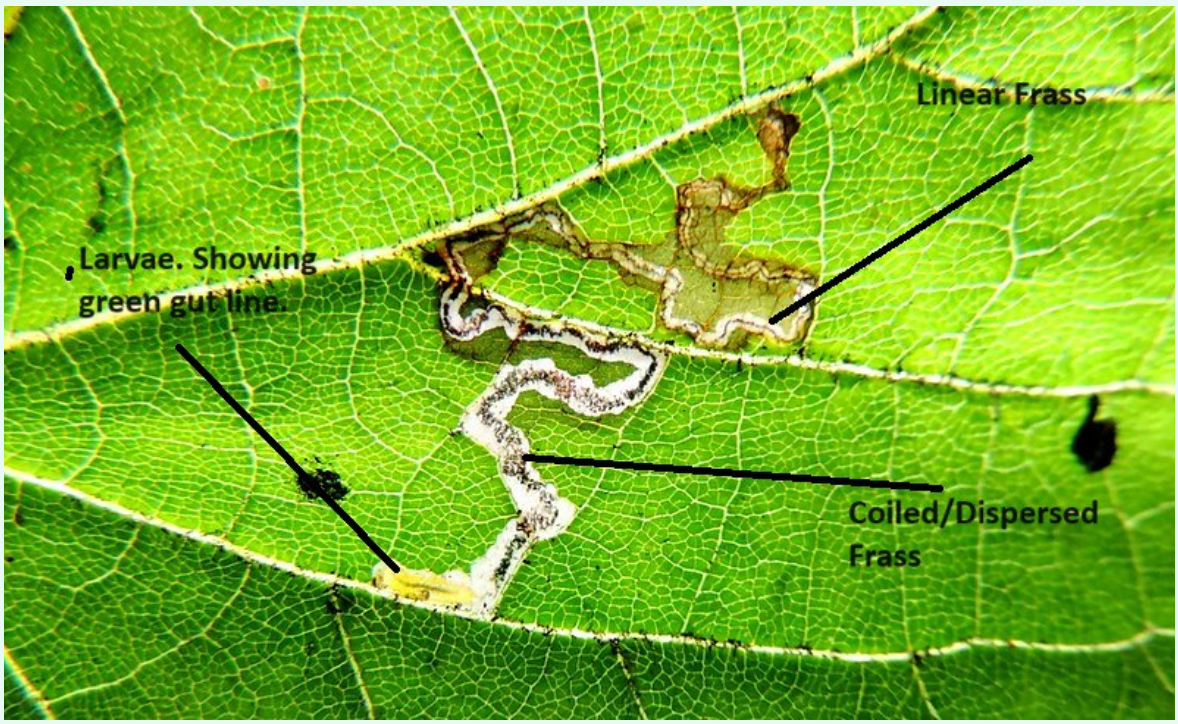
The patterns created by leaf-miners are certainly intricate, often haphazard-looking, but most certainly diagnostic when it comes to trying to identifying them. Two things are key here, the larval food-plant that the mine is found on, and the quality of the photograph submitted. Taking photos of the larval food-plant (upper and underside of the leaf) is also key when it comes to helping aid identification. The trick with leaf-miners is to try and have as much light enter the leaf as possible, either backlit with the sun behind or manoeuvred into a position where you can see all the required detail. Even on a dull day, you can usually position the leaf sufficiently enough to allow light in.

Holding the leaf as close to the lens as possibly will normally allow you to take macro images which will be more that suitable for identification purposes. Adjusting the focal length of the leaf in relation to the lens will help to gain as clear an image as possible. It's all trial and error. Just one thing to bear in mind, try and position the leaf to photograph whilst it is still attached to the branch until you can determine whether the mine is tenanted (larvae present) or vacated (larval chamber empty). If it is determined that the larval chamber is empty then the leaf can be removed for easier access to photograph.

Here is an example of ***Stigmella hybnerella*** mined on a Hawthorn Leaf, showing the key characteristics of the leaf-mine.



An example of sufficient light entering into the lens, highlighted here by ***Stigmella tiliae*** found on Small-leaved Lime.



We should stress that no photography of wildlife is straightforward and this is just a guide with an aim to help point you in the right direction. If you can submit photos that are as clear as possible then we can ask for no more. We really appreciate all your records, photos and continued support of the Derbyshire Moths Facebook Group.

News Update - A new species of Leaf Miner for VC57 has been discovered on Holme Oak in Kings Newton on 12 February 2024 by Will Soar. ***Ectoedemia heringella*** **(4.088).** The leaf mine has been confirmed by Dave Evans as this species from Will's photographs, here's one below. Also a **Bright-line Brown-eye** found in a garden shed in Belper on 19th by Dave Newcombe. A very early record indeed.

The Leaf Mine of ***Ectoedemia heringella*** - Will Soar

Bright-line Brown-eye - Dave Newcombe

February Moth News - continued.

News Update - During the recent mild spell of weather, especially in mid February, many moth recorders along the South and south west coasts of England, and in addition to the run of the mill stuff, were catching a wide range of mouth watering migrants from southern Europe and North Africa. One in particular, the stunning crambid, ***Euchromius ocellea,*** the **Silver Spotted Veneer,** stood out**,** with the first ones recorded at the end of January**.** I can't imagine the excitement of emptying the moth trap and finding one of these in it! In some cases reports came in of quote "Only moth in the trap last night was another ***Euchromius ocellea***, 8th record of the year," really gripping stuff.

Other migrants included numerous **Dark Sword-grass**, **Small Mottled Willow**, **Bordered Straw, Rush Veneer, Rusty Dot Pearl**, a **Radford's Flame Shoulder, Angle Shade** and **Striped Hawk-moth**.

The Facebook Group, **Migrant Lepidoptera (GB&Ireland)** run by Steve Nash, was kept very busy, with many records pouring in. Steve was releasing a constant supply of weather maps and news, describing the tropical conditions that were moving towards the UK during February, from Southern Morocco and the Western Sahara. Unfortunately for us in Derbyshire, the conditions were not so mild, but nevertheless gave us opportunities to catch moths that usually appear in March!

***Euchromius ocellea* –** by kind permission of Steve Nash

Well, that's another bulletin completed, I do hope you enjoy the read. Many thanks to Dave Evans for the article on Photo Tips, Steve Nash for the use of his brilliant photo of the Silver Spotted Veneer, and to the many Derbyshire moth recorders for supporting the DMFG, by submitting their sightings and records. Really looking forward to the commencement of spring moth trapping, which is now just around the corner!

Tony Davison