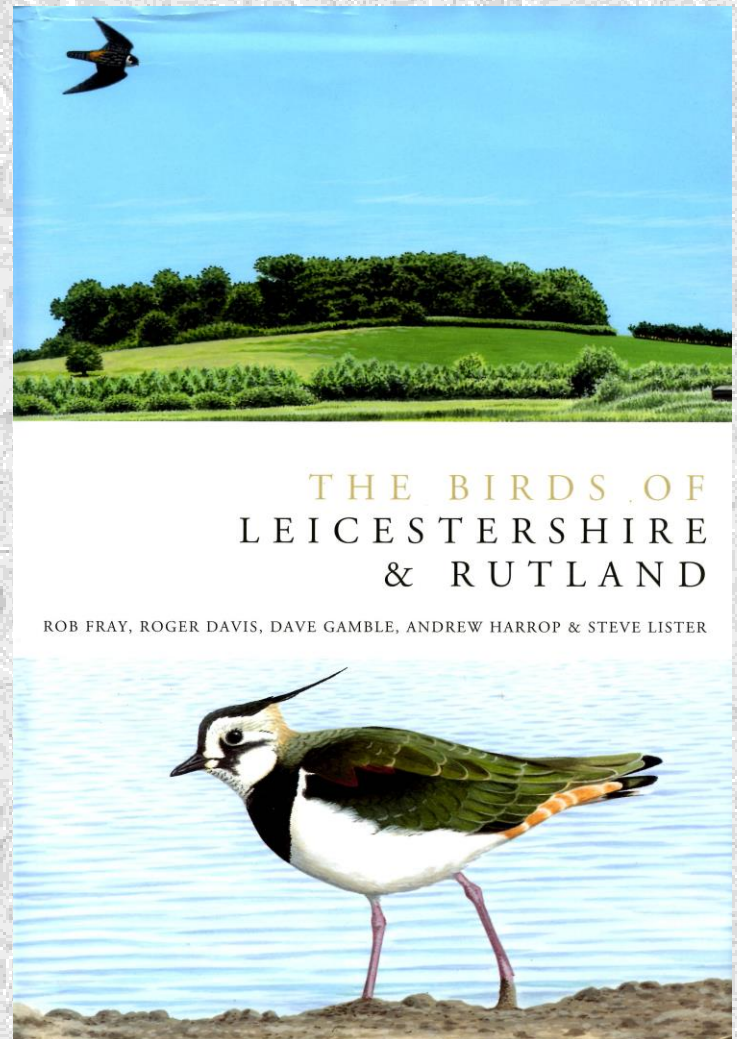
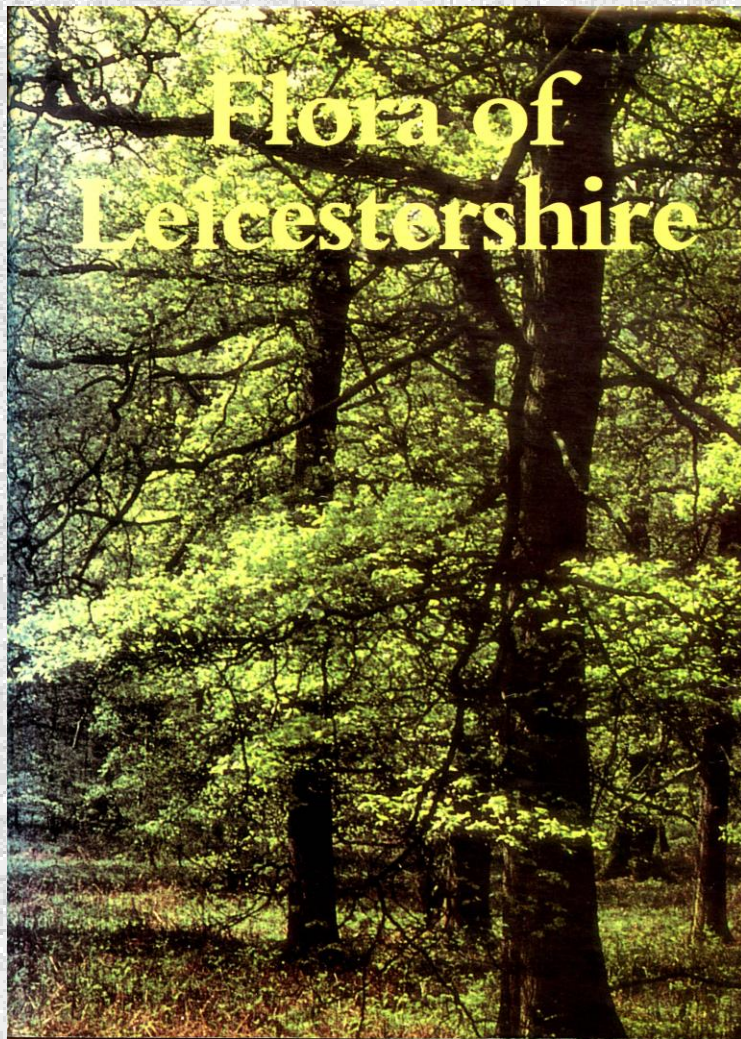


Towards:

“The Butterflies and Moths of Leicestershire & Rutland”

“It seems remarkable that despite considerable activity, there is still no detailed study of the Lepidoptera generally available in the county”

(Tony Fletcher in “Exchanging Ideas Dispassionately and Without Animosity: The Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society 1835-2010”)



Yet, in other areas, one, two, three or four publications have been produced over the years

- Deciding the cut-off point for records is always difficult, but this is especially the case with moth populations changing so dynamically.
- One might think there are more than enough records in the VC55 database:
- I have therefore decided that the cut-off (last year) for records will be **2019**, with a view to publishing in (or as soon as possible after) 2020.

	Records
Butterflies	129,257
Macromoths	537,766
Micromoths	152,674
Total	819,697

With the addition of historical and 2018 -2019 records, this should take the total to approx. one million records!

Should it be:

- ‘The Larger Moths of Leicestershire & Rutland’?

But it seems illogical to exclude micromoths

- ‘The Moths of Leicestershire & Rutland’?

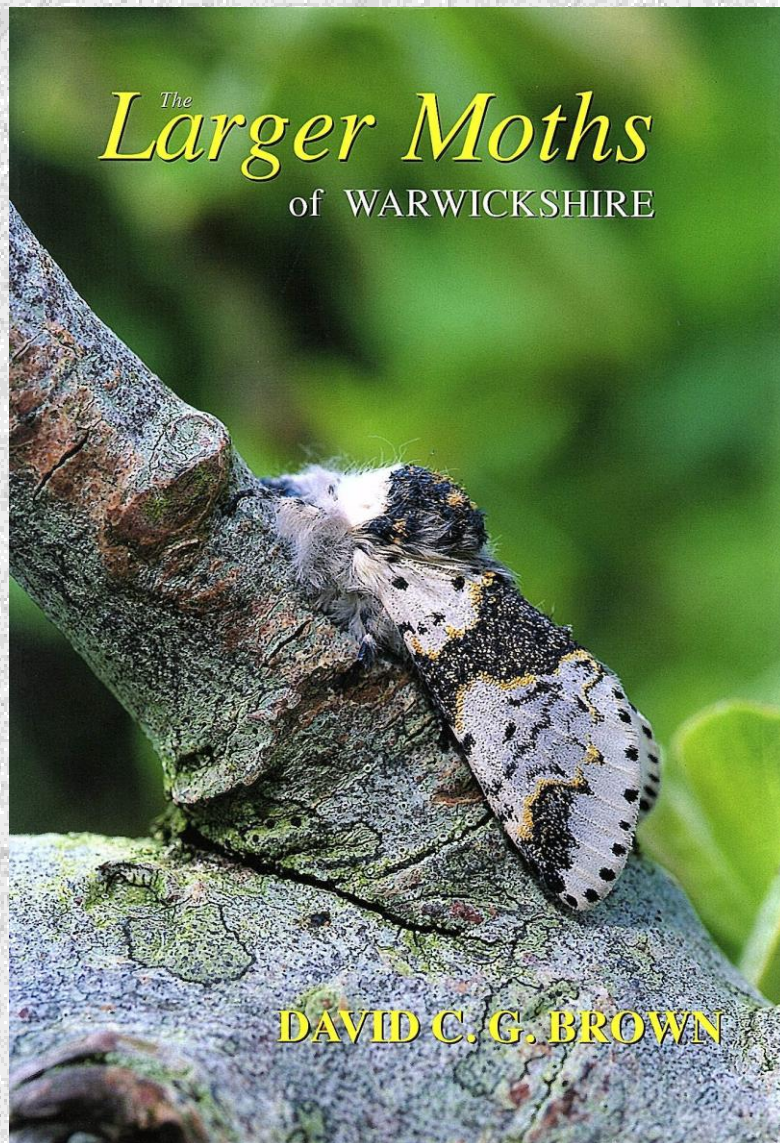
And then one might as well include butterflies too

- ‘The Butterflies and Moths of Leicestershire & Rutland’?

So this will be the scope of the book

- One Volume?
- Two Volumes?
- Three Volumes?!

Many county moth faunas have been produced in recent years.
This is a typical example:



Stout Dart

2113 *Spaelotis ravida* ([D. & S.])

Nationally Local

County status: Possibly extinct. Formerly very local.

Flight: Late June to September.

Larval foodplants: Unknown in the wild.

The Stout Dart is similar to the Dotted Rustic in experiencing periodic fluctuations and range expansions followed by contractions. Having been fitfully recorded in the County during the first half of the twentieth century, the species experienced a dramatic increase during the 1970s. It became locally plentiful in river valleys, damp woodland and gardens over a broad band of central and southern Warwickshire. By the mid-1980s a serious decline had commenced and this unpredictable moth has not been observed since 1988 (Fig. 20).

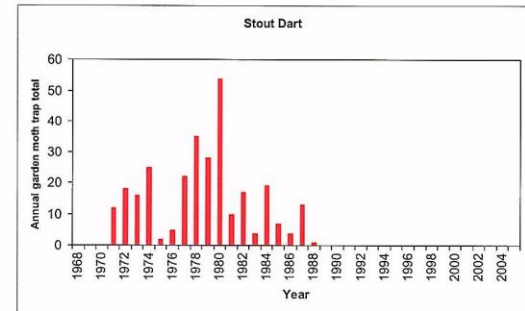
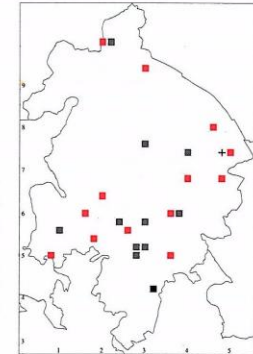


Figure 20. The changes in fortune of *S. ravida* at Charlecote (DB).

Records:

Tysoe, July 1947 (TT); Ufton Fields, 15/8/1964 (ANT); 9/8/1985 (CDNHSS); Wilnecote, 1965 (RGW); Earlsdon, Coventry, 1968 (PC); Bowshot Wood, 1970, 1971 (DB); Charlecote, 1970–88 Last record 9/9/1988 (DB, AFG); Hampton Wood, 1972 (23), 1973 (3), 1974 (7) (AFG); Oakley Wood, 24/7/1973 (DB), 18/9/1976 (DB, AFG), 26/7/1977 (DB, WF), 29/8/1978 (2) (DB, WF); Walton, 8/8/1973 (2) (DB, PR, ES), 9/8/1973 one at sugar (DB), 25/8/1973 (DB, BE, JC); Marton, 1970s (RA); Wolston, 5/8/1977 (KAM); Walton Wood railway embankment, 27/8/1978 (3) (DB, RHS, AFG); Toft Farm, Dunchurch, 14/7/1979 (AFG); Oversley Wood, 2/8/1980, 28/8/1987 (AFG, DB); Hartshill Hayes, 1980 (RJT); Hillmorton, Rugby, 1982 (4), 1983, 1984 (3), 1985 (9), 1986 (2), 1987 (3) (DIP); Doshill, 1982 (PAD); Evesham Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, 5/8/1983 (DB); Pailton, 1984–85 (KCG);

The cost of full colour printing has reduced and at £16, this is a very affordable book:

The Larger Moths of Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough



John & Brenda Ward

[73.042 (2286) **Light Knot Grass** *Acronicta menyanthidis* (Esp.)]

Status: Unknown. 1882. (L.) **Only record:** 1882, Northampton (W. Hull & H. Tomalin). **L.O.N.:** Unrecorded.

Notes: This is considered an unlikely record for Northamptonshire.

73.043 (2287) **Scarce Dagger** *Acronicta auricoma* (D. & S.)

Status: Unknown. 1946. (Extinct). **Records:** 1882, Whittlebury Forest (W. Hull & H. Tomalin) and 10 June 1946, Northampton (J. Payne). **L.O.N.:** Unrecorded. **First record:** 1882, Whittlebury Forest (W. Hull & H. Tomalin).

Notes: The 1946 moth was found on Northampton railway station by an experienced recorder.

73.045 (2289) **Knot Grass** *Acronicta rumicis* (L.)

Status: Resident. 2013. **Distribution:** Common. **Habitat:** Woodland and wetland. **Flight season:** Double brooded; May and June and again in August. **L.O.N.:** 1907. Common. **First record:** 1862, Northampton (W. Smith).

Notes: The moth has been recorded each year in the Pitsford Water light traps since they were first operated in 1999. The annual average to 2012 was six, with a high of 22 and a low of one. Although intermediate forms occur the melanic form ab. *salicis* appears to be uncommon in the county. The colourful larvae can sometimes be seen feeding on a variety of herbaceous plants, particularly dock and plantain, in the summer months. Larva p.158.



73.046 (2278) **Poplar Grey** *Subacronicta megacephala* (D. & S.)

Status: Resident. 2013. **Distribution:** Common. **Habitat:** Woodland and hedgerows. **Flight season:** Single brooded from May to August. **L.O.N.:** 1907. Many localities. Rather common. **First record:** 1882, Northampton District (W. Hull & H. Tomalin).

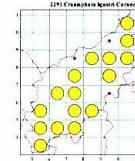
Notes: The larvae can readily be found exposed on poplar leaves and the pupae under loose bark on poplars and willows, especially along the River Ise. Perhaps surprisingly, the melanic form ab. *nigra*, does not appear to have been recorded in the county.



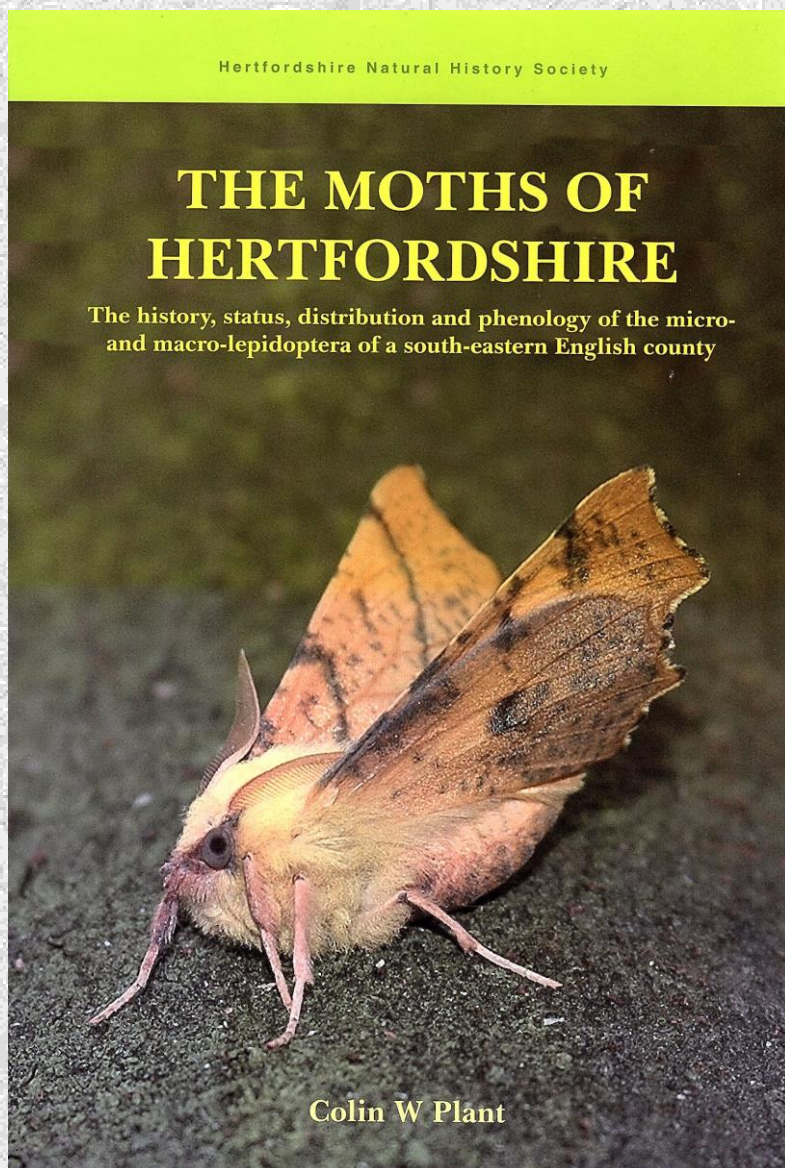
73.047 (2291) **Coronet** *Craniophora ligustri* (D. & S.)

Status: Resident. 2013. **Distribution:** Local. **Habitat:** Woodland and scrub. **Flight season:** Single brooded in June and July. **Localities:** Eastfield, Ashton Wold, Storefield Wood & Quarry and Whistley Wood. **L.O.N.:** 1906. Farming Woods, Faxton, Badby. Not common. **First record:** 1843, near Peterborough (J. Whitwell).

Notes: In a note from the 1960's on this species at Castor Hanglands it was stated that, "This is not as a rule a common moth in Britain, but at Castor it is sometimes very common and very variable. In 1954 sixteen specimens came to light on one night" (R. Pilcher, unpub.data). After this was written the moth became much more local in the county with a discontinuous distribution, being found in the north eastern Rockingham Forest woodlands and less frequently in south Northamptonshire. Over the past few years the species has expanded its range and, although still local, in 2013 was recorded again in some of the old sites in which it formerly occurred.



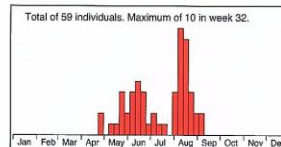
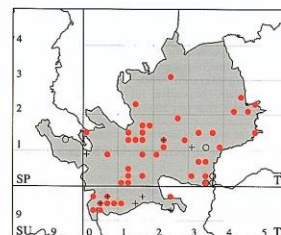
This is a larger format book, running to 542 pages. Our book is likely to be an equally weighty tome!



recording trip on 1st July 2006 at Casbury Park, Watford, a site also crossed by the River Colne. A voucher specimen for the last mentioned record is in my own collection. The earliest Hertfordshire record, however, is away from the Colne Valley at Whippendell Wood, Watford, where an example was taken at light on 26th July 1964 by Roy McCormick. Another report is in a letter dated 18th March 1971 from Mrs Joan Nicklen, of the Rothamsted Experimental Station at Harpenden, to the then Hertfordshire moth recorder, Peter Bell, in which it is stated that 'Our latest find is a specimen of *Xanthorhoe hirsutiata* [at the Rothamsted Estate] on the night of 22nd June 1970 ...'. This record is published in Bell (1971) as new to the Hertfordshire fauna, but oddly is omitted by Riley (1999) in his summary of moths at the Rothamsted Estate; nor is it commented upon by this latter author and it is unclear if this record was missed by Riley or simply deemed unreliable. Both these two records and another by John Murray at Marshal's Heath in 1995 are surprising in that the sites are not near to any appropriate breeding habitat; it is assumed that these single adults were wanderers

1722 *Xanthorhoe designata* (Hufn.) Flame Carpet

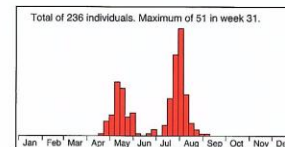
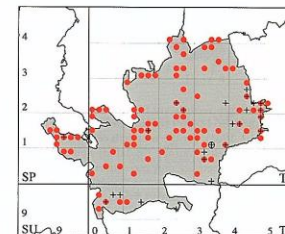
Recorded: 1828 – 2006
Distribution / Status: Local / Uncommon resident
Conservation status: Herts Stable
Caterpillar food plants: Not recorded in Britain
Flight period: April to September in two generations
Records in database: 125



This moth has an affinity with damp woodland, damp hedgerow ditches, scrub-invaded field ponds and similar habitats and so the apparent absence from the north-east of Hertfordshire was predictable. The two generations of adults almost merge, though there is a small but clear gap without records in mid-July. Captive larvae can be fed on various cruciferous plants, but the natural foodplant is apparently unknown in Britain.

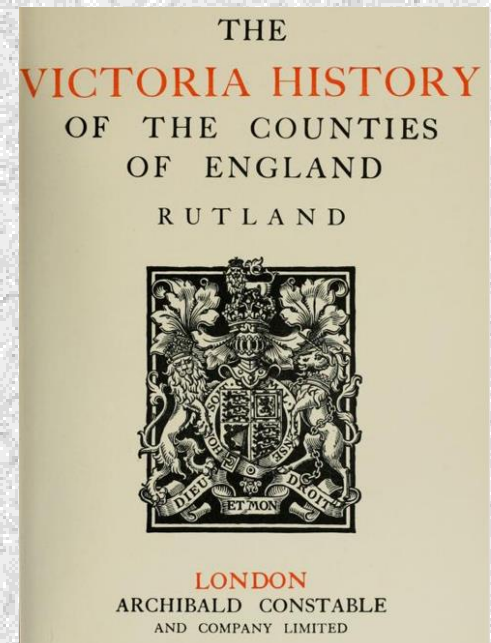
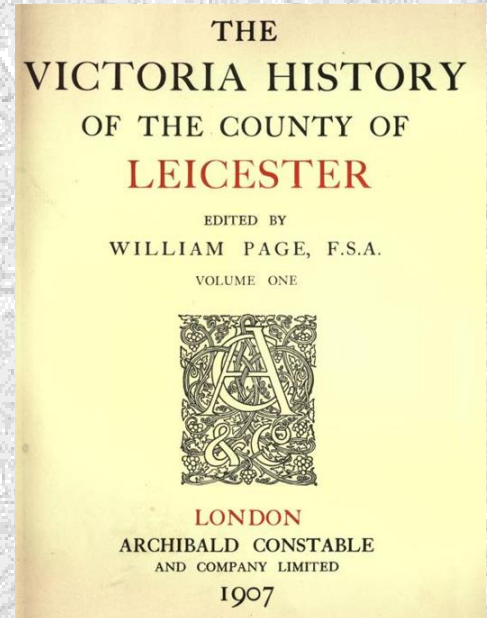
1724 *Xanthorhoe spadicaria* (D. & S.) Red Twin-spot Carpet

Recorded: 1887 – 2006
Distribution / Status: Widespread / Common resident
Conservation status: Herts Stable
Caterpillar food plants: Not recorded. Elsewhere, polyphagous on herbaceous plants
Flight period: April – June then July/August
Records in database: 363



Separation of this species from 1725: Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet can be extremely difficult and has been discussed by Plant (2005). The Red-twin-spot usually has a red median band on the forewing, but in some forms this band can be very dark or almost black. The Dark-barred Twin-spot, as the common name implies, has the median band of the forewing dark – often black. However, there is a form that has a reddish band (actually the typical form – those with black bands being referable to *abundantaria*). A very widely used character for the separation of the two has been the presence (in Dark-barred) or absence (in the Red) of a notch on the inner edge of the median fascia of the forewing at the costa. However, this character has now been proven to be unreliable and should not be used. In many cases it will be necessary to rub away the scales from the tip of the abdomen of male specimens in order to look at the genitalia with a hand lens. The two species are immediately and easily separated by the length and shape of the costal process that arises from the inner face of each valva. In *X. spadicaria* each process is long and narrow, produced from the tip of the valva and then turning inwards at 90 degrees so that the two often touch or even overlap. In *X. ferrugata* the costal process is short and stout, produced to a short point that scarcely extends beyond the tip of the valva. Both species have an exceptionally long, narrow and curved uncus which should not be confused with the costal processes of the valvae.

- I had originally envisaged that the book would build upon the Lepidoptera accounts published in the Victoria County Histories (1907 and 1908), but having undertaken a lot of historical research recently, I have found these to contain errors and many important omissions.
- Therefore, “The Butterflies and Moths of Leicestershire and Rutland” will be a **full historical account**.



What sort of book will it be?

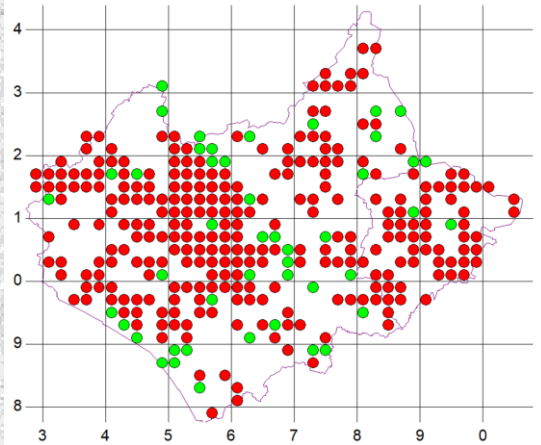
- High quality – hopefully the best!
- Anything less would not do justice to all of the work undertaken by Lepidopterists in the past, the vast amount of the recording work undertaken by recorders in recent years and the thousands of hours spent processing records!
- This will be **YOUR** book and there are many ways in which you can help:

	DRAFT TIMETABLE
Spring 2018	Annual Recorders Meeting Covert database to new ABH checklist names & numbers Talk to publishers & printers
Summer 2018	Fieldwork, photography, etc.
Autumn 2018	Record processing: Buckler/Lisney records Validation of micromoth records
Winter 2018/19	Record processing: 2018 records & other old/historical records
Spring 2019	Annual Recorders Meeting
Summer 2019	Fieldwork, photography, etc.
Autumn/Winter 2019	Validation of macromoth & butterfly records Record processing: 2019 records Writing species accounts
Spring/Summer 2020	Annual Recorders Meeting Final record processing and validation work (inc. 2019 records) Produce final distribution maps, phenology charts & other analyses Writing species accounts
Autumn 2020	Sample pages & cover available for potential sponsors Seek sponsorship
Winter 2020/21	Pre-publication offer. Printing & publication

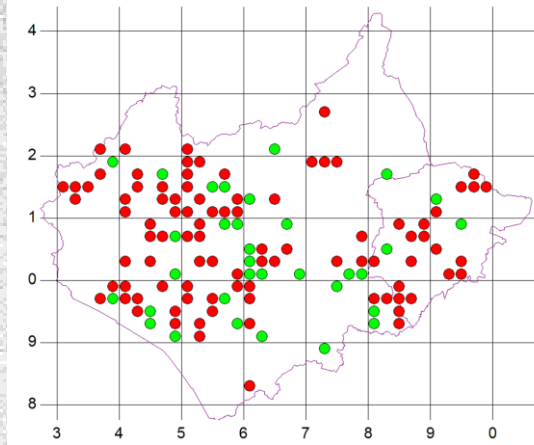
Fieldwork/Recording: Only two years left – 2018 and 2019

- Keep doing what you've been doing!
- As much recording as possible – or as much as you are able
- Garden moth trapping (including some special surveys)
- Out of garden recording – there are plenty of under-recorded areas and sites, as the maps below indicate.

2107 *Noctua pronuba* (Large Yellow Underwing)



1934 *Agriopsis marginaria* (Dotted Border)



The gaps are even more apparent with species flying outside of the main season

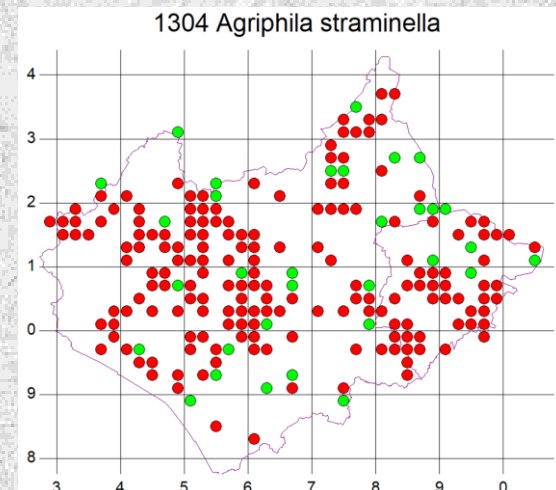
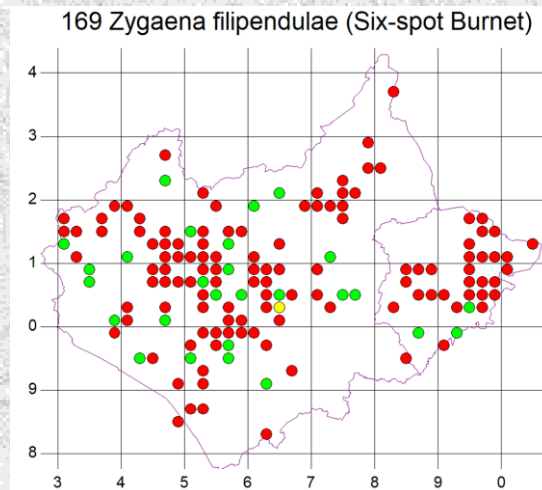
Permits for recording on Trust reserves can be arranged and moth trapping equipment is available on loan for such work.

Fieldwork/Recording: Only two years left – 2018 and 2019

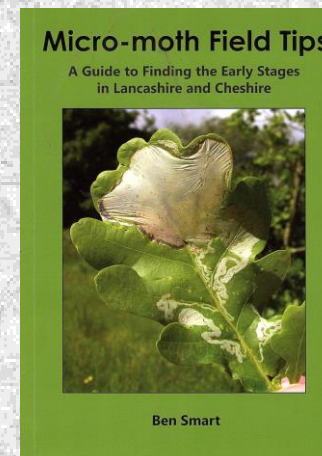
- Keep doing what you've been doing!
- As much recording as possible – or as much as you are able
- Garden moth trapping (including some additional surveys)
- Out of garden recording
 - Plenty of under-recorded areas and sites
 - Permission for recording on Trust reserves
 - Moth trapping equipment available on loan
 - **Daytime recording of moths and butterflies**

Fieldwork/Recording: Only two years left – 2018 and 2019

- Out of garden recording
 - Daytime recording of moths and butterflies



- Micromoth fieldwork.
E.g. plenty of tips in this
new book:



Moth Recording In VC55

Many strengths, but also some relative weaknesses

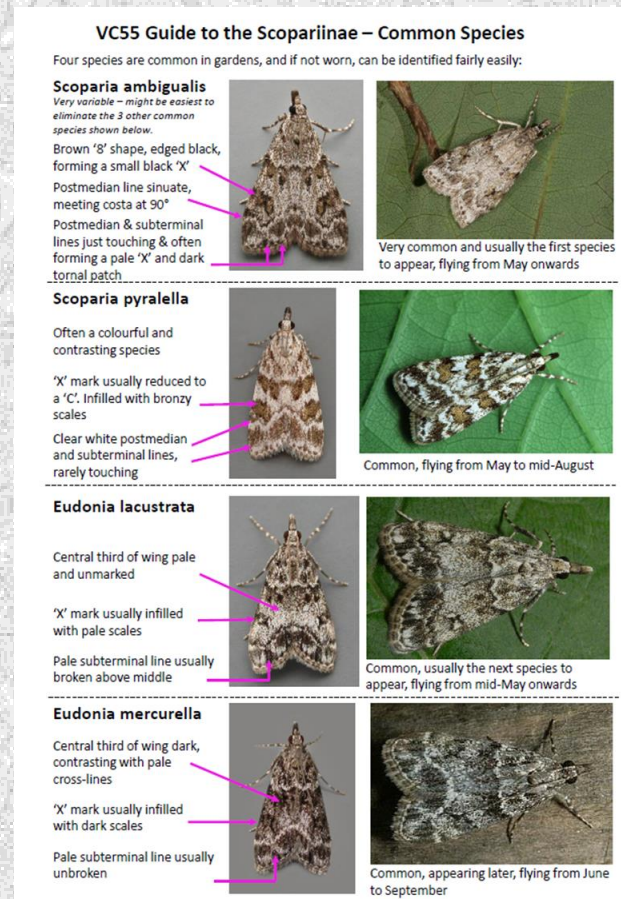
- Where are the shortfalls in our knowledge of the moths of VC55?
- Which gaps should we try to address in the next two years?

Difficult to Identify Species

The Scopariinae!

This is a notoriously difficult group to identify, especially when worn. An identification guide has been prepared to help VC55 recorders identify these moths and improve our knowledge of the status and distribution of the less common species. However, this is perhaps not a group for those new to (micro)moth recording!

Copies were given out at the meeting and will be available to download – but for VC55 recorders only!



Difficult to Identify Species

The Pugs!

Whilst a number of specialist pug identification guides have been produced in the past, they were all let down by poor illustrations.

One of the better guides was an online publication: The Pug Moths of Lancashire and Cumbria.

But this has now been updated and improved and recently published in book form (right). This book contains excellent photographs and is now probably best specialist identification guide to the British Pugs.

Pug Moths of North-west England

A Guide on Identification and Distribution
in Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria



Brian Hancock

Difficult to Identify Species

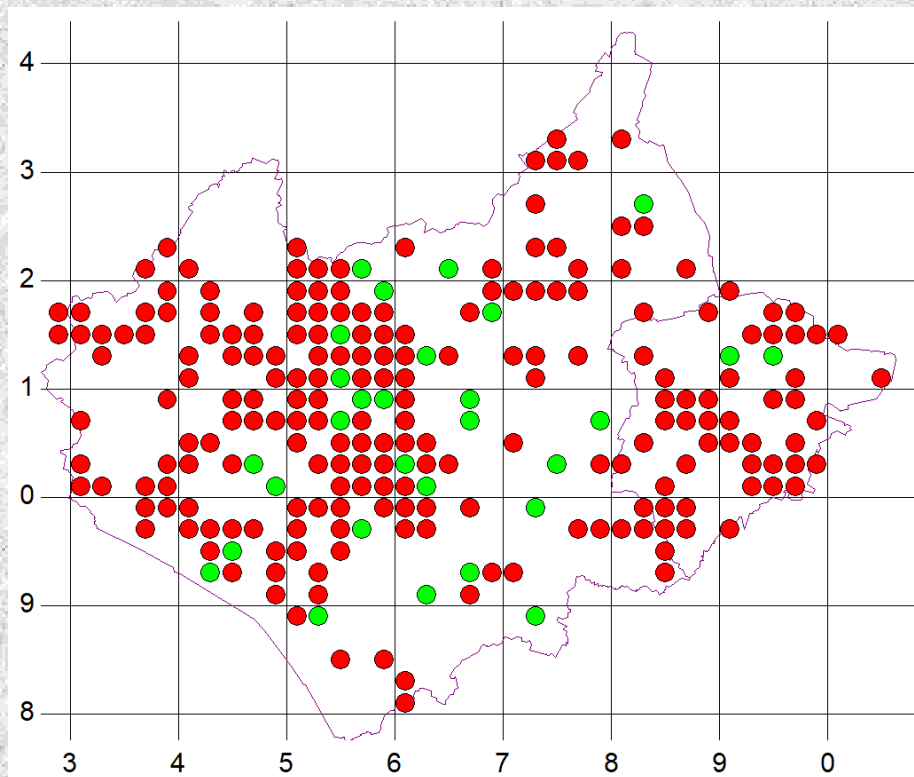
‘Critical Species’

(species requiring dissection)

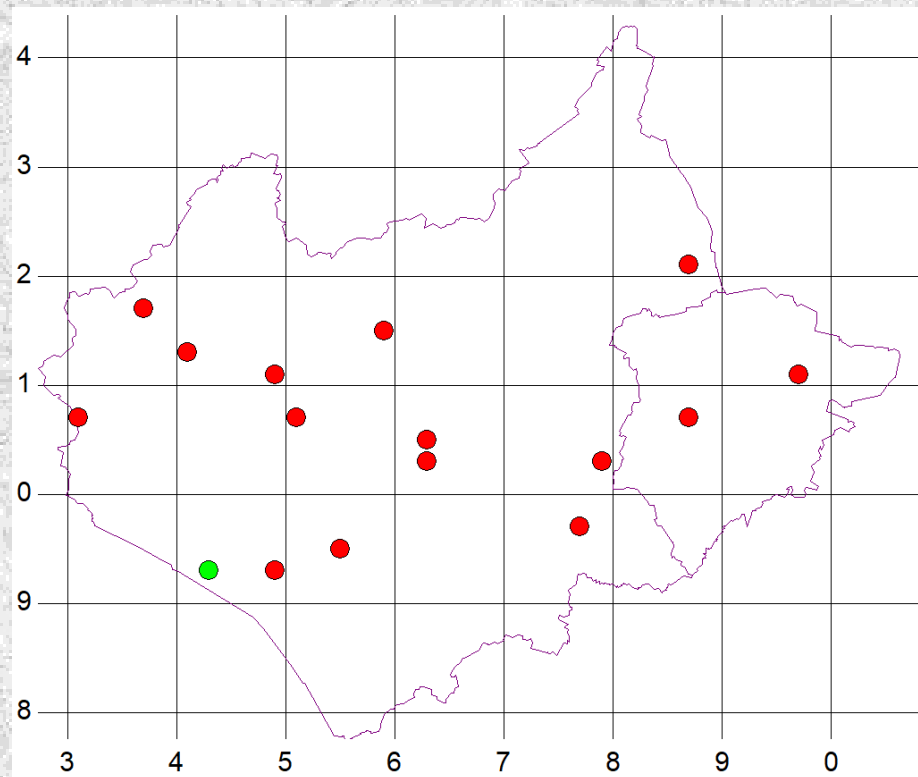
2017 records of three such species show how we receive far more records of aggregate (i.e. un-dissected) species than of confirmed (dissected) species:

	Agg. records	Species records (dissected)
Marbled Minor	448	2
Common Rustic	532	1
Oegoconia quadripuncta	58	3

This is reflected in distribution maps and shows that whilst we might know a lot about the aggregates, we know far less about the actual species:



Marbled Minor agg.



Tawny Marbled Minor

2018-19 Special Survey of Critical and Difficult Species

- Participation is voluntary, though the more that participate, the better.
- The aim to improve our knowledge of the distribution of these species.
- Small samples collected from a range of sites/tetrads where there are no dissection-based records
- Specimens will be identified/dissected and recorder informed of id
- But we can't guarantee to identify every specimen!

2018-19 Special Survey of Critical and Difficult Species

- Minors
- Common/Lesser Common Rustic
- Uncommon Pugs
- *Oegoconia quadripuncta* agg.
- *Accleris laterana/comariana*
- *Accleris ferrugana/notana*
- Coleophoridae
- *Cnephasia* ssp.

- Also: micromoths from sites/recorders where not being recorded or where assistance is required with not so straightforward species.










Guidance and instructions will be emailed out ASAP and survey packs of containers will be provided (N.B. Some were given out at meeting, though demand outstripped supply!

VC55 'Form' Survey 2018-2019

- This is a very simple survey that all garden moth trappers can assist with.
- Whilst some recorders have provided this information with their records in the past, that information is difficult to analyse. It will therefore be useful if we could collect this data across the whole county in 2018 and 2019.
- The form will be made available for use or as a reminder, but is not essential; recorders can simply send me the annual counts at the end of the year, e.g. *"Ribband Wave: 7 banded and 31 un-banded"*

VC55 "Form" Survey 2018-2019

Please could you help by keeping a record of the numbers of each of the different forms of the species seen below:

Peppered Moth			
			
Typical form. Number =	form insularia Number =	form carbonaria. Number =	
Ribband Wave			
	Typical (banded) form. Number =		ab. remutata (unbanded). No.=
Scalloped Hazel			
	Typical form. Number =		form nigra Number =
Burnished Brass			
	Form aurea. Number =		Form tutti. Number =

Do not worry if you do not catch many of these moths, as the aim is to aggregate all of the totals across the whole of VC55.

You can return this form to me by post or scan & email or simply email me the numbers when you submit your records at the end of the year.

Thanks.

Adrian@wainscot.demon.co.uk

Other ways you can help:

- Photographs (if you are a moth photographer)

The aim is to include a top quality photograph of every species of macromoth, and as many micromoth species as possible, currently present in VC55.

- Moth must have been caught in VC55
- Moth should be in excellent/pristine condition
- It should be photographed on a natural background
- Photographs “in the field” are often superior
- Moth must look alive!
- Photograph must be pin-sharp and properly exposed
- Etc.
- If you’re not a photographer, you may be able to help by retaining elusive species for photography.
- A “wants list” will be emailed out in due course, but generally speaking there are fewer photographs of dull-looking common species and small & “flighty” species.

Other ways you can help:

- Submitting your “old” records
- Record transcription
- Being patient with queries and requests for information!
- Other?please let me know

Communications

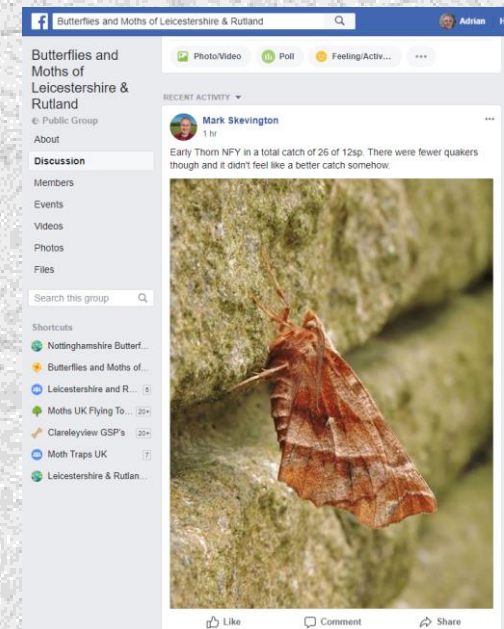
Emails

I will probably be sending out more emails than usual in this important two year period and recorders shouldn't hesitate to contact me by email for information and advice.

Yahoo & Facebook Groups

The old VC55 Yahoo Group was cumbersome and little-used in recent years. I have therefore decided to close it down.

On the other hand the Facebook Group (right) has proved popular and lively. It is extremely easy to use for identification queries, for both recorders and identifiers alike. N.B. It is possible to simply sign-up for Facebook without all of the social networking bells & whistles that you either love or hate!



VC55 Download Site – New!

At some stage in the future (most likely after the book has been published) it would be good to have a VC55 Moth website. In the meantime, I have set-up a Download Site, where important documents and useful information can be downloaded. However, this site is for VC55 recorders only, so please don't publicise the URL any more widely than that. The URL will be emailed out to VC55 recorders.