

Micro-moths 2019 (Provisional report)

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Introduction

During the year eight species were added to the county list: *Lampronia fuscata*, *Monopis fenestrata*, *Phyllonorycter sagitella*, *Symmoca signatella*, *Elachista bedella*, *dystebenna stephensi*, *Oxyptilus laetus* and *Moitrelia obductella*. In addition *Merrifieldia baliodactylus* had not been seen in the county since 1900. Full details of these can be found in the accounts below.

Review

The following list includes species of interest recorded in VC30 during 2018. Most of the species analysis is based on the 7,516 records for 2019 that had been uploaded to the county database by late April 2020. This also includes only easily identifiable species from the Eaton Bray II Rothamsted trap as Andy has not had time to dissect the rest yet.

The list is based on that of Agassiz, Beavan & Heckford (2013), which was a revised taxonomic list and numbering system of British Lepidoptera. This list has subsequently been updated and corrected; the new version can be downloaded via the Natural History Museum's website. The number in square brackets refers to a species' Bradley-Fletcher number (Bradley 2000), which were used in previous reports.

A list of the micro-moths of VC30 with their current status is on the Beds Moth Group (BMG) website www.vc30moths.org.uk or available from the Recorders on request. This is based on a national status list and associated supporting documentation that was produced by the Moths Count team at Butterfly Conservation in early 2016.

Nepticulidae

4.001 *Enteucha acetosae* (Stainton) [Na] [118]

An encouraging 15 leafmines of this tiny species were found in Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella* at the usual, very small location in Ampthill Park on 27th June (AMB & MGB). This follows on from records at the same single location in the county in 2010, 2011 and 2016.

4.020 *Stigmella paradoxa* (Frey) [Nb] [82]

This is a very scarce leafminer of Hawthorn *Crataegus* sp., with the only previous county records at Pegsdon Hills and near Ravensburgh Castle (on Barton Hills) in 1985 and 1986 (T.Hollingworth). Therefore it was especially pleasing to refind the leafmines near Barton Hills NR on 8th August (AMB & MGB).

4.064 *Trifurcula headleyella* (Stainton) [pRDB2] [44]

Following on from the addition of this to the county in 2018, there were two further records in 2019. Single leafmines in Self Heal *Prunella vulgaris* were found at Pegsdon Hills on 19th July (MGB) and 7th August (JC & JS).

Prodoxidae

9.006 *Lampronia fuscata* (Tengström) [Nb] [138]

One to MV light at Potton on 19th May (FW & RW) was a new addition to the county list. The larvae feed in twigs of birch *Betula* causing galls.

Tischeriidae

10.006 *Coptotriche angusticollis* (Duponchel) [Nb] [127]

Five tenanted leafmines of this were found on Rose *Rosa* sp. on 17th October in Maulden Wood (AMB & MGB). This was the fifth county record; all come from a very small area in that wood where it was first found in 1984. It has been found nowhere else in the county.

Tineidae

12.042 *Monopis fenestratella* (Heyden) [pRDB2] [233]

A male of this species, new to the county list, came to MV light at Marston Vale Millennium CP (MVMCP) on 31st May (AMB & MGB, genet AMB). It is a rare species with only a few records for the UK. The larvae are thought to feed in birds' nests and on other detritus.

Gracillariidae

15.027 *Parornix carpinella* (Frey) [Na] [302a]

Three leafmines of this species were found on Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* on 11th July at Wrest Park and two at Etonbury Wood on 12th September (AMB). These are the fourth and fifth county records.

15.087 *Phyllonorycter comparella* (Duponchel) [Na] [365]

Following on from records in 2017, a single vacated leafmine was found on hybrid Black Poplar *Populus x candensis* at a site on the edge of Sandy on 3rd August (AMB & MGB).

15.088 *Phyllonorycter sagitella* (Bjerkander) [pRDB2] [366]

This species was added to the VC30 fauna in 2019; 11 active and vacated leafmines were found on Aspen *Populus tremula* in two locations in Maulden Wood on 17th October (AMB & MGB). The identification was confirmed by inspection of the morphology of empty pupal cases protruding from the mines.

Yponomeutidae

16.001 *Yponomeuta evonymella* (Linnaeus) [424]

Despite this being the most commonly-reported species of this genus in the county, with 973 records, it was not until 2019 that larval webs were reported. Many webs were found on a Bird Cherry *Prunus padus* at Stotfold Mill Meadows NR on 26th May (AMB & MGB), and larvae were found on the same pabulum at Millennium Wood, Southill, on 30th May (JHM).

Ypsolophidae

17.016 *Ochsenheimeria vacculella* Fischer von Röslerstamm [Na] [253]

Following on from the addition of this species to the county list in 2018, eight specimens, including one male and four females, were found hiding under peeling, dead, oak *Quercus* bark in a lightly-grazed grassland area at Whipsnade Zoo on 26th July (DLB, conf. AMB).

Autostichidae

27.004 *Symmoca signatella* Herrich-Schäffer [872]

An extremely surprising addition to the county list was a male to MV light in Southill on 2nd August (JHM, genet AMB). This is a species that is resident in the European mainland and North America, and its larvae are thought to feed on plant debris. Reliable, previous records of this species come from London (VC21) in 1889, 1890 and 2015. There is also a possibly erroneous record from Leicestershire (VC55) in 1957. A review of the occurrences of this species in the UK will be published in a national journal in due course.

Oecophoridae

28.029 *Trachypepla contritella* (Walker)

This species was recorded as new to Britain in 2012, from VC30, with a further record in the county in 2018. In 2019 there were four further records from Eaton Ford between 19th June and 23rd July (RIB). There were also further records close by in VC31 as before (BD pers. comm.).

Peleopodidae

31.001 *Carcina quercana* (Fabricius) [658]

Larvae found feeding on the underside of oak leaves at Sandy Pinnacle on 20th March (JHM & RIB) was the first larval record of this common species in the county.

Gelechiidae

35.056 *Metzneria lappella* (Linnaeus) [724]

Five larvae found feeding in seedheads of Burdock *Arctium* sp. at The Lodge (RSPB Sandy) on 20th February was the first larval record for this species in VC30 (RIB & JHM).

35.065 *Monochroa cytisella* (Curtis) [728]

One to light on 13th July at The Lodge (RSPB Sandy) (AMB & MGB) was the third county record, and a new species for the site and 10km square.

35.0191 *Anarsia innoxella* Gregersen & Karsholt [857a]

For more information on this species please refer to the 2017 micro-moth report; but it is worth noting that ten specimens were caught in 2019 between 29th June and 25th July.

Coleophoridae

37.058 *Coleophora conspicuella* Zeller [pRDB2] [539]

This species was added to the county list in 2017 from a single female in a light trap at Biggleswade on 13th July (LRB, gendet DVM). It was thought that the large, distinctive, larval cases should be able to be found in the county on Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. After searching a number of sites 104 cases, an amazing count, were found at Stratton Park Balancing Lake on 25th May (AMB & MGB).

37.103 *Coleophora follicularis* (Vallot) [555]

Following on from previous records in 1984, 2014 and 2017, larval cases were found at two sites in 2019, both with previous records. Two cases were found on Hemp Agrimony *Eupatoria cannabinum* at Duck End NR (DENR), Maulden, on 17th May (MGB), and ten cases on Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* and Ploughman's Spikenard *Inula conyzae* at MVMCP on 20th May (AMB & MGB).

Elachistidae

38.010 *Elachista bedellella* (Sircom) [Nb] [616]

A tiny, grey moth netted whilst sweeping at Knocking Hoe NR on 23rd May turned out to be a male of this species and new to the county (RIB & JHM, gendet AMB). It is a scarce species found mainly on chalk downland; the larvae are leafminers of Meadow Oat-grass *Avenula pratensis*.

Parametriotidae

39.004 *Dystebenna stephensi* (Stainton) [Na] [907]

This was another addition to the county in 2019, with a male to MV light on 25th July at The Lodge (RSPB Sandy) (JHM, gendet AMB). This was an expected addition, the larvae of which feed in the bark of oak.

Scythrididae

43.006 *Scythris potentillella* (Zeller) [pRDB1] [920]

This rare species was first recorded in the county at Cooper's Hill, Ampthill, in 2006 and then at The Lodge (RSPB Sandy) in 2016. It was pleasing therefore to receive specimens from the latter site to check for identification. Three males and two females were netted on the old heath on 12th August (RIB, gendet AMB). There is no need to record this further from The Lodge for a few years but other heathland sites on the Greensand Ridge should be searched.

43.007 *Scythris limbella* (Fabricius) [pRDB3] [918]

The fourth county record came from a light trap on 25th August in Biggleswade where there have been two previous records (LRB, gendet AMB).

Pterophoridae

45.027 *Oxyptilus laetus* (Zeller) [1492]

This was new to VC30. An unfamiliar plume photographed next to a moth trap in Biggleswade on 29th July was disturbed before it could be potted (LRB). This was identified from the photos by AMB as possibly this species, which is a rare migrant, and Colin Hard agreed this might be the case. However, this does need dissection to separate from *Oxyptilus distans*. Happily, it or another specimen came to the same light trap on 4th August and the ID was confirmed by gendet (AMB).

45.034 *Merrifieldia baliodactylus* (Zeller) [Nb] [1512]

The only previous record of this species in the county came from Barton Hills in 1900 by W.G.Nash. Therefore it was excellent that a male and a female came to MV light at Pegsdon Hills on 25th July (JHM, gendet AMB). The larvae feed on Wild Marjoram *Origanum vulgare*, which is abundant at the site.

45.037 *Oidaematophorus lithodactyla* (Treitschke) [Nb] [1523]

A larva found feeding on a leaf of Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* at DENR on 17th May was identified as this species (AMB). It is the first larval record of it for the county.

45.040 *Hellinsia lienigianus* (Zeller) [Nb] [1518]

The fourth county record of this species was a male to MV light at Sandy on 25th June (leg. & gendet AS). Previously, this species, whose larvae feed on Mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, had only been found at Luton airport and in the Cockayne Hatley RIS trap in 1999, and at Totterhoe Quarry in 2013.

Tortricidae

49.094 *Phtheochroa sodaliana* (Haworth) [Nb] [923]

With three previous records of adults of this species, it was pleasing to find larvae for the first time this year. Characteristic feeding in the fruits of Purging Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica* were found near Barton-le-Clay on 10th August and at Warden Hill near Luton on 22nd August (AMB).

49.221 *Rhopobota stagnana* ([Denis & Schiffermüller) [Nb] [1161]

The fourth county record of this species was a male to MV light at Pegsdon Hills on 25th July (JHM, gendet AMB).

49.245 *Epinotia tetraquetrana* (Haworth) [1137]

With only four previous records and none for five years, one netted during the day at The Lodge (RSPB Sandy) on 14th May (RIB, conf. BS & AMB) was a good find. The other records were from Sutton Fen on two dates in 1982, King's Wood Heath & Reach in 2012, and Lowe's Wood in 2014.

49.330 *Cydia conicolana* (Heylaerts) [Nb] [1269]

The fourth county record was of a female to a light trap on 3rd June in Kempston (HJG, gendet AMB). In addition, larval feeding signs and emergence holes were found in fallen cones of Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* at The Lodge (RSPB Sandy) on 5th May and at Wigmore Valley Park, Luton, on 6th May (AMB).

49.339 *Cydia servillana* (Duponchel) [Nb] [1256]

Three to MV light at MVMCP on 31st May (AMB & MGB) was only the third county record.

49.358 *Grapholita tenebrosana* (Duponchel) [1246]

The larvae of this species feed in rose hips, whereas the larvae of *Grapholita funebrana* are a commercial pest species in plums and also feed in Sloes and other *Prunus* fruits. The two species can only be separated by gendet or very close inspection of the palps. Males of both species will assemble to an artificial pheromone lure. One of these lures was placed in a pheromone trap in a Lower Stondon garden between 7th July and 13th August and the contents kept for dissection. Of the moths collected, only six were males of *tenebrosana* and 77 were males of *funebrana* (leg. and gendet AMB). This is mirrored in the county database with 11 records of *tenebrosana* and 107 of *funebrana*.

49.362 *Pammene giganteana* (Peyerimhoff) [Nb] [1227]

One to MV light at Sandy on 19th March (AS conf. AMB) was only the third county record, following a singleton in 2017 and the species being mentioned in the Victoria County History published in 1904.

Pyralidae

62.013 *Moitrelia obductella* (Zeller) [Nb] [1444]

Amongst the pyrales that came to MV light at Pegsdon Hills on 25th July (JHM gendet AMB) were a male and female of this species, which was new to the county. The female was putatively identified as this by JHM but had to wait for gendet to prove it was this; the male was scaleless and had remained unidentified until gendet. This is an excellent find in VC30, as the population in the UK was thought to be mostly in Kent, primarily in the North Downs. The larvae feed on Wild Marjoram.

Crambidae

63.016 *Anania fuscalis* ([Denis & Schiffermüller]) [1386]

Following reassessment of this species in the county in the 2018 report and a record at Totternhoe Quarry in that year, it was excellent to get two further records in 2019. These were of singletons at Sharpenhoe on 30th April (JCr det. KF conf. AMB) and near Barton-Le-Clay on 1st June (AMB). Both were daytime records.

63.034 *Udea prunalis* ([Denis & Schiffermüller]) [1390]

Despite there being 463 records of this species in the county, the larva had never been found before. Therefore it was pleasing to find one feeding in silk-webbing on the underside of a leaf of Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* at Maulden Wood on 17th October (AMB & MGB).

Migrant records are forwarded to the appropriate editor for inclusion in the Immigration of Lepidoptera to the British Isles Report for the *Entomologists Record and Journal of Variation*.

All records are held by the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre and updated regularly. In addition the dataset is forwarded to the National Moth Recording Scheme annually, as in 2016 this started accepting micro-moth records.

References

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Andy and Melissa Banthorpe are now the Society's joint Recorders for all Moths, a position they hold in an honorary capacity, having taken on the macros in autumn 2006 and the micros as well in spring 2016.