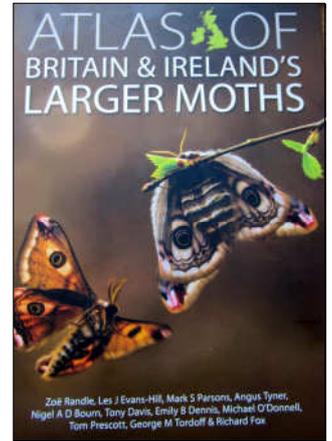


## **LAPWG MOTHS ANNUAL REVIEW 2020**

A high spot of the winter has been the eagerly-awaited **Atlas of Britain & Ireland's Larger Moths**. This carefully compiled and well-presented book encompasses hundreds of thousands of verified records dating from the pre-1070s to the end of 2016. Easy to interpret, it is a mine of information about the current status and distribution of all the 'macro' moths, showing trends of abundance and distribution, and gives an overall picture so one can see the place nationally into which our Cornish moths fit. Although not an identification book, it has a photograph of each species.



**January** has seen a cross section of our winter weather, largely unsettled with wind, rain a high pressure system around the 20<sup>th</sup> giving icy, quiet and sunny weather for about 5 days. David Braine on spotlight SW Weather remarked that it was the first high pressure over Britain since September 2019! Winter Moths have been the commonest moths flying, not infrequently seen in car headlights in the lanes.



**Mottled Grey**

**February** At last, I put the moth trap out on 24<sup>th</sup> Feb, three months to the day since the last trapping. because of continuing unsettled wet and windy weather. There have even been two back-to-back named storms, Ciara and Dennis, followed rapidly by storm Jorge (named by the Spanish Meteorological Service) The total lack of trapping, or any moths by other means for so long into the new year is unprecedented for me. David Brain our regional weather man tells us it has been the wettest February on record nationally, and at least for the SW, the windiest February on record!

**March.** Chilly nights only allowed 3 nights of trapping and numbers of individuals were low.

**April** This month is dry, sunny with warm day-time temperatures although often with chilly North and East winds, but I think the warmer days are encouraging emergence and the numbers of suitable nights for trapping and greater numbers of both individuals and species was heartening. Especially important as the coronavirus lockdown was enforced , so all trapping had to be done at home. Occasional migrant Silver Y and The micro Diamond-back were turning up as winds from the Continent blew.



**Pebble Prominent**



**Oak Beauty**

**May** A few moths, particularly Carpets, were beginning to be seen flying by day when disturbed from vegetation. The Brown Long-eared Bat which regularly uses our shed loft as a feeding roost began to drop a few discarded moth wings, mainly Silver Y's and Large Yellow Underwings.

Catches in the trap in the garden were improved with a rush of new species for the year.

Cockchafers were also coming to the light, but conspicuously, very few midges or other insects.



**Iron Prominent**

**June.** Numbers were climbing and there were more micros. These small moths seem on the whole, to prefer warmer nights. This turned out to be the peak month in terms of both number and variety of species, no double responding to the prolonged warm spell.



Fox Moth caterpillars

**July.** This month we were able to trap away from home on a few occasions in selected sites. We used the Skinner trap with the green Synergetic tube run off a battery in sites where we knew there would be no interference, vandalism or theft. We returned at first light to switch off and look at the catch. Catches were still moderate, insect by-catch very low and the bat in the shed is catching fewer individuals than in previous years, nor such a wide variety of species.



Twenty Plume

**August.** At last, a short spell of warm weather again in the earlier part of August gave overcast and very humid nights, just perfect for moths and catches in the moth trap immediately responded! A few migrants were caught, but fewer than have been seen nearer the coast or further West.

As usual, the relative abundance or scarcity of species was noticeable. This varies from year to year. This year Riband Waves in all their variety were common a bit earlier, but Dark Arches, usually abundant, have so far been scarcer. Large Yellow Underwing numbers have steadily increased through the summer.

Even though we have been out and about far less than usual, Silver Y's have quite frequently been disturbed by day, but very few have come to the light. I have noticed before that when they are feeding they are seldom interested in the light. As it is a migratory species, new arrivals may well need to feed as soon as they get here, whilst the generation bred here will not necessarily need to replenish supplies so urgently. Just an idea! The month ended stormy and numbers fell again.



Marbled Beauty

### **September.**

The weather this month allowed several trappings. Numbers fell as is the usual pattern as Autumn approaches. We are still only trapping at home so naturally we aren't seeing such a wide variety of species that we do when we are trapping in a wide variety of sites and habitats throughout East Cornwall. However a few migrants appeared such as the elegant Vestal, and a Scarce Bordered Straw.



The Vestal

Most interesting was a very late July Highflier, on 29<sup>th</sup> Sep, This is only one of a small handful of late September sighting for this moth in Cornwall. The most recent one, also seen on the 29<sup>th</sup> was in 2002 by Adrian Spalding.

## **October**

October was seen in by the wet and windy Storm Alex from France. Some sort of idea of abundance of moths can be seen in the evidence left on our shed loft floor by a regular feeding Brown Long-eared bat. I look at the moth wings abandoned by the bat and noticeable this year have been fewer than usual Large Yellow Underwing, usually the most abundant. The most this year have been Silver Y wings, usually a close runner-up, but most obvious was the almost total lack of Dark Arches, usually one of the most abundant. This has been echoed by very few caught in the trap this year.



*Palpita vitrealis*

The month went out as it came in. Wet and windy. People down West who are trapping in more favoured spots have been seeing quite a few migrants including Vestals, the lovely micro *Palpita vitrealis* and Gem.

## **November & December**

Lumped together because conditions have been too poor to justify trapping; (just one, on 7<sup>th</sup> Nov when there was a little flurry of Spruce Carpets, usually common but this year conspicuously scarce.) The nights were too cold, too windy or too wet! One brave Winter Moth came to a house window in mid-December.



Spruce Carpet

Altogether in common with so much this year, there has been restriction of effort and therefore of records. As ever, we look forward to the New Year offering a fresh start and as usual we hope for better things.

*Mary Atkinson*  
December 2020