

Some of my more interesting Lepidoptera site records for 2008

By John L. Gregory.

2008 turned out to be even worse than 2007 was for Lepidoptera records. This is probably to a large extent due to two factors, the very inclement weather during most of the summer of 2007 which would have had an adverse effect on the breeding successes of many species, and then in 2008 the weather was almost as bad for much of the summer. It therefore seems likely that breeding success-rates for species which were already seriously depleted in numbers in 2007 may take a few more years to fully recover. However 2008 was certainly not all bad, as I recorded a surprising number of interesting items to go into my main Site Records. Though I visited many sites scattered throughout Cornwall, and a few in north-west Devon, my total species-count for 2008 was only 363, not including various records of immature stages (larvae, leaf-mines, vacated feeding-places, etc.) this being my lowest end-of-year count-up for many years. As before, I have included JLG numbering here, and it can be assumed that where I have omitted to show locality data the records were from my home area, monad SX-04,55, or in a very few instances SX-04,54.

28th Jan. An exceptionally early date for both **L873 Eupithecia abbreviata** (Brindled Pug) and **L673 Xylocampa areola** (Early Grey) to turn up at my lighted windows, along with **G345 Agriopsis leucophaearia** (Spring Usher) which I last recorded in my home area well over twenty years ago.

18th Feb. A worn specimen, with the forewing apices missing, of what I believed to be **L306 Conistra ligula** (Dark Chestnut) at my lighted windows, this being another species which I have not seen at home for many years. Unfortunately the genitalia could not be checked.

21st Feb. Several specimens of **L303 Psychoides filicivora** were seen flying by day, almost communally, around a very small area of my garden in the vicinity of one of its foodplants, Hart's Tongue Fern.

22nd Feb. An overwintered specimen of **L231 Caloptilia stigmatella** at my lighted windows, a rather early date for this species to rouse itself from diapause.

23rd Feb. An early date for **L141 Orthosia munda** (Twin Spotted Quaker) to appear at my lighted windows.

29th Feb. Another species which is not often seen in my home area, **G222 Lithophane ornitopus** (Grey Shoulder Knot), came to my lighted windows.

2nd Mar. Two of the moths at my lighted windows that night were **L695 Biston strataria** (Oak Beauty) and **L582 Orthosia cruda** (Small Quaker) among other species.

14th Mar. My earliest recorded date in well over twenty years for **L799 Lampropteryx suffumata** (Water Carpet) to turn up at my lighted windows.

24th Mar. A specimen of **L203 Plutella xylostella** (Diamond Back) was attracted to my lighted windows, and it is surprising that after such an early start this species was not particularly abundant later in the year.

3rd Apr. Among several common spring-flying overwintered butterflies seen nectaring in a very small glade beneath Treffry Viaduct, near Luxulyan, was a freshly emerged **L349 Anthocharis cardamines** (Orange Tip).

5th Apr. A small day-flying moth was netted near my home, and when closely examined later it turned out to be **G124 Eriocrania sparmannella**. It was identified only from wing-markings, not genitalia, but if my identification is correct it would be my first-ever home record for this species.

12th Apr. Another rather early date, slightly earlier than in 2007, for **L802 Nola confusalis** (Least Black Arches) to be among the moths seen at my lighted windows.

14th Apr. The first of several dates during the year when specimens of **L829 Mompha divisella** were seen flying around indoors. This species seems to be on the increase locally.

25th Apr. A bit earlier than usual for **L104 Thyatira batis** (Peach Blossom) to arrive at my lighted windows.

26th Apr. Not often recorded in the moth stage, a specimen of **L130 Caloptilia elongella**, presumably from the nearby Alder trees, came to my lighted windows, though the genitalia could not be checked.

1st May. An overwintered female **L1260 Chloroclysta siterata** (Red Green Carpet) at my lighted windows. This is another species which seems to be on the increase locally.

3rd May. The earliest-ever date for **L208 Lycaena phlaeas** (Small Copper) to be seen flying around my garden.

5th May. From this date and almost continuously through the summer and early autumn many day-flying **L1623 Dichrorampha acuminatana** were observed in meadow-land close to my home, where in the last few years there has been a spectacular show of Ox Eye Daisy flowers, the roots of which are the food for the larvae of this little moth.

6th May. A rather uncommon species in my home area, and perhaps sometimes overlooked, **G665 Eupithecia exiguata** (Mottled Pug) arrived at my lighted windows.

8th May. During the butterfly event near St. Breward, day-flying specimens of **G497 Hysterophora maculosana** were seen in the vicinity of numerous Bluebells, of which the seeds are the natural food for the larvae of this moth. When at rest on its foodplant the moth could easily be mistaken for a small bird-dropping. Then four days later, on 12th May, another moth was seen in my garden, again in the vicinity of Bluebell plants.

10th May. Among the 39 species which were attracted to my MV light that night were a late **L240 Agriopsis marginaria** (Dotted Border), and early specimens of **L262 Diarsia rubi** (Small Square Spot), **L1221 Incurvaria oehlmanniella** and **G359 Drymonia dodonaea** (Marbled Brown).

12th May. An easily overlooked little moth, **L27 Aspilapteryx tringipennella**, was netted in my garden, followed that night by an early **L1463 Tinea semifulvella** at my lighted windows.

23rd May. In the meadow area near my home an early day-flying **L177 Lathromypha strigana** was netted in the vicinity of its larval foodplant, St. John's Wort.

24th May. A surprising lighted windows record of **L921 Acronicta alni** (Alder Moth). This species is much more often seen at MV than at other lights.

27th May. It was good to see several male **L1231 Aphelia paleana** at rest by day in a coastal locality near Hartland, in north-west Devon. Males of this species tend to be slightly larger and to have slightly greater wing areas than the females.

6th Jun. Starting from this date and continuing into early July, several specimens of **L1202 Pyralis farinalis** (Meal Moth) were seen flying around indoors. How they got there and what the larvae had been feeding on is a bit of a mystery.

7th Jun., "National Moth Night". 38 species were recorded in my MV light-trap, and these included a female **L1306 Cyclophora punctaria** (Maiden's Blush) which laid eggs for me, and the resulting larvae were successfully reared.

8th Jun. A rather early date for **L67 Cnephasia asseclana** to appear at my lighted windows.

9th Jun. An early record for **G673 Hydrelia flammeolaria** (Small Yellow Wave) at my lighted windows.

11th Jun. After a four-year absence from my home records, **L211 Clepsis consimilana** turned up at the lighted windows.

14th Jun. During a butterfly event in Greenscoombe Wood some of the interesting moths seen included a day-flying **G748 Eupithecia plumbeolata** (Lead Coloured Pug), and a much smaller moth at rest on an Oak leaf which I provisionally identified as **G1574 Coleophora flavipennella** though unfortunately the genitalia of this moth could not be checked.

28th Jun. A good moth-night, and among the 66 species in my MV light-trap were **L38 Adaina microdactyla**, **L402 Eupithecia simpliciatata** (Plain Pug), **L467 Crocallis elinguarua** (Scalloped Oak) and **L1583 Eilema sororcula** (Orange Footman).

2nd Jul. **G739 Eupithecia lariciata** (Larch Pug) turned up at the lighted windows. This species is not often seen in my home area, though there are some Larch trees not far away.

6th Jul. A disappointingly cold and windy day for a butterfly event near Pendeen, with few butterflies actually seen, but these did include a rather early **G214 Hipparchia semele** (Grayling).

16th Jul. A fresh-looking specimen of **G916 Amblyptilia punctidactyla** came to my lighted windows.

22nd Jul. During a botanical event near the southern end of Colliford Reservoir, a very small moth was captured, and when it was examined later it turned out to be **L513 Elachista canapennella** which, in the larva stage, is a leaf-miner of grasses. That night, at home, one of the small moths at my lighted windows was an unconfirmed **G1019 Niditinea fuscella** (Brown Dotted Clothes Moth).

23rd Jul. The **L227 Acleris kochiella** which came to my lighted windows is probably only the second-ever Cornish record for this species, the first being mentioned in my 2007 write-up. Unless both moths were immigrants to Cornwall, which seems unlikely, this suggests a probable local thriving colony somewhere nearby. The normal foodplant for the larvae of this species is Elm, but as there are no Elm trees in the vicinity, this raises the question as to whether the larvae have become adapted to an alternative, undocumented foodplant. Many very common species also came to the windows that night, including a probable **L335 Phyllonorycter coryli**, being a species which is not often attracted to light, though the genitalia of this moth could not be checked.

24th Jul. It was good to see a specimen of **L1338 Schreckensteinia festaliella** at rest on a Bramble leaf in my garden. I have recorded this species in many parts of Cornwall, most of them from vacated larval feeding-places on Bramble.

26th Jul. An apparently freshly emerged **L739 Ypsolopha ustella** at my lighted windows. Then in my MV moth-trap that night 73 species were recorded, my highest MV species-count of the year. These included **L1066 Rhodometra sacraia** (Vestal), **L1232 Ennomos quercinaria** (August Thorn) and **G845 Phytometra viridaria** (Small Purple Barred).

2nd Aug. My latest date in recent years for sightings of **L882 Melanargia galathea** (Marbled White), of which several were seen during a botanical recording event at Churchtown Farm, near Saltash.

6th Aug. My latest-ever date for **L465 Mesoleuca albicillata** (Beautiful Carpet) to come to my lighted windows.

9th Aug. A moth at rest on a wall was brought to my attention by a family of visitors to Eden. It turned out to be **L633 Pheosia gnoma** (Lesser Swallow Prominent). This was just one among several moths of other species which were captured by a little girl in the nearby ladies' toilets, for my examination.

21st Aug. The local population of **L1579 Asthena albulata** (Small White Wave) did very well during the year, this being my latest recorded date for this species. It coincided with my first-ever home record of **G1581 Rhyacionia pinicolana**, the larva of which had probably fed on one of the nearby Pine trees.

24th Aug. A species which I have not seen in my home area for many years, **L858 Archanara geminipuncta** (Twin Spotted Wainscot), came to my lighted windows.

26th Aug. A later-than-usual date for a second generation **L728 Cilix glaucata** (Chinese Character) to be seen at my lighted windows.

30th Aug. Among only 21 species recorded in and around my MV light-trap that night was a late and slightly undersized **L630 Eilema lurideola** (Common Footman).

7th Sep. A rather late date for **L10 Camptogramma bilineata** (Yellow Shell) to be still flying in my garden.

12th Sep. An indoor record of what was almost certainly **L809 Tinea dubiella**, though the genitalia were not checked. Then on that same day what is almost certainly a first-ever record for Cornwall was a few occupied leaf-mines of **L1496 Phyllonorycter leucographella** (Firethorn Leaf Miner) which I found on a Firethorn hedge near my home. A moth emerged a few days later and photographs by Phil Boggis of this actual moth and of one of the leaf mines was published in "The Butterfly Observer Newsletter number 41". The second-ever Cornish record of this little species was nine days after the first, on 21st Sep. from near Par, where I found numerous leaves on another Firethorn hedge which displayed both immature and more mature "podded" mines. Since its first discovery in Essex as a resident British species nearly twenty years ago, it has spread to many parts of England and it is interesting to note that it has at last found its way to Cornwall.

23rd Sep. My latest-ever home record for **L674 Scopula marginepunctata** (Mullein Wave). This species did very well locally during the year, with a large number of moths seen during the summer months. On that same night a late **L54 Eudonia mercurella** turned up at my lighted windows.

26th Sep. A rather late date for **L198 Acleris emargana** to arrive at my lighted windows.

28th Sep. Near St. Just In Roseland, at a "Cornwall Fungus Group" event, a late day-flying specimen of **L128 Epirrhoe alternata** (Common Carpet) was recorded, and in the same general area a single late **L134 Maniola jurtina** (Meadow Brown) was observed.

9th Oct. A rather early sighting, if the identification was correct, of **L1127 Epirrita christyi** (Pale November Moth) at my lighted windows.

11th Oct. A small, rather worn male **G381 Rhizedra lutosa** (Large Wainscot) at the lighted windows. It is many years since I last recorded this species.

26th Oct. A rather late date for **L650 Omphaloscelis lunosa** (Lunar Underwing) to arrive at my lighted windows.

15th Nov. A surprisingly late date for **L1616 Blastobasis decolorella** to be seen at my lighted windows. This would suggest the possibility of a second generation of this normally univoltine species.

20th Dec. An indoor home record for **L129 Scolopteryx libatrix** (Herald) which was flying around in a warm room.

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