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# OECOPHORIDAE (LEPIDOPTERA) IN CHESHIRE AND NORTH WALES

By H. N. MICHAELIS*

In Cheshire, species of this family are well recorded but this is not so in the counties of north Wales. The writer has lived on the Lancashire/Cheshire border for many years and has also lived in Wales from time to time, eventually settling in the Conwy valley in 1964. Watsonian vice-county numbers are used and some biological detail is included; months are shown as i-xii. The county numbers are: Cheshire (58); Flintshire (5I); Denbighshire (50); Caernarvonshire (49); Anglesey (52) and Merioneth (48). Records for the southern part of the latter are sparse.

Oecophorinae.

Of the seventeen species listed, the larvae of ten are associated with dead or decaying wood, decaying or dried vegetable matter, wool, skins and dead insects and the two common house or clothes moths are among these. Of the remaining six species, two feed on heathers and four on deciduous trees and shrubs. The food of one is unknown.

*Schiffermuelleria subaquilea* (Staint.). Locally common in 58 and scarce in 49 and 50, the moth favours high heathy ground in vi - vii resting on walls and rocks and may be "smoked" from herbage. The food is unknown and efforts to breed it from vegetable debris from the base of walls were unsuccessful.

*S. similella* (Hubn.). Occasional in east 58 resting on bark of *Pinus sylvestris* in vii.

*S. tinctella* (Hbn.). One record from Delamere (58); locally common in 49, 50 and 51 flying at sunset and dawn from late v - vii. Two moths were bred from a decayed oak branch taken in iii which also produced *Esperia sulphurella.*

*Batia lambdella* (Don .). Once in 58 and occasional in 49 and 50 flying at sunset in vi - vii and also at light; the larva feeds in dead wood of *Ulex.*

*Borkhausenia fuscescens* (Haw.) Occurs throughout from late vii - ix. Occasionally disturbed from trees and hedges, it is mainly found on the windows of outhouses. Larvae brushed from crevices in wood and brickwork in old cobwebs suggests a diet of dead insects.

*Telechrysis tripuncta* (Haw.) Scarce in 58 but fairly common in mixed hedgerows in 49 and 50. The moth flies in the evening sun from late v - vii. Have associated this moth with *Corylus* and have bred a moth from a rotten piece of hazel gathered in the winter.

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*Hoffmannophila pseudospretellã* (Staint.) Plentiful throughout, mainly indoors from spring to autumn. The larva feeds on a great variety of organic matter.

*Endrosis sarcitrella* (L.) Known as the "white-headed clothes moth" and is plentiful throughout the year in houses, sheds, etc., where the larva feeds on a wide range of organic matter and refuse. The moth is also found out of doors on tree trunks and lichen covered walls.

*Esperia sulphurella* (Fabr.). Flies in sun and is plentiful among hedges and woods throughout from late iv - vi. The larva feeds in dead wood over winter.

*Alabonia geoffrella* (Fabr.) Local throughout in mature hedgerows, v - vi. Larvae found in ii in dead wood of hazel and sallow, pupating in iv in a yellowish white cocoon among flakes of wood. It is advisible to keep the dead wood out of doors exposed to the weather.

*Pleurota bicostella* (Clerck). Plentiful on heaths throughout in vi - vii where the larva feeds on heather.

*Amphisbatis incongruella* (Staint.). A secretive moth which flies only in warm sunshine in iv - early v on still days and rests on shoots of ling *(Calluna)* when it is difficult to find. Found only in 58 and 50 as yet.

*Carcina quercana* (Fabr.) Plentiful throughout, vii - ix. Larva in a white web under leaves of many deciduous trees and shrubs usually in v - vii; may possibly overwinter as a larva as I found two on *Hypericum hidecote,* an evergreen shrub, in iii.

*Diurnea fagella* (D & S). The male is plentiful on tree trunks during daytime while the semi-apterous female is more easily found at night, late iii - v. The larvae of this and the next two species have a characteristic club-footed appearance due to swelling of the 3rd pair of thoracic legs; all three species feed very slowly, v - ix/x. *D. fagella* feeds in spun leaves of many trees and shrubs.

*D. phryganella* (Hbn.). Is locally common in oakwoods in 58 but uncommon in the Welsh counties, flying in sun, x-xi. Ova are laid separately on twigs and bark of oak and hatch in v.

*Cheimophila salicella* (Hbn.) Local and uncommon in iv- early v in 58 and 50. Have found larvae in spun shoots of bilberry *(Vaccinium myrtillus)* growing in woods in ix, ova from the moths resulting were easily reared when left in a sleeve on sallow, v - ix.

Depressariinae

The larvae of all listed species are phytophagous found mainly

in spun or rolled leaves or in spun flowers and shoots of Umbelliferae and Compositae; an ability to wriggle rapidly backwards or forwards is characteristic of many species. Many species hibernate as imagines and fly on warm winter evenings and well on into the spring. A few will come to light but the majority are more readily found by searching flowers of *Senecio, Centaurea, Daucus* etc., or by the use of a bee smoker.

*Semioscopsis avellanella* (Hübn.) Is local in 58 and in the Maelor district of 51. The moth rests low down on birch trunks in iv.

*S. steinkellneriana* (D & S.) Local and uncommon in all vice-counties; the moth is difficult to disturb, is usually among sloe *(Prunus spinosa)* and will occasionally come to light, iv - v.

*Exaeretia allisella* Staint. Locally common as larvae in young shoots of Mugwort *(Artemisia vulgaris)* in 58 and less so in 50, 51 and 49. Drooping young shoots in the crown of the plant indicate larvae in iv-v and these will move to new shoots as required. Larvae should be reared on a potted plant which should be kept until late August as it is likely to produce the Tortricids *Epiblema foenella* (L.) and *Dichrorampha simpliciana* (Haw.) during the summer. *E. allisella* is not easily disturbed by day and may be found on leaves of Mugwort after dusk, vii - ix.

*Depressaria daucella* (D. & S.) Plentiful throughout, viii - v. Larvae are gregarious on flowers of Hemlock Water-dropwort *(Oenanthe crocata),* v - vii.

*D. pastinacella* (Dup.) *(heracliana* sensu auctt.) Plentiful, viii - v. Larvae are gregarious on flowers of Hogweed *(Heracleum)* in v - vi.

*D. ultimella* Staint. Single records from Delamere and Wirral in 58, ix.

*D. pulcherimella* Staint. Occasional in 58 and 52, locally common in 49, 50 and 51. The larva is found singly in spun flower heads of Earthnut *(Conopodium)* in vi.

*Agonopterix heracliana* (L.) *(applana* Fabr.). Plentiful throughout from vii - iv. Larvae in rolled leaves of many Umbelliferae during the summer and is the only Oecophorid larva found on Alexanders *(Smyrnium olusatrum).*

*A. ciliella* (Staint.) Widespread but never common in all vice-counties, vii - iv. Larvae feed on lower leaves of *Heracleum* making a fold or turning down the edge of a leaf and are occasionally found on *Angelica,* vi - vii.

*A. subpropinquella* (Staint.) Local throughout mainly on coastal sandhills vii - iv; form *rhodochrella* (H. - S.) having a dark brown thorax occurs sparingly in 50 and 51. Larvae feed in rolled leaves of Hardheads *(Centaurea nigra),* v - vii.

*A. propinquella* (Treits.). Local near the coast in all vice-counties, viii - iv. Larvae feed in a web on the underside of leaves of *Carduus* making a window-feeding pattern of brown blotches; Nodding Thistle *(C. nutans),* Seaside Thistle *(C. tenuiflorus)* and very occasionally *Carline Thistle (Carlina vulgaris)* are favoured on the north Wales limestone.

*A. arenella* (D. & S.). Plentiful throughout, ix - v. Larvae in spun shoots and leaves of *Carduus, Centaurea* and Burdock *(Arctium* sp.). vi - vii.

*A. liturella* (D. & S.). Occurs locally throughout, vii - viii. Larvae in spun shoots and rolled leaves of *Centaurea nigra,* v - vi.

*A. bipunctosa* Curtis. Two moths found in September 1980 at Cors Goch (52) where Sawwort *(Serratula tinctoria)* is well established. I understand that the only previous records are from Cornwall (I or 2), Dorset (9), Hampshire (11 or 12) and Isle of Wight (10).

*A. ocellana* (Fabr.) Plentiful among *Salix,* the food-plant, ix - iv.

*A. pulverella* (Hübn.) An unconfirmed record in 1917 for 58.

*A. assimilella* (Treits.). Local throughout where Broom *(Sarrothamnus)* is established, vii - ix. Larvae in a long spinning to join two shoots together.

*A. scopariella* (Hein.) As yet, was found only after hibernation among *Sarrothamnus* at Mochdre (50), iv.

*A. nervosa* (Haw.) *(costosa* Haw.) Plentiful throughout, vii - ix. Larvae feed in spun shoots of *Ulex* and *Sarrothamnus,* v - vi.

*A. carduella* (Hübn.) A record by the late C. M. Jones at Hoylake (58) in 1953. Two bred by J. M. Chalmers-Hunt, 25. vii.1971, from larvae taken by him on *Carduus,* Great Orme (49), 2.vii.1971.

*A. ulicetella* Staint. *(umbellana* sensu auctt.) Local throughout, viii - iv. Larvae live in a silk tube among the needles of *Ulex europaeus* and *U. gallica,* vi - viii, found at 2000 feet on the latter.

*A. conterminella* (Zell.) Plentiful as a larva in spun shoots of *Salix* throughout during v - vi. The moth comes to light and ragwort flowers vii - ix.

*A. liturosa* (Haw.) Plentiful as larvae in top shoots of various herbaceous *Hypericum,* v - vii. The moth often rests on the leaves, vii.

*A. astrantiae* (Hein.) In August 1949, the late B. B. Snell took five specimens at Llanarmon yn Iâl (50) mainly by searching with a Tilley lamp and at same the time in the following year, Snell took me to the locality and we found four specimens. As I remember, B. B. S. sent two specimens to the British Museum and the others will be in the Lancashire and Cheshire Entomological Society collection at Liverpool; my specimens are in Manchester Museum. The ground was a limestone ridge with poor woodland on the lower slope, a search for larvae on Wood Sanicle *(Sanicula)* in late June 1951 was not sucessful. In 1970, I found a possible larva in the folded edge of a leaf of *Sanicula* in a wood on limestone near Llandudno (49); this fed on *Astrantia major* growing in my garden but later turned flacid and died so I cannot claim this as a record. At an exhibition meeting of the Raven Entomological Society (Formby) in 1952, I saw a specimen exhibited by a Mr. or Dr. Greenwood which was contained in a series of *A. ocellana* taken at Grassington in north-west Yorkshire; this is also a limestone area.

*A. angelicella* (Hubn.) Occurs in wetlands in all vice counties vii - ix. The larvae feed on *Angelica sylvestris* in v - vi and is gregarious when young.

*A. yeatiana* (Fabr.). Occurs sparingly on coasts of 50, 51, 52 and 58 in viii - ix on flowers of *Senecio jacobaea* and *Daucus carota.* The last named is probably the foodplant.

*A. rotundella* (Doug.) A single unconfirmed record from the Lleyn (49) in the 1950s; as the foodplant is *Daucus carota,* this is a likely occurrence.

While the foregoing notes are derived mainly from personal observations, I have taken some records for Cheshire (58) from "The Lepidopterous Fauna of Lancashire and Cheshire" by J. W. Ellis, 1890 revised by William Mansbridge in 1940. There are records prior to 1890 which have not been confirmed since and as these were communicated to Ellis by C. S. Gregson, J. B. Hodgkinson and J. H. Threlfall, all well known northern collectors, I feel these should be included:

*Depressaria chaerophylli* (Zell.); *D. badiella* (Hübn.); *D. pimpinellae* Zell.; *D. albifrontella* Zell., *Agonopterix pallorella* (Zell.); *A. capreolella* (Zell.); *A. purpurea* (Haw.).

Mrs M. J. Morgan has kindly supplied a list of records from North Wales taken from the files in the Department of Applied Zoology, University College of North Wales, Bangor which are included. Additionally there are old records of *Shiffermuelleria*

*grandis* (Des.) from Langollen (50); v, vi 1855, J. S. Ashworth *(Zoologist,* 1855); vii 1860, C. S. Gregson *(Ent. Weekly Intellegencer* 1880); 1862, N. Greening *(Zoologist,* 1862). It is unlikely that this handsome moth associated with rotten wood was mis-identified though the late Wm. Mansbridge in the 1920's searched at Llangollen for moth and larva without success.

# BUTTERFLIES ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD ISLAND

By Dr. C. J. Luckens*

My family and I spent the month of August 1979 on Martha's Vineyard, a small island off the coast of Massachusetts about three miles from the nearest point of the Cape Cod mainland. This island has a land area of approximatly 100 square miles and encompasses diverse habitats including saltmarsh, dune, meadowland, extensive scrub and woodland and a few freshwater bogs. The lepidoptera of Martha's Vineyard and its neighbouring island of Nantucket has been surveyed by F. M. Jones and C. P. Kimball (1943), and they were able to record 1227 species from the former island.

My wife's family have had their home on Martha's Vineyard for many years and this was my second visit to the island, the previous occasion being in 1968. Rather surprisingly during these two short visits I was able to add a butterfly species unrecorded in the Jones and Kimball list. This was the distinctive little skipper *Pholisora catullus* Fab., The Common Cloudywing, which I took once only in 1968 but which appeared to have become quite common 11 years later. A parallel seemed to have occured among the birds – the splendid scarlet and black Cardinal, either rare or absent in 1968, had become in the interim a frequent visitor to my father-in-law's garden just outside Vineyard Haven.

This garden proved to be a harbour for many butterfly species. Between the lawns and the sea was a strip of grass and scrub where wild flowers grew in plenty and around the property were various trees and shrubs such as sassafras and wild cherry, foodplants of several butterflies. The Swallowtails, in particular, were much in evidence, two black species being quite common. One of these, *Papilio troilus* L., was frequent in the larval stage on the aromatic sassafras where the spectacular 'eyed' caterpillars, (superficially like a green version of an Elephant Hawkmoth larva), make 'tents' by turning over the irregular leaves. These dwellings were very easy to spot. In 1968 I had found many of the very similar larvae of *Papilio glaucus* L. on wild cherry but this year failed to find any though I saw several of the magnificent yellow imagines and searched persistently for the early stages.

The commonest Swallowtail was the black *Papilio polyxenes* Fab. Drinking coffee on the veranda before breakfast was especially pleasurable as I could watch the velvety females ovipositing on my father-in-law's carrot plants!

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