

## Moth trapping in the Cévennes

Over the last couple of weeks I've been in the Cévennes National Park, South of France, with a friend from Northern Ireland. We were staying at the Eagle's Nest Field Centre, an English-speaking centre primarily for UK biology and geography field trips. In return for our board and lodgings we had to help with things such as washing up for a couple of hours each day; the rest of our time we were free to do what we liked!



*Eagle's Nest Field Centre*



Two 125w Robinsons traps were at the centre so along with two portable actinic heath traps we had plenty of kit. The centre is at 1314m (same height as Ben Nevis apparently; however the warm climate means a good range of species can still breed there, and of course there is always a good chance of migrant species from the Mediterranean.

We trapped for 11 nights at the centre, most nights operating all four traps. The weather was lovely for the most part. There were some really spectacular storms however – the centre got struck by lightning at one point! On the whole though, I gather we had much better mothing conditions than in the UK.



Rather than go through the whole trip, night by night, I'll just show you the highlights! But first is a list of top 50 commonest moths caught at the centre during our stay – I always find it interesting to compare what's common elsewhere; for example the most numerous species has never been found in the UK!!

1		<i>Lasionycta proxima</i>	766
2	Silvery Arches	<i>Polia trimaculosa</i>	307
3	Scarce Brindle	<i>Apamea lateritia</i>	255
4	Heart and Club	<i>Agrotis clavis</i>	238
5	Shears	<i>Hada plebeja</i>	198
6	Small Elephant Hawk-moth	<i>Deilephila porcellus</i>	194
7		<i>Noctua interposita</i>	178
8	Mottled Rustic	<i>Caradrina morpheus</i>	156
9	Marbled Minor agg.	<i>Oligia sp.</i>	125
10	Brown Rustic	<i>Rusina ferrugina</i>	118
11	Dark Arches	<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	115
12	Bordered Gothic	<i>Heliophobus reticulata</i>	105
13	Shoulder-striped Wainscot	<i>Mythimna comma</i>	102
14	Heart & Dart	<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>	95
15	Peppered Moth	<i>Biston betularia</i>	80
16	Ingrailed Clay	<i>Diarsia mendica</i>	76
17		<i>Chelis maculosa</i>	72
18	Mottled Beauty	<i>Alcis repandata</i>	68
19	Scotch Annulet	<i>Gnophos obfuscata</i>	65
20	Green Arches	<i>Anaplectoides prasina</i>	62
21	Clouded-bordered Brindle	<i>Apamea crenata</i>	58
22	Sprinkled Rustic	<i>Hoplodrina respersa</i>	55
23	Cabbage Moth	<i>Mamestra brassicae</i>	47
24	Feathered Ear	<i>Pachetra sagittigera</i>	44
25	Brimstone	<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	39
26		<i>Elophos sp.</i>	37
27	Small Rivulet	<i>Perizoma alchemillata</i>	37
28		<i>Epirrhoe molluginata</i>	36
29		<i>Dichagyris nigrescens</i>	32
30	Reddish Light Arches	<i>Apamea sublustris</i>	30
31	Brown-line Bright-eye	<i>Mythimna conigera</i>	29
32	Pine-tree Lappet	<i>Dendrolimus pini</i>	28
33	Clancy's Rustic	<i>Platyperigea kadenii</i>	25
34	Large Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	25
35	Grass Wave	<i>Perconia strigillaria</i>	23
36	Grey Arches	<i>Polia nebulosa</i>	23
37	True Lover's Knot	<i>Lycophotia porphyrea</i>	22
38	Pine Carpet	<i>Thera firmata</i>	21
39	Light Brocade	<i>Lacanobia w-latinum</i>	20
40	Double Dart	<i>Graphiphora augur</i>	19
41	Pale-shouldered Brocade	<i>Lacanobia thalassina</i>	17
42	Silver-ground Carpet	<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i>	17
43	Blair's Mocha	<i>Cyclophora puppillaria</i>	16
44	Uncertain	<i>Hoplodrina alsines</i>	16
45	Toadflax Brocade	<i>Calophasia lunula</i>	15
46	Pine Hawk-moth	<i>Hyloicus pinastri</i>	14
47	Double Square Spot	<i>Xestia triangulum</i>	14
48	Spruce Carpet	<i>Thera britannica</i>	14
49	Poplar Hawk-moth	<i>Laothoe populi</i>	14
50	Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua janthe</i>	14

## Highlights



To get the ball rolling is the aptly-named **Beautiful Marbled**. The stunning moth is a very rare migrant to the UK, with the first individual being caught in 2001. We caught just one of this thistle-feeder during the 2 week stay.

Next is the **Beech-green Carpet**, a species that feeds on bedstraw; this moth has a local distribution throughout the UK. This is a species I've not seen before.



**Blair's Mocha** is a rare immigrant (but becoming more common on the South coast) to the UK. This species feeds mainly on Evergreen Oak – none of this grows at the centre so it's likely the 16 individuals we caught were migrants.

The **Black-veined Moth** is a very rare species in the UK (RDB1) and is protected by law. This rather beautiful moth, which resembles a butterfly, was fairly common at the centre. We caught 3 in light traps in the first week of our stay, but was more common by day. Unfortunately I never managed to get a photo of this lovely moth.



We caught over 100 **Bordered Gothic** over the two weeks. This species of dry grassland is a Notable Na species in the UK and is thought to be declining rapidly.



This beautiful tiger moth, *Chelis maculosa*, has no common name and does not occur in the UK. Like many of its UK relatives it has brightly coloured hindwings

**Clancy's Rustic** was first recorded in the UK in 2002, since then it has been an increasingly common migrant to the south coast and is now probably resident. It was a common species at the centre.



This large pug species is a **Cloaked Pug**. The species is rarely recorded in the UK and its status is unclear. A former resident but was thought to have gone extinct. More recent records may be explained by migration.

This is the **Cudweed**, a moth which feeds on various goldenrods and wormwood. This larva requires a warm climate. It is now extinct in the UK.



*Dichagyris nigrescens* is another species of moth that doesn't occur in the UK. It was common at the centre where it would feed on various low-lying plants.



**Dwarf Cream Wave,**  
**Golden Plusia** and  
**Royal Mantle** are  
three rather nice  
species that were new  
for me.







**Dotted Rustic** (left) and **Northern Rustic** are two noctuid species that I hadn't seen before.



This moth is a member of the ***Elophos*** genus; none of which occur in the UK. Unfortunately it can't be named without dissection.

This moth also doesn't occur in the UK, it can however, be named without dissection; it's ***Epirrhoe molluginata***. A moth which feeds on Galium (plentiful at the centre)



The **Feathered Ear** is a grassland species, now extinct in the UK.

A rare vagrant to the UK, **The Feline**, is a close relative of the Puss Moth.



The **Fir Carpet** is a recent addition to the British list, added earlier this year. It's thought to be a migrant to the UK. We caught two at the centre.

This beautiful moth is the **Frosted Yellow**, a broom feeder. but it now thought to be extinct in the UK.



The **Ground Lackey** is a lovely little moth that feeds on a very wide range of plants. It's more restricted in the UK, being found only in saltmarshes and shingle beaches, and is extremely local. It was reasonably common at the centre.





**Galium Carpet** was another new moth for me.

As was **Wood Carpet**. It was nice to see both these species as they're said to be easily overlooked. It was nice to know that I was not overlooking these at my home site as I was able to recognise them both immediately; another example of this was when we caught **Vine's Rustic**.



This is ***Hadena filograna***, another non-UK species; it's a species of grassland which feeds on Nottingham catchfly.



**Isle of Wight Wave** is another fairly small wave species we saw on the trip. It is presumed extinct in the UK.



The **Lace Border** was a moth we saw just once on the trip. In the UK it's a declining Notable Na grassland species.



**Lasionycta proxima**, a non-UK species, was the commonest moth overall at the centre. In the first few nights of trapping, Small Elephant Hawk-moth was actually the commonest species (often 60+ per trap), but they were nearing the end of their flight time and by the end of the trip were not seen in the traps at all.

**Lewes Wave** is a species of grassland areas which is now extinct in the UK. It was found reasonably commonly at the centre.



Just one tired individual was seen of this species, **Light Feathered Rustic**.



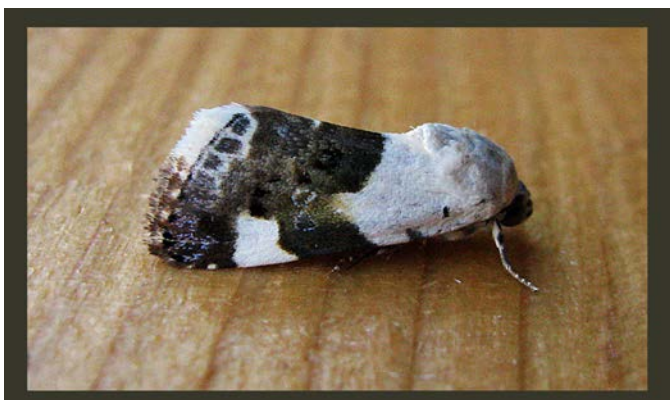
**Lunar Yellow Underwing** was another species present at the centre. Here in the UK it has a rather local distribution



**Noctua interposita** is another yellow underwing species. This is one that doesn't occur in the UK but was very common at the centre.



**Opigena polygona** is a rather pretty species, which is also not found in the UK.



**Pale Shoulder** is the name of this one. This pretty species is a rather rare migrant to the South.



### Patton's Tiger

This is a species of upland areas which was only found in the UK in 2005; since there have been a handful more records.



*Perizoma juracolaria*, a carpet species not found in the UK.

**Pine Hawk-moth** was fairly common at the centre. The impressive moth was unfortunately nearing the end of its flight time when we were there so most individuals were looking a bit worn.



The stunning **Pine-tree Lappet** was also common at the centre.



***Polia serratilinea***, another non-UK species was also present at the centre.



**Portland Riband Wave**, another RDB species in the UK, which is far more common on the continent.

**Radford's Flame Shoulder**, a rather rare migrant to the UK, which is however, probably overlooked.



We also caught this beautiful moth at the centre, a **Saxon**.





**Scarce Bordered Straw** (left) and **White-speck** were two other migrants to the UK which we found at the centre.



**Scarce Brindle** was another common moth at the centre, yet is a very rare migrant to the UK.



**Small Chocolate-tip**

**The Silurian** was also present in good numbers at the centre. A relatively recent addition to the UK list (1972), this is a rare RDB species found in the Welsh mountains.







**Silvery Arches** is a uncommon species of moorland and heathland in the UK and was very common in our traps.

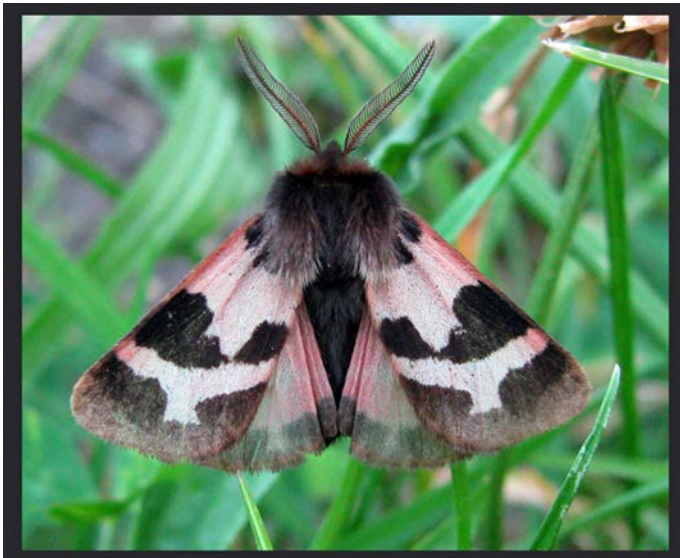
**Sprinkled Rustic** (*H. respersa*) - a species not present in the UK.



**Striped Hawk-moth** was found most nights at the centre; an uncommon migrant species here in the UK.



In the UK, the **Toadflax Brocade**, is a species of shingle beaches, which is becoming very scarce indeed. Several were caught over the two weeks at the centre.



This rather small tiger species is called ***Watsonarctia deserta***. Present in small numbers at the centre.

Another rare species to be found in the Welsh hills is **Weaver's Wave**; which was common at our traps.



**Yellow-ringed Carpet**

**White Colon**, a mainly coastal species in the UK



Over the 11 nights we managed a total of 4710 moths of 205 species (just macros). Not bad at all, especially taking altitude into account, certainly some different stuff from Montgomeryshire!

There were also a few species of day-flyers which were not caught in the traps.



The stunning **Wood Tiger**.

**Ochraceous Wave**, lovely wave species thought to be just a vagrant to the UK, with just a few old records.



As you can see, there are some stunning moths up at the centre. For the next part of the report I move down to the “lowlands” – for just one night we went down the valley to trap at around 600m in hope of catching some different stuff – we weren’t disappointed.





We were staying with a man called Trevor, a semi-retired English geography teacher who had moved to France and bought a lovely cottage and with it vast amounts of woodland. This stunning valley was home to our four traps for the night.



The night was very warm but also very windy, it didn't seem to put off the moths too much though; 96 species (just macro) of 849 moths.

The most common were:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Quantity
Sprinkled Rustic (non-UK)	<i>Hoplodrina respersa</i>	167
Riband Wave	<i>Idaea aversata</i>	87
Clay Fan-foot	<i>Paracolax tristalis</i>	85
Jubilee Fan-foot	<i>Zanclognatha lunalis</i>	81
Scarce Footman sp.*	<i>Eilema complana</i> sp.	53
Purple-banded Wave (non-UK)	<i>Idaea ostrinaria</i>	40
Lackey	<i>Malacosoma neustria</i>	27
Nycteoline sp.	<i>Nycteola</i> sp.	21
	<i>Tephronia sepiaria</i>	19
Four-spotted Footman	<i>Lithosia quadra</i>	14
Uncertain	<i>Hoplodrina alsines</i>	14
Pine Processionary	<i>Thaumetopoea pityocampa</i>	13
Mottled Rustic	<i>Caradrina morpheus</i>	12
	<i>Catocala nymphagoga</i>	9
Small Purple-barred	<i>Phytometra viridaria</i>	8
Horse Chestnut	<i>Pachycnemia hippocastanaria</i>	8
Oak Hook-tip	<i>Watsonalla binaria</i>	8
Leopard Moth	<i>Zeuzera pyrina</i>	8
Large Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	8
Black Arches	<i>Lymantria monacha</i>	7
	<i>Catocala nymphaea</i>	7
Dwarf Cream Wave	<i>Idaea fuscovenosa</i>	7
The Latin	<i>Callopietria juvenina</i>	6
Pale Shoulder	<i>Acontia lucida</i>	6
Common Emerald	<i>Hemithea aestivaria</i>	6
Clancy's Rustic	<i>Platyperigea kadenii</i>	6
	<i>Idaea moniliata</i>	5
Willow Beauty	<i>Peribatodes rhomboidaria</i>	5
Dingy Footman	<i>Eilema griseola</i>	5
Blair's Mocha	<i>Cyclophora puppillaria</i>	5
Powdered Rustic	<i>Hoplodrina superstes</i>	5
	<i>Platyperigea aspersa</i>	5
The Handmaid	<i>Dysauxes ancilla</i>	4
Guernsey Underwing	<i>Polyphaenis sericata</i>	4
	<i>Mythimna sicula</i>	4
Muslin Footman	<i>Nudaria mundana</i>	4
	<i>Rhodostrophia calabra</i>	4

\* - due to lots of confusion species any footman appearing to be Scarce were recorded as 'Scarce Footman sp.'



## Highlights

**The Alchymist**, a rare migrant to the UK. This rather dull moth flashes bright white hindwings when disturbed.



**Ascotis selenaria**; this rather large and pretty moth is not found in the UK.

This rather smart moth, the **Bordered Straw**, is a migrant species.







Next up is a **Bright Wave**, another RDB species here in the UK. We caught two in the traps and saw a third by day.

We recorded two species of *Catocala*, neither of them being found in the UK. These are impressive moths in the same genus as the red underwings.

*Catocala nymphaea*



*Catocala nymphagoga*



We caught two species of fan-foot also; **Clay Fan-foot** and **Jubilee Fan-foot**; the former a RDB resident in the UK and the latter a very rare vagrant.







*Eupithecia breviculata*  
was a rather pretty pug  
species we caught.

We caught one example of **The Festoon**. Here in the UK it's a local species confined to mature woodland in the south of England.



The beautiful female **Four-spotted Footman**.



And the equally lovely **Rosy Footman**.



**Guernsey Underwing** is another species with brightly coloured hindwings. This is also a species which is yet to be recorded on mainland Britain.



This next one is **The Handmaid**. A rather interesting moth of the Ctenuchidae family, its status in the UK is unknown with just one unconfirmed record in 1876.



The rather oddly named **Horse Chestnut** is next, a heathland species in the UK which feeds on heather.

Here are three, non-UK, wave species we caught:



**Idaea moniliata**

**Idaea sericeata**



**Idaea politaria**





***Idia calvaria***, an interesting noctuid moth we caught.



**The Lackey** is another lovely moth we caught.

**The Latin** was one of my favourite moths of the trip. We caught several of this furry species. In the UK it's a vagrant with only three records.



**Leopard Moth**, another of my favourites; not a moth I see very often and never at home.



**Marbled Clover** was another nice one in the traps; a very rare resident and occasional migrant in the UK.



***Mythimna sicula***, a small wainscot is not found in the UK.

This moth looked very old fashioned to me, with the rather drab colours. It's an **Olive Crescent**, a very rare woodland species in the UK.



Although we didn't record micro moths this stunning ***Palpita vitrealis*** caught our attention.



**The Passenger** was another lovely moth we caught. This large species is a rare vagrant to the UK.



**Pine Processionary**, one of moths which always seems to be worn. Famous for its 'follow-the-leader' caterpillars, this species is a rare vagrant in the UK.

***Platyperigea aspersa*** is another species of southern Europe.



**Powdered Rustic** is yet another of these 'rustic species' we caught. This one has been recorded in the UK, but only on four occasions.



**Purple-banded Wave**  
(*I. ostrinaria*) - a very lovely non-UK wave species found in southern Europe.



***Rhodostrophia calabra*** – another lovely moth, which shares the same colour scheme of the above species.

**Scarce Dagger** is another species now thought to be extinct in the UK. Just this one battered individual turned up at our traps.

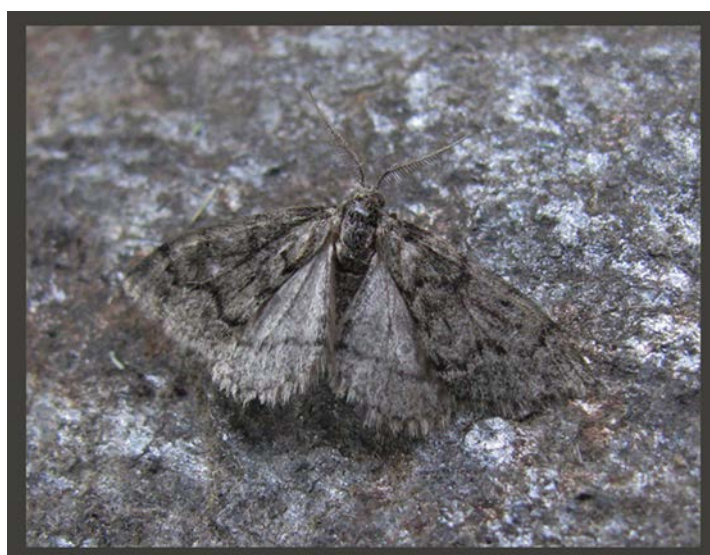






**Small Purple Barred**, a common but lovely little species,

And last, but not least, is **Dusky Carpet**. Just one British record, from South Wales, of this small carpet moth which feeds on lichen.



And that's just about it; as you can I've seen some really special species which I have no chance of seeing in the UK. I've certainly expanded my knowledge of European species. Even though it was only for a couple of weeks in two locations there was a good range of moths present; species that in the UK are only found up mountains, on shingle beaches, on dry grassland, around salt marches, in ancient woodland, or on heathland were all present on one site – quite amazing.

Douglas.