

# The **Bulletin**



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## Moth Recording in Tarn-et-Garonne, south-west France

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### Introduction

*Bulletin* Number 448 contained a short piece (since repeated) which caught my attention, from member Jenny Boncey. Jenny is involved in renovating a traditional-style farmhouse in the département of Tarn-et-Garonne in southwest France and was making an offer which I wasn't able to refuse – free accommodation in return for a survey of insects. Because my wife and I were away visiting our son in France at the time of publication, I didn't read the article until half way through July. However, two quick e-mails later and it was all arranged – another trip to France in the second half of September to do a moth survey (plus a second visit to see our new grand daughter!)

### The Site

The farm of Barrau is part of the tiny hamlet of Haumont, about an hour's drive northwest of Toulouse, though we took the three day route from South Yorkshire.

The farmhouse stands in its own plot of about 16 acres and has a small out-building nearby, totally rebuilt and equipped to provide holiday accommodation for two (fairly friendly!) people.

The land itself falls into several different areas:-

- The highest part is a sizable flat meadow area, with many herbs, featuring Viper's Bugloss.
- In a secluded corner of this meadow is a very large pond, sadly reduced by the drought of 2003 to an area about the size of our dining table and amply provided with my least favourite French starter – edible frogs!
- There is a second meadow area, falling steeply away into a valley with cultivated fields beyond. Both meadows seem relatively unimproved, but are in need of a grazing or mowing regime.
- There are two large areas of mature oak woodland, both on steep slopes, separated by a 3 or 4 metre wide grassy lane.
- This lane divides at the foot of the slope, to continue around the base of each area of woodland. The lanes provide opportunities for woodland edge shrubs and more herbaceous plants.



- In the centre of the property, between top-meadow and woodland, is the house, with flower and herb gardens around. The guest bungalow faces the front of the farmhouse, but the back door opens on to a small sitting area at the edge of one of the woods.

### Equipment

With just two people in an estate car, there was no shortage of space, so I took along most of the gear I would normally use at home, consisting of:-

- A selection of tubes, jars and nets.
- My portable Honda 2 stroke generator, with sheet, 160watt mercury-tungsten blended lamp and fisherman's rod-rest.
- Home built light trap using 125watt mercury vapour lamp in a Robinson style funnel, mounted in a large cardboard (for lightness) computer monitor box with plywood lid, measuring 50 x 40 x 50 cm approx.
- A small collection of reference books – see References.
- Boots, torches and folding seats.
- A pot of homemade sugaring mixture.
- Hand lenses and new digital camera.

### Methods

Despite the very hot days and lateness of the visit (we arrived on the 16th of September), nighttime temperatures held up very well. We were easily able to sit around the portable light in the evenings wearing only shorts and T-shirts. Daytime temperatures were generally too high for us to venture out for long in full sun.

Every evening, except the last, for the six nights of our stay we set up the portable lighting equipment in a different part of the property and sat around recording for around three hours. Separate species lists were compiled in this way for the pond side, top-meadow, steep woodland near the house and foot of the steep lane.

For our final working night, Jenny had invited some of her friends to come and join us mothing and to stay overnight to open the trap in the morning. We selected a spot half way down the steep lane where there was room for all 10 of us to gather round the sheet, and this provided us with a list from another different site.



Each night, the static trap was switched on at dusk, before setting off with portable gear, and turned off again around 7.30 the following morning, the catch generally being examined straight away. On the first night, the trap was placed at the full extent of its cable from the bungalow, just reaching into the adjacent woodland. By the second night, an extension cable had been found enabling us to re-site the trap slightly further away, just on the edge of this woodland, further up at a flatter site where it was much easier to examine. Thus, over the six nights, two more species lists were compiled from these two areas.

During the daytime, an occasional watch was kept on the flowers and herbs, revealing a list of 8 butterflies and several day-flying moths, most numerous of which (by far) was Scarce Bordered Straw.

I also managed to try out the sugaring mixture on a couple of occasions, but as so often happens with sugaring, it proved to be singularly ineffective; and there was little incentive to persevere since light trap catches were so good.

At home I usually use a tea chest as a catching box and find this better than a Robinson trap because of the greater space inside. In France, I found the computer monitor box performed even better, with plenty of room for egg boxes. Luckily, there was no rain and very little wind, which could have been difficult with a cardboard box.

## Results

Late September proved to be an interesting time to be in southern France, since many larger insects had reached maturity and were still around. Notable and generally easily recognisable non-moth species recorded included European Swallowtail, Painted Lady, White Admiral, Long-tailed Blue, Mallow Skipper *Carcharodus alceae*, several different bush crickets, bloody-nosed beetle, sexton beetle, the weevil *Curculio elephas*, potter wasp, hornets and the hornet-mimic hoverfly *Milesia crabroniformis*, various bugs including the fire bug *Pyrrhocorus apterus* and the striped shield bug *Graphosoma italicum*, the spider *Argiope bruennichi* and good numbers of praying mantids. These latter were all females, prompting me to wonder if mating had already taken place and the males been devoured!

Separate moth lists were compiled for each site where recording took place during the week, but naturally enough, there was a very large over-lap of species between the different sub-sites, and only the final composite list is published here.



## MOTHS RECORDED AT HAUMONTY TARN-ET-GARONNE FRANCE September 16th to 21st 2003

Scientific Name	English Name	French Name	Nos	Status (in Britain)	Larval Foodplants / other comments
Family 15 <i>Heptialus sylvina</i>	Hepialidae Orange Swift		9	common	roots
Family 286 <i>Caloptilia alchimieella</i>	Gracillariidae		1		oak
Family 460 <i>Ypsolopha parentbesella</i>	Yponomeutidae		1	common	oak
Family 658 <i>Carcina quercana</i>	Decaphronidae		5	common	oak
Family 937 <i>Agapeta hamana</i> 993 <i>Clepsis pallidana</i> 1036 <i>Acleris forsskalana</i> 1259 <i>Cydia foggiandana</i> 1260 <i>Cydia splendana</i>	Tortricidae (French sp. - false number)		1 3 3 >20	common common common common	thistles, roots mugwort, golden rod etc. sycamore beech, oak oak
Family 1306 <i>Agripita inquitatella</i> 1327 <i>Arcytolomia tentaculella</i> 1356 <i>Evergestia forficalis</i> 1359 <i>Cynaedea dentalis</i> 1360 <i>Helitula undalis</i> 1362 <i>Pyrausta purpuralis</i> 1364 <i>Pyrausta sanguinalis</i> 1365 <i>Pyrausta cespitalis-despicata</i> 1368 <i>Margarita stercoralis</i> 1375 <i>Ostrinia nubilalis</i> 1395 <i>Udea ferrugalis</i> 1397 <i>Mecyna asnalis</i> 1398 <i>Nomophila noctuella</i> 1399 <i>Dolicharthria punctalis</i>	Pyralidae (A Grass Moth)  (Garden Pebble)		>10 2 1 1 1 4 1 2 5 2 2 3 5 >20	common rare immigrant common local in south v. rare immigrant widespread but local very local widespread rare immigrant immigrant, res in SE immigrant coastal in south-west immigrant coastal in south-west	grasses grasses crucifers viper's bugloss (only one British record) mint, thyme thyme plantain mugwort mugwort herbaceous plants wild madder clover, knoit grass herbaceous plants

Scientific Name	English Name	French Name	Nos	Status (in Britain)	Larval Foodplants / other comments
1400 <i>Antigasira catalaunalis</i>			1	rare immigrant	Southern European & tropical
1405 <i>Pleuropterya ruralis</i>			3	common	nettles
1408 <i>Palpita unitorialis</i>			1	rare immigrant	jasmine, olive
1424 <i>Endotricha flammalis</i>			1	common in south	trefoils, decaying leaves
1441 <i>Oncocera semirubella</i>			>10	common in south	trefoils, clovers
1451 <i>Etiella zinckenella</i>	(1451a)		2	rare immigrant	
1452 <i>Phycita roborella</i>			1	common	mainly oak
1481 <i>Homoeosoma sinuella</i>			2	common in south	plantain - in rootstock
<b>Family</b>					
1632 <i>Trichnura crataegi</i>	<u>Lasiocampidae</u> Pale Eggar	le bombyx de l'aubépine	1	common	birch, hawthorn, blackthorn etc.
<b>Family</b>					
1646 <i>Drepania binaria</i>	<u>Drepanidae</u> Oak Hook-tip	le haneçon	4	common in south	oak, perhaps birch
1651 <i>Chlix glaucata</i>	Chinese Character	la petite-épine	1	common	hawthorn, blackthorn etc.
<b>Family</b>					
1678 <i>Cyclophora pupillaria</i>	<u>Geometridae</u> Blair's Mocha	la timandre aimée	1	mainly immigrant	oak
1682 <i>Timandra griseata</i>	Blood-vein		3	common	dock, sorrel, knoigrass etc.
1690 <i>Scopula imitaria</i>	Small Blood-vein		1	common in south	privet, honeysuckle
1699 <i>Idaesa vulpinaria</i>	Least Carpet	la phalène rustique	1	local in south	ivy, clematis
1702 <i>Idaesa biselata</i>	Small Fan-footed Wave	la truite	1	common	dandelion, plantain etc.
1707 <i>Idaesa seriata</i>	Small Dusty Wave		1	common	dandelion, dock - on withered leaves
1708 <i>Idaesa dimidiata</i>	Single-dotted Wave	la phalène écussonnée	1	common	herbaceous plants - withered leaves
1713 <i>Idaesa aversata</i>	Riband Wave	l'impolte	5	common	low herbaceous plants
1714 <i>Idaesa degeneraria</i>	Portland Ribbon Wave		1	RDB	bramble, clematis, blackthorn etc.
1715 <i>Idaesa shraminata</i>	Plain Wave		1	local	dandelion, knoigrass, sallow
1716 <i>Rhodometra sacrararia</i>	Vestal		>20	immigrant	knograss etc.
1717 <i>Lybrija purpuraria</i>	Purple-barred Yellow		2	widespread in France	doubtfully British, no C20th records



Scientific Name	English Name	French Name	Nos	Status (in Britain)	Larval Foodplants / other comments
1728 <i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i>	Garden Carpet	la phalène ondée	1	common	crucifers
1738 <i>Epirrhoe alternata</i>	Common Carpet	l'alternée	1	common	bedstraw
1742 <i>Camptogramma bilineata</i>	Yellow Shell	la brocaille d'or	1	common	bedstraw, dandelion, dock etc.
1770 <i>Thera vestitata</i>	(French sp. - false number)		1		
1825 <i>Eupithecia centaureata</i>	Lime-speck Pug		2	common	flowers of low-growing plants
1862 <i>Gymnoscelus rufifasciata</i>	Double-striped Pug		1	common	flowers of low-growing plants
1875 <i>Asthenia albulata</i>	Small White Wave		3	common	hazel, birch, rose
1888 <i>Stegania trimaculata</i>	Dorset Cream Wave(1888a)		2	rare immigrant	poplar
1894 <i>Chiasmia clathrata</i>	Latticeed Heath	la géomètre à barreaux	1	common	clovers, trefoils
1906 <i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	Brimstone Moth	la citronnelle rouillée	4	common	blackthorn, hawthorn etc.
1921 <i>Crocallis elinguaris</i>	Scalloped Oak	la phalène de la mancienne	2	common	blackthorn, hawthorn, birch, oak etc.
1936 <i>Menophra abruptaria</i>	Waved Umber	la boarmie pétrifiée	1	common in south	privet, ash, birch
1937 <i>Peribatodes rhomboidaria</i>	Willow Beauty	la boarmie rhomboidale	>10	common	many deciduous trees
1937b <i>Peribatodes ilicaria</i>	Lydd Beauty		1	rare immigrant	many deciduous trees
1945 <i>Cleorodes lichenaria</i>	Brussels Lace	la boarmie des lichens	1	local in west	lichens on stems & rocks
1947 <i>Ectropis crepuscularia</i>	Engrailed	la boarmie crépusculaire	0	common	many deciduous trees
1968 <i>Aspitates ochrearia</i>	Yellow Belle	l'aspilate ochracée	>20	local in south	low plants, inc clover & trefoil
Family	<b>Sphingidae</b>				
1972 <i>Agris consobolus</i>	Convolutus Hawkmoth	le sphinx du liseron	1	immigrant	bindweed
Family	<b>Notodontidae</b>				
2004 <i>Harpyia milhauseri</i>	Tawny Prominent	le dragon	1	rare immigrant	oak
Family	<b>Lymnephidae</b>				
2026 <i>Vapourer</i>	<i>Orgyia antiqua</i>	l'étoilé		common	many deciduous trees, day flying
Family	<b>Arctiidae</b>				
2037 <i>Mitocrista miniata</i>	Rosy Footman	la rosette	>10	local in south	lichens on stems
2040 <i>Pelostia muscerda</i>	Dotted Footman	la lithosie muscerda	3	RDB	lichens on stems



Scientific Name	English Name	French Name	Nos	Status (in Britain)	Larval Foodplants / other comments
2045 <i>Eilema caniola</i>	Hoary Footman	le manteau pâle	>20	Nb (in south-west)	lichens on rocks
2050 <i>Eilema lurideola</i>	Common Footman	la lithoste complanule	1	common	lichens on stems & rocks
2056 <i>Cymbalophora pudica</i>	(French sp. - false number)	l'écaille tesselée	>20	Mediterranean	various low plants & grasses
<b>Family</b>					
2087 <i>Agrotis segetum</i>	Noctuidae Turnip Moth	la moissonneuse	3	common	roots & lower shoots of herbs
2091 <i>Agrotis ipsilon</i>	Dark Sword Grass	la noctuelle baignée	2	immigrant	roots & lower shoots of herbs
2097a <i>Actinotia hyperici</i>	Pale-shouldered Cloud	le hibou	2	rare immigrant	st john's-wort
2107 <i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	la suivante	>10	common	many herbaceous plants
2109 <i>Noctua comes</i>	Lesser Yellow Underwing	la suivante	5	common	many herbaceous plants
2110 <i>Noctua fimbriata</i>	Broad-bordered YU	la frangée	1	common	many herbaceous plants
2111 <i>Noctua janthe</i>	Lesser Broad-bordered YU		6	common	many herbaceous plants
2112 <i>Noctua interjecta</i>	Least Yellow Underwing		2	common in south	many herbaceous plants
2117 <i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i>	Autumnal Rustic		1	common	low plants, birch, willow
2120 <i>Diatris mendica</i>	Ingrailed Clay	le C noir	1	common	many trees, shrubs & herbs
2126 <i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>	Setaceous Hebrew Character		7	common	many herbaceous plants
2134 <i>Xestia xanthographa</i>	Square-spot Rustic	la noctuelle du trèfle	1	common	mainly grasses
2145 <i>Dicentra trifolii</i>	Nutmeg		2	common	various herbaceous plants
2147 <i>Hada nana</i>	Shears	la potagère	2	common	various herbaceous plants
2160 <i>Lacanobia oleracea</i>	Bright-line Brown-eye		1	common	various herbaceous plants
2177 <i>Toxera cespitis</i>	Hedge Rustic		1	common	grasses
2193 <i>Mythimna ferrago</i>	Clay		2	common	grasses
2194 <i>Mythimna albipuncta</i>	White-point		5	immigrant: recent colonist	grasses
2198 <i>Mythimna impura</i>	Smoky Wainscot		2	common	grasses
2202 <i>Mythimna l-albium</i>	L-album Wainscot		1	Nb immigrant in south	grasses, esp marram
2224 <i>Catophasia platyptera</i>	Antirrhinum brocade		2	suspected rare immigrant (one C19th specimen only)	
2261 <i>Contsrta erythrocephala</i>	Red-headed Chestnut	l'hyacinthe	1	rare immigrant, transitory resident	
2265 <i>Agrochola belvola</i>	Floenced Chestnut	la dorée	1	common	many deciduous trees
2289 <i>Acrionicta ruiticis</i>	Knot Grass		1	common	herbaceous & woody plants
2297 <i>Amphipyra pyramidea</i>	Copper Underwing	la pyramide	1	common in south	many deciduous trees





Scientific Name	English Name	French Name	Nos	Status (in Britain)	Larval Foodplants / other comments
2298 <i>Amblypyra berbera</i>	Svensson's Copper U-wing	la pyramide berbère	2	common in south	many deciduous trees
2303 <i>Thalpopbila matura</i>	Straw Underwing	la cythérée	>20	common in south	grasses
2343 <i>Mesapamea secalis/dityma</i>	Common Rustic species	l'hieroglyphe	4	common	grasses
2353 <i>Luperina testacea</i>	Flounced Rustic	l'avare	8	common	roots & lower shoots of grasses
2355 <i>Luperina dumerilii</i>	Dumeril's Rustic		2	immigrant	roots & lower shoots of grasses
2380 <i>Sesamia</i> sp.	(French sp. - false number)	(S. nonagrioides/cretica)	5		
2384 <i>Hoplodrina ambigua</i>	Vine's Rustic		5	common in south	many herbaceous plants
2385 <i>Spodoptera exiguata</i>	Small Mottled Willow		>20	immigrant	many herbaceous plants
2389 <i>Caradrina clauipalpis</i>	Pale Mottled Willow	la noctuelle des jachères	5	immigrant, common	seeds of grass, plantain & peas
2400 <i>Helicoverpa armigera</i>	Scarce Bordered Straw	l'armigère	10	immigrant	geranium, yellow-rattle etc. etc.
2403 <i>Heliothis pelligera</i>	Bordered Straw	la pelligère	2	immigrant	restharrow, groundsel, marigolds
2407 <i>Eublemmia purpurina</i>	(French sp. - false number)		2	common in France	thistles
2414 <i>Emmelia irabealis</i>	Spotted Sulphur	l'arlequinette jaune	1	presumed extinct	field bindweed
2421 <i>Bena prasiniana</i>	Scarce Silver Lines	la halias du chêne	1	local in south	oak, perhaps birch
2423 <i>Nyctea revoyana</i>	Oak Nyctoline	la noctuelle de revay	1	local	oak
2428 <i>Chrysoideixis chalcites</i>	Golden Twin-spot		1	immigrant, import	sage, viper's-bugloss, chrysanthis
2441 <i>Autographa gamma</i>	Silver Y	le lambda	2	immigrant	many herbaceous plants
2453 <i>Catocala elocata</i> (2453a)	French Red Underwing	la déplacée	1	rare immigrant - Jersey	
2460 <i>Dysgonia algiva</i>	Passenger		4	immigrant	many herbaceous plants & trees
2463 <i>Aedia leucomelas</i>	(French sp. - false number)		>20	mediterranean	
2465 <i>Tyta luctuosa</i>	Four-spotted	la funèbre	1	Na suspect immigrant	field bindweed
2477 <i>Hypena proboscidalis</i>	Snout	la noctuelle à museau	1	common	nettle
2489 <i>Zanclognatha tarsipennalis</i>	Fan-foot		1	common	withered leaves of oak, beech etc.



It was noticeable how few genuinely autumnal species were recorded, and how few micros were about; in the end I built up a fair list of pyralids; but tortricids were distinctly scarce and smaller things almost non-existent. Perhaps they were just hard to spot amongst the sometimes overwhelming numbers of larger species!

Likewise, only one hawk moth was seen during the whole stay, this being a *Convolvulus* Hawk found at rest, close to the static trap on the final morning of operation. It was a fitting end to the week, and a spectacular moth for the other visitors to see, but we wondered where all the other hawks were – there was no shortage of Humming-bird Hawks the following week at our son's house near Grenoble!

I have recorded moths in France on quite a number of visits over about the last 12 years, and although this was actually the furthest south-west I have ventured, it confirmed my impression that most of the species encountered are actually on the British list, though some have only very occasionally or doubtfully been recorded here. On this visit, only six of the 119 species recorded could not be located in the usual British identification guides, and these 'French' species have been allocated false numbers in the accompanying list to allow them to be placed accurately alongside their British relatives.

Also in the list, I have shown the French vernacular names given in Leraut, the status of species in Britain and some comments on habitats and food-plants, which were readily available in the literature. The 'Nos' column gives an indication of the maximum numbers seen on any one occasion during the week, with five being generally an approximate number and >10 and >20 being used when accurate counting was judged to be unnecessary.

## Conclusion

Jenny had already been visited by some 'butterfly people' who had recorded moths during Summer 2002. Their results, combined with mine, will surely give a total moth list of well over 200 species, which might be of interest in a future bulletin. There is huge scope, though, for the recording of other orders, and for work to be done on botany/food-plants and habitat management. Any specialists wondering where to spend a week's holiday should consider making contact with Jenny.

## Acknowledgements

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identification of the small number of specimens which had to be retained.

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## Some Butterflies on the Balearic Islands in June

by David Newman (8968)

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I am a decidedly amateur amateur entomologist! All wildlife fascinates me but my special joy is butterflies. Although I do survey some sites on a more-a-less regular basis and do try to stick to a fixed survey route, I cannot put my hand on my heart and say that I have ever walked a transect, except by accident. I get great enjoyment from observing and recording the wildlife in my own garden but otherwise I am a bit of an opportunist. My greatest pleasure is to stumble upon butterflies where other people might not deign to look.

Our annual family holiday, which now includes my little grandson and his parents, generally consists of a week in self-catering accommodation somewhere sunny. The aim is to enjoy as much of the outdoors as possible and to "eat out" at every available opportunity. The Balearic Islands of Ibiza and Menorca seemed to offer just what we look for – a short flight and easy access by hire car to a variety of seaside locations. Both islands can be traversed from end to end in a couple of hours.

On holiday we typically head off to a suitable looking beach and, having settled the family down to the serious business of making sand castles, swimming etc., "grandpa" forays forth into the adjacent environs to meet the local butterfly residents. This means that most sites I investigate are coastal. Occasionally the whole family will join me on an inland butterfly safari, much to my delight.