

**ARGYRESTHIA TRIFASCIATA STDGR., 1871 (LEP.: YPONOMEUTIDAE)
NEW TO HERTFORDSHIRE (VC 20) AND SOUTH ESSEX (VC 18), WITH
FURTHER RECORDS FROM LONDON (VC 17, 21) AND WITH A
SUMMARY OF ITS BRITISH DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS**

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TWO MALES OF *Argyresthia trifasciata* Staudinger presented themselves at CWP's garden light trap in Bishops Stortford, at around 11 pm on 15 May 2000. This constitutes the first record of the moth for Hertfordshire (VC 20). A stand of mature *Cupressocyparis leylandii* trees was a mere three metres from where the trap was situated. A few days later, Brian Elliott, in a telephone conversation with Dennis O'Keefe (pers. comm.), also recorded the species presence in Hertfordshire, stating that the moth was present "in dozens" around a coniferous shrub in his daughter-in-law's garden in Letchworth. There were also signs of feeding, i.e. brown tips to the plant shoots.

On the night of 19 May 1999 MRH, who runs a light trap in the grounds of The Natural History Museum, London, found, among the 19 species of Lepidoptera trapped that night, a single specimen of an unrecognised *Argyresthia* species. The specimen was retained and was later identified, using the plates in Emmet (1996: pl. 10, fig. 8) and from a comparison of the specimen with others in the Museum's British collection, as *Argyresthia trifasciata*. Subsequent research has shown that the specimen is the second record of this species for Middlesex (VC 21). A further specimen was taken at the same locality on 12 May 2000.

On the morning of 7 May 2000 GM found in his garden m.v. trap at Plaistow, South Essex (VC 18), a specimen of an unrecognised *Argyresthia* species. It was later shown to MRH who was able to identify it immediately as *Argyresthia trifasciata*. This specimen constitutes the first record for VC 18, further specimens were taken in the same location on 14 May and 19 June.

This small and rather attractive moth which, when at rest in a moth trap, may perhaps be overlooked by the inexperienced Lepidopterist as a peculiar *Phyllonorycter* species, is evidently becoming widespread in Britain and, since its first appearance at Ray Softly's balcony trap in Hampstead, north London, has spread (or been spread) as far north as Aberdeen. Whilst its origins and the cause of its spread may remain open to discussion, it would seem sensible to pull together, at this relatively early stage, all the available records of the species into a single summary, so that future researchers may be able to locate the early records rather more easily.

After the publication of the original article adding *A. trifasciata* to the British list (Emmet, 1982), 15 years elapsed before the second specimen was discovered in Heald Green, Greater Manchester (VC 58) (Shaw, 1999). Since then there have been reports of numerous further examples from a total of 14 separate vice-counties. The following summary is an attempt to list, in chronological order, all known British records of

Argyresthia trifasciata, though there will almost certainly be additional records of which we are unaware. Some of these records are previously unpublished and we are grateful for the permission to publish them, and some were found from web sites as indicated. This highlights the problems of recording in general and of publishing records in particular.

Hampstead, Middlesex (VC 21), [3] June 1982, R. A. Softly (first British record. Reported by Emmet, 1982).

Heald Green, Cheadle, Greater Manchester, Cheshire (VC 58), 19 June 1997, (Shaw, 1999: 74). The record for Stockport, 19 June 1997, attributed to B. T. Shaw, and incorrectly given as relating to VC 57 in the Microlepidoptera review of 1997 (Langmaid & Young, 1999a: 109), but corrected later (Langmaid & Young 1999b: 258), refers to this example.

Farnborough, North Hampshire (VC 12), 20 May 1998 [and one earlier in May that escaped and so is unverified] (Parfitt, 1999; Langmaid & Young, 1999b: 252).

Raynes Park, Surrey (VC 17), 20 and 23 May 1998, four examples (Parsons, 2000) – also reported by Langmaid & Young, 1999b: 252, and exhibited at the 1998 Annual Exhibition of the British Entomological and Natural History Society.

Castlegate, Prestbury, Cheshire (VC 58), two on 18 May 1999 and nine more on subsequent nights. A hedge of “*Leylandii*” surrounds the garden (Poynton, 1999).

Raynes Park, Surrey (VC 17), 28.v.1998 (M. Parsons, pers. comm.).

The Natural History Museum Wildlife Garden, South Kensington, Middlesex (VC 21), 19 May 1999, M. R. Honey (mentioned in Paston, 1999).

Colchester, North Essex (VC 19), 26 May 1999 (Goodey, 2000; Langmaid & Young, 2000: 194).

Norwich, East Norfolk (VC 27), 28 May 1999 (Paston, 1999; Langmaid & Young, 2000: 194).

Bucksburn, Aberdeen (VC 92), 3 June 1999, at rest on *Cupressocyparis leylandii* (Palmer, 1999; Langmaid & Young, 2000: 194).

Northampton (VC 32), 3 June 1999, G. Boyd (Langmaid & Young, 2000: 194).

Chessington, Surrey (VC 17) [two specimens, undated 1999] (Porter, 2000).

Plaistow, South Essex (VC 18) 6 May 2000, G. Martin (here reported).

Raynes Park, Surrey (V. C.) 6/7.v.2000 (Mark Parsons, pers. comm.).

Petts Wood, West Kent (VC 16), 8 May 2000, D. O'Keeffe (pers. comm. to MRH, unpublished record held by John Langmaid).

South Kensington, Middlesex (VC 21) on 12 May 2000 a further specimen, M. R. Honey (here reported).

Castlegate, Prestbury, Cheshire (VC 58), one in the Rothamsted Insect Survey light trap in the week ending 14 May 2000 (S. Palmer, pers. comm.).

Plaistow, South Essex (VC 18) 14 May 2000, G. Martin (here reported)

Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire (VC 20), 15 May 2000, two males, C. W. Plant (here reported)

Buckhurst Hill, South Essex (VC 18), 20 May 2000, G. Beccaloni (det. GM, here reported)

Letchworth, Hertfordshire (VC 20) 22 May [2000?] (Brian Elliott pers. comm. via D. O'Keefe to MRH "in dozens around a coniferous shrub in his daughter in law's garden where there are also signs of feeding (brown tips)").

Flixton, Greater Manchester (VC 59) 12 & 14 May 2000 singletons at mv light by Kevin McCabe (Ian Kimber pers. comm.; Stephen Palmer, microlepidoptera recorder for Lancashire, pers. comm.; and Lancashire Moth Group Newsletter, Nov. 2000).

Buckhurst Hill, Essex (VC 18), 13 June 2000, G. Beccaloni (det. GM, here reported).

Littleborough, Lancashire (VC 59), 16th June 2000 (Ian Kimber pers. comm.). This specimen is illustrated in colour on Ian's web site (UKmoths) (URL <http://www.ukmoths.force9.co.uk>) a second individual was caught two nights later (18 June 2000).

Plaistow, Essex (VC 18) 19 June 2000, G. Martin (here reported).

Walberton, W. Sussex (VC 13) 2000 (no date available), John Radford (pers. comm. via Mark Parsons to MRH).

Undated record

Eakring & Kersall district, Nottinghamshire (VC56) (no date available) from: <http://www.eakring99.freemove.co.uk/MOTH%20LIST.htm>

The distribution of these records is presented in Figure 1.

Many of the specimens recorded to date have been collected from gardens or primarily urban locations and are thought to be specimens emerging from recently introduced, infested plants. The disjunct distribution, involving no fewer than 14 vice-counties, is mainly centred in the southern half of Britain and especially around the Greater London area, with the most surprising record being from Aberdeen. This would also suggest a species that is being transported artificially, perhaps on *C. leylandii* plants from garden centres, rather than one which is spreading naturally after either unaided arrival or accidental introduction. Obtaining proof of such introductions is often difficult. The first specimen of *trifasciata* from The Natural History Museum garden in May 1999 was quite unexpected and initially thought unlikely to have been a recent introduction as most of the juniper in the garden had been planted in a chalk

Alford (1991), in his book on pests of ornamental trees and shrubs, gives details of the life history, damage (figured) and control measures. The written description he gives of the adult "fore wings blackish, each marked with whitish crosslines" is erroneous and no doubt based on the photograph reproduced as a half-tone illustration in Emmet (1982), rather than the accurate description given there "fore-wings glossy golden". Sokoloff (1992) also discusses briefly its pest status in the Netherlands and cites damage to *Chamaecyparis*, *Cupressocyparis* and *Thuja*, as well as to *Juniperus*.

After publication of a paper (Agassiz & Tuck, 1999), in which another *Cupressus* feeding *Argyresthia* species was added to the British fauna, (*A. cupressella* Wals.), we became aware that there is a legal requirement, under Article 20 of the Plant Health (Great Britain) Order 1993, to notify the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF) of pests/potential pest insects (i.e. "any plant pest which is of a description specified in Schedule 6, or which is not normally present in Great Britain"). The occurrence of *Argyresthia trifasciata* was mentioned to Justine Clark of the Invertebrate Identification Team, Central Science Laboratory, and she has since informed the Plant Health Division of the MAFF. A copy of this paper will be forwarded to the PHD for information.

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The Light Knot Grass *Acronicta menyanthidis* (Esp.) (Lep.: Noctuidae) in Norfolk

Seven light traps (three mercury-vapour bulbs and four actinics), were operated at Dersingham Bog, Norfolk (grid reference TF 665283) on the very foggy night of 8 May 2000. Dersingham Bog is an extensive area of acid bogland, managed by English Nature, with flora typical of this habitat, including Cotton grass *Eriophorum* sp. and Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale*. It is one of only a handful of such sites in north Norfolk. We were hoping to encounter the somewhat local plume moth *Buckleria paludum* (Zell.), which feeds as a larva on sundew *Drosera* spp., and can also be seen during daylight. No examples of the plume moth were seen, but we were quite surprised when we visited one of the more secluded mercury vapour traps out on the bog amongst boggy Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, and discovered a very fresh looking Light Knot Grass.

The British distribution of this species is not now much altered from that presented by Heath & Emmet (1983. *Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland (MBGBI)*, volume 10, distribution map on page 138). In this work, records are shown confined to the north and west of a line drawn between the Humber and the Severn, with a single pre-1970 locality shown for Norfolk in grid square TF91. Records are also shown for Ireland. The Norfolk records are, therefore, apparently worth reviewing here.

The record shown in *MBGBI* is that included on a recording card submitted to Monks Wood by K. C. Durrant and gives a list of macro moths for the 10-km square TF91, which he labels "East Dereham area: arable with small plantations". The records come from the period 1940-1960, but there is no further information of relevance.

In the nineteenth century, single larvae were found at Hickling Broad (grid reference TG42) and Barton Turf (grid reference TG32) in about 1870, and an adult was reared so confirming the records (Barrett, 1901. *Lepidoptera*. In *Victoria County History* **1**: 135-162). Bog myrtle still grows at Barton Turf, though no longer at Hickling. These records evidently escaped the compilers of *MBGBI*.

The moth is known currently from Roydon Common (grid reference TF 6922), which lies some six kilometres to the south-east of Dersingham. Bernard Skinner attracted twenty adults to a single light on 13 June 1980 (of which two were the melanic ab. *suffusa* Tutt), whilst Gerry Haggett informs me that several have been



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