

The status of the Silurian moth *Eriopygodes imbecilla* (Fabricius) (Lep.: Noctuidae) in Monmouthshire in 1995

The Silurian *Eriopygodes imbecilla* was discovered in Britain in 1972 by Neil Horton and subsequently reported as resident in 1976 (*Ent. Rec.* **88**: 246-248, *Ent. Gaz.* **24**: 219-222). It was found to inhabit a gulley in the uplands of Monmouthshire, since which time a number of Britain's keenest and most adventurous lepidopterists have visited the gulley to see the insect and obtain specimens. The moth has still not been reported away from the vicinity of the original gulley however. Concerned that the moth would be extremely vulnerable both to accidental fires and to over-collecting, if confined to the gulley, Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) commissioned a survey of the surrounding area in 1995. Nearby gulleys were searched and light-trapped and it is a pleasure to report that the moth was found in good numbers in the known gulley and in three others immediately to the north and in one to the south. Further afield, the moth was found in a gulley in the next water catchment to the north but not in several gulleys visited to the south, even though one looked most promising and was light-trapped all night in good weather. The moth is now known to occur over an area four kilometres in extent from north to south. It is likely it is more widespread because there are other areas of similar habitat as yet unsearched.

Where the moth occurs it can be numerous, as many as fifty occurring in one trap per night. Interestingly, all seen were males and almost all arrived late in the night, well after midnight. Of a hundred moths collected up from two light traps and marked with a small spot of paint, only 19% were recaptured when the site was revisited two nights later, though the overall catches were as large as before. Only one marked moth turned up four nights after the first visit, though the species was still plentiful. This indicates that the marked moths were a small fraction of a very substantial population. On the basis of the distribution and size of the population(s), the current level of collecting, which appears to be no more than a few specimens on one or two nights in one place only and not every year, poses no threat to the species and could become a useful means of ensuring that the presence of the moth and the condition of the habitat continue to be monitored frequently, at a time when funding for such work is extremely limited.

Silurian moths were also trapped some distance from the gulleys, though not in such large numbers. A start has been made on an ecological study which will continue into 1996 with the aim of establishing the preferred breeding conditions and larval foodplants in the wild in Britain, which are not currently known. In Germany and Sweden the larvae have been found feeding on *Galium* spp., specifically *G. boreale* in Sweden (*British Wildlife* **3**: 307) and observations made this year suggest *Galium saxatile* is a strong candidate in Monmouthshire.

During the Silurian study important records and new sites for other noteworthy moths were obtained. For example the Grey Scalloped Bar

- 2006 *Pheosia gnoma* Fabr. Lesser Swallow Prominent
Common resident; feeds on Birch.
- 2007 *P. tremula* Cl. Swallow Prominent
Common resident; larva feeds on Poplar, Aspen and Sallows.
- 2008 *Ptilodon capucina* Linn. Swallow Prominent
Common resident; larva feeds on Hawthorn, Birch, Hazel and many other deciduous trees.
- 2011 *Pterostoma palpina* Cl. Pale Prominent
Common resident; larva feeds on Poplar, Aspen and Sallow.
- 2014 *Drymonia dodonaea* D. & S. Marbled Brown
Common resident; larva feeds mainly on Oak.
- 2019 *Clostera curtula* Linn. Chocolate Tip
Widely distributed in southern and eastern England. Mr A. Kolaj recorded a female from which a series was bred; larva feeds on Aspen, Poplar and Willow.

LYMANTRIIDAE

- 2026 *Orgyia antiqua* Linn. The Vapourer
A day-flying species generally distributed throughout the British Isles; larva feeds on most deciduous trees and shrubs.
- 2028 *Calliteara pudibunda* Linn. Pale Tussock
Common resident; larva feeds on Birch, Oak, Elm and many deciduous trees.
- 2029 *Euproctis chrysorrhoea* Linn. Brown Tail
Common resident; larva feeds on Bramble, Sallow, Hawthorn and many other trees and shrubs, and readily sheds hairs which can cause irritation.
- 2030 *E. similis* Fuess. Yellow Tail
Common resident; larva feeds on Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Sallow and many other trees and shrubs.

ARCTIIDAE

- 2033 *Lymantria monacha* Linn. Black Arches
Distributed throughout the southern half of Britain; larva feeds mainly on Oak.
- 2037 *Miltochrista miniata* Forst. Rosy Footman
Common resident; larva feeds on lichens growing on the stems and branches of trees.
- 2044 *Eilema griseola* Hb. Dingy Footman
Common resident; larva feeds on lichens.



Waring, Paul. 1996. "The status of the Silurian moth *Eriopygodes imbecilla* (Fabricius) (Lep.: Noctuidae) in Monmouthshire in 1995." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 108, 24–25.

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