

## Some Records of Migrant Lepidoptera in South Cumbria in 1976

By Dr. NEVILLE L. BIRKETT\*

1976 will be long remembered for the many immigrant species of lepidoptera recorded. Much of this immigrant activity tends to fall away by the time north-west England is reached—so my records are not of any startling exotic discoveries.

*Vanessa atalanta* (L.). The Red Admiral has been very common in south Cumbria in the last two years. This year I saw the first specimen in Black Tom's Lane, Witherslack, on 13th June. The following day I saw two examples in my garden at Kendal Wood on the outskirts of Kendal at an altitude of 630 feet. There then followed a gap in sightings until the first week of August when a few more were seen at Kendal Wood and from then until late September the species was seen nearly every day. The last specimens were seen on 24th October, when I observed one near Rydal Water, and a friend reported seeing one high in central Lakeland on the same sunny day.

*Cynthia cardui* (L.). The Painted Lady never seems to be so frequent as the Red Admiral here. This year was no exception. The first one was observed at Kendal Wood on 10th August and I noted in my diary that a few were seen between 20th and 27th August in the same locality.

*Agrius convovuli* (L.). A rather battered female of this hawk-moth was brought to me having been found by a patient, Mrs. J. Young, on her farm at Moss Side, Crosthwaite, near Kendal. It was captured on 18th August and duly released.

*Acherontia atropos* (L.). On 19th August I received reports via Nurse Bracken, of Levens, of a large caterpillar having been found in a potato field at Halforth Farm, nr. Heversham. Two days later I was able to visit the owner of the farm, Mr. Wilson, who produced for me a full-fed larva of *atropos* almost literally rushing round the floor of a gold-fish bowl. On being put into a plant-pot with a suitable substratum this larva buried itself within ten minutes. A search of Mr. Wilson's potato fields revealed no further larvae. They would have been difficult to see because the haulms were dried and discoloured due to the recent drought conditions. However, a fine pupa of *atropos* was brought to me from the same field on 13th September. The pupae were kept warm and damp and in late October the free-lying pupa emerged but failed to expand its wings. It did however provide suitable musical entertainment. The second pupa emerged, a fine female, on 23rd November. This second one to emerge, which had pupated normally in soil/peat mixture, rather surprised me. Two days before the moth eclosed, the pupa had worked itself up to the surface of the soil and lay free. Gentle palpation confirmed that it was alive, but it felt very flabby. However, the moth emerged and was a perfect specimen. I do not recall reading

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of this habit of *atropos* pupae coming to the soil surface before emergence of the moth.

*Macroglossum stellatarum* (L.). One specimen of this moth was seen at Kendal Wood on 14th August. Another specimen visited my son's brightly coloured shirt in the same garden on 23rd August. I also have note of an observation by Mr. Ralph Stokoe who saw a specimen in his garden at Cockermouth.

*Agrotis ipsilon* (Hufn.). First taken in the trap at Kendal Wood on 29th August. From then until mid-October it was a common visitor, especially in the middle fortnight of September.

*Autographa gamma* (L.). First appeared in the trap at Kendal Wood on 12th June. From then on a few occurred each night, more or less, until the end of October. From late August to mid-October this species was extremely common flying about the garden in daylight, visiting various flowers. The species was much more common than usual this year.

*Udea ferrugalis* (Hübner). Decidedly less common than usual. In fact, I recorded one specimen only in my trap on 18th August.

The common "whites" were extremely plentiful during the late summer months and were a pest on the Brassicas. A very few each of *Nomophila noctuella* (D. & S.) and *Plutella xylostella* (L.) visited the trap here in late August.

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LITHOPHANE LEAUTIERI BOISD. — FURTHER RECORDS FROM EAST SUSSEX. — In confirmation of previous notes regarding the favourable season enjoyed by Blair's Shoulder-knot during 1976 (*Ent. Rec.*, 89: 13, 16), I would like to report that my m.v. trap contained a total of seven of the species between September 25th and October 24th inclusive. These catches were preceded by a single example on October 7th, 1975, in the same area. — COLIN PRATT, "Oleander", 5 View Road, Peacehaven, Newhaven, Sussex.

THE SAND DART (*AGROTIS RIPAE* HBN.) IN LONDON. — After the night of 27th June, 1976, I was amazed to find in the m.v. trap in my garden a specimen of *Agrotis ripae*. Normally this species is never found at any distance from the coast. It was a night when moth populations were on the move, for in the same trap were my first two specimens from this area of *Idaea vulpinaria atrosignaria* Lempke; however, the most likely explanation must be that the *riparae* specimen was accidentally brought here in a vehicle. It was a worn specimen, taken on a Sunday night after a hot weekend and the favourite resorts with the local inhabitants are on the Essex coast where the species occurs. — DAVID AGASSIZ, St. James' Vicarage, 144 Hertford Road, Enfield, Middx.





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