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The Magpie Moth (*Abraxas grossulariata* L.) in North Cheshire (v.c.58)

I was very interested in B.K. West's article (*Ent. Rec.* **103**: 89-92). In the 1950s and 1960s any currant or gooseberry bush in the Sale/Altrincham area, to the south of Manchester, could be guaranteed to provide a plentiful supply of larvae of this species. I used to breed large numbers every year, especially from the *Ribes* in my own garden and the allotments across the road.

On 22.x.1967 I came across a vast number of *grossulariata* larvae behind Dunham Park, settling down for hibernation on a small oak tree, on which at that time they appeared to have been feeding. I returned to the site on 17.v.1968 to find the larvae, nearly fully grown, feeding on a hedge of sloe bushes underneath the oak. I brought about five hundred of them home and reared virtually 100% through to moths, among which were a handful of interesting vars, including a few approximating to *hazeleighensis* Rayn. and one *paucisignata* Lempke. Taking this many appeared to have made very little effect on the colony. The remaining caterpillars completely stripped the sloe bushes.

Returning in 1969, I found the colony still present, but in greatly reduced numbers. The following year, there were none. Neither have there ever

been any since, although the habitat is unaltered. At the same time, the species also completely disappeared from all the currant and gooseberry bushes in this area.

In 1990, by very diligent searching on many semi-wild currant bushes in the Birchwood/Risley Moss area of Warrington "new town" (v.c.59), about ten miles from here, I did manage to find five *grossulariata* larvae, and brought the three largest home, from which one moth resulted, the other two being parasitised.

In the years of abundance, I could never persuade *Ribes*-feeding larvae to accept any other pabulum; however the *Prunus*-feeding brood would accept currant. In general, the moths from the local currant bushes were larger than the Dunham examples from sloe.— P.B. HARDY, 10 Dudley Road, Sale, Cheshire.

Farmland Ecology light trap network: interesting Lepidoptera records for September 1990.

Continuing our notes on unusual Lepidoptera records from the network of light traps operating on the Rothamsted Estate, the following are particularly noteworthy for September 1990:

Considering the relatively large number of unusual immigrant Lepidoptera recorded in the UK this year by various collectors and recorders, it is surprising that only the common species, *Udea ferrugalis* Hb., *Agrotis ipsilon* Hufn, and *Autographa gamma* L. were caught in the traps during September at Rothamsted. However, extra broods of several species of resident Lepidoptera were recorded. *Idaea dimidiata* Hufn. and *Scopula imitaria* Hb. are usually univoltine but a second brood was recorded for both species during mid-September. The occasional second emergence known to occur in *Idaea aversata* L. and *Caradrina morpheus* Hufn. was also recorded. A single individual of *Catoptria falsella* D. & S. and several *Hepialus sylvina* L. were caught on 22nd and 21st-26th respectively. These are late records for these species and it is possible that the former represents a partial second emergence.

The third brood of *Ectropis bistortata* Goeze which was suggested in the notes for August is confirmed by captures of this species to the middle of September. Clear gaps are evident between captures of each brood. *Drepana binaria* Hufn. was also recorded during mid-September after an absence of approximately six weeks. These records also appear to represent a third emergence of this normally bivoltine species.

The occurrence of extra broods during the warm spring and hot summer of 1990 is particularly interesting given the present speculation regarding climatic change.—ADRIAN M. RILEY and MARTIN C. TOWNSEND, AFRC Farmland Ecology Project, Dept. of Entomology and Nematology, Rothamsted Exp. Stn., Harpenden, Herts AL5 2JQ.



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