

MOTH MUMBLINGS – LAST CHANCE FOR LEAF-MINES

LAST CHANCE TO MAKE YOUR COUNTY MOTH RECORDER HAPPY!

The leaves are almost gone in some areas – at least out here in the sticks. Perhaps they are hanging on longer in the forbidden zone that is the new Ultra Low Emission Zone where, apparently, I now have to pay to visit. A huge thank you to the many of you that have bombarded me with padded envelopes full of mined leaves from various parts of both Hertfordshire and Middlesex. I will send you lists, but I am now (happily) seriously behind in that task. We have added many dots to the distribution map – should keep Andrew Wood busy updating the web site maps at the end of the season.

A couple of you have moaned to me that they would like to take part, but work gets in the way and in any case they don't feel confident enough to look for mines alone. When they get home from work it is already dark and their spouses have "advised" them that weekends are already booked for other, non-moth activities! So – I have devised a cunning plan to enable these people to make a serious contribution to biodiversity studies and, as a consequence, to saving the planet. Read on.

THIS FIRST ONE IS AIMED ESPECIALLY AT THOSE OF YOU WHO COMMUTE TO LONDON ON WEEKDAYS. Assuming the boss lets you out for air at lunch time, please walk a few yards from the office door and find a London Plane tree. These are everywhere in London's streets – even the very centre. Many will by now have shed most of their leaves – which makes your life much easier. **Look at those on the ground.** There is one (just the one) moth that makes a pucker (= fold) mine on the underneath of Plane leaves – it is called *Phyllonorycter platani*. It was discovered new to Britain in the 1980s on fallen leaves in Cromwell Road, South Kensington. Look at this picture ... <http://www.leafmines.co.uk/html/Lepidoptera/P.platani.htm> ... and go find!!! You do not even need to send it to me (though you can if you prefer me to check it) – just make a note and tell me. You don't even need to look up a map grid reference – just tell me the street name and first half of the postcode and I can do the rest. Everyone who works in London ought to be able to find this mine – this week! Of course, if you can find it in more than one place then so much the better. Of course, neither the mine nor the tree are confined to urban London – they are planted in streets across North London and elsewhere. We even have them (both) here in Bishops Stortford – I imagine they are also scattered across the western reaches of London in old Middlesex?

FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE THE MISFORTUNE OR NEED TO VISIT THE MURKY AREA THAT IS THE NEW ULTRA LOW EMISSION ZONE, here is another specific target – selected because EVERYONE ought to be able to find it. Indeed, most of you doubtless recognise it – yet many of you have simply not bothered to report it. I refer to the infamous **Horse Chestnut Leaf-miner** (*Cameraria ohridella*). For those not familiar there is a picture here ... <http://www.leafmines.co.uk/html/Lepidoptera/C.ohridella.htm>. **ABSOLUTELY UNMISTAKEABLE.** Again, you do not even need to send it to me (unless you so wish, of course) – just make a note and tell me. You don't even need to look up a map grid reference – just tell me the street name and first half of the postcode and I can do the rest. I predict that you will easily spot infected trees in EVERY map tetrad of both our counties – yet to date we have reports from only around 70% of them. If nothing else, see if you can find this moth this week and again, see if you can find it in different places. Commuters looking for Plane trees are not excluded – affected Horse Chestnut trees can be spotted from the train (or car) – so take a map with you to work out where you saw them (there is probably an "App" for that – though I have no idea what/where/why that is – I have been told by a younger person to say so)!

FOR THOSE WHO ARE FREE TO WANDER (I would hate you to be left out) – here are a few scattered random places from where I need any leaf-miner records.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Flamstead;

Wheathampstead;
Caddington;
Chipperfield Common;
Flaunden;
Panshanger Park;
Wilstone.

MIDDLESEX

Shepperton;
Enfield Chase;
Trent Country Park;
Anywhere at all in the Lea Valley (where moths seem to be extinct?);
Cranford Park & the Crane River Valley southwards;
Collindale,
Welsh Harp Reservoir;
Neasden.
This is not exclusive – just a guide so you can pick something near you.

How many more blank map squares can we fill in this week, I wonder?

Good hunting,

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