

Recording the 'difficult' macro-moth species in VC22 (Berkshire)

These are species that require dissection or other close examination for certain identification, sometimes referred to as 'critical species'. Remember that it is not compulsory to dissect moths! You may be able to pass a specimen to your county recorder for dissection, or you may choose not to keep a specimen at all, in which case the moth can still be recorded as an 'aggregate' species.

Code	Individual species	English name	Name that should be used in MapMate (and elsewhere) to record the aggregate species
1724	<i>Xanthorhoe spadicearia</i>	Red Twin-spot Carpet	Wing markings can be unreliable – most moths that look like Red Twin-spot Carpet can be safely recorded as such, but if you have found a Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet please contact your county recorder for confirmation. If in any doubt record as ' <i>Xanthorhoe spadicearia/ferrugata</i> (Red/Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet)' unless identified from genitalia
1725	<i>Xanthorhoe ferrugata</i>	Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet	
1795	<i>Epirrita dilutata</i>	November Moth	Record as ' <i>Epirrita dilutata</i> agg. (November Moth agg.)' unless identified from genitalia
1796	<i>Epirrita christyi</i>	Pale November Moth	
1797	<i>Epirrita autumnata</i>	Autumnal Moth	
2283	<i>Acronicta tridens</i>	Dark Dagger	Record as ' <i>Acronicta tridens/psi</i> (Dark / Grey Dagger)' unless identified from genitalia
2284	<i>Acronicta psi</i>	Grey Dagger	
2297	<i>Amphipyra pyramidea</i>	Copper Underwing	Use ' <i>Amphipyra pyramidea</i> agg. (Copper Underwings)' unless the exact species has been identified; the best character for identification is the colours of the underside of the hindwing (need to have the hindwing held open to see this)
2298	<i>Amphipyra berbera</i>	Svensson's Copper Underwing	
2337	<i>Oligia strigilis</i>	Marbled Minor	Wing markings are unreliable - record as ' <i>Oligia strigilis</i> agg. (Marbled Minor agg.)' unless identified from genitalia
2338	<i>Oligia versicolor</i>	Rufous Minor	
2339	<i>Oligia latruncula</i>	Tawny Marbled Minor	
2343	<i>Mesapamea secalis</i>	Common Rustic	Record as ' <i>Mesapamea secalis</i> agg. (Common Rustic agg.)' unless identified from genitalia
2343a	<i>Mesapamea didyma</i>	Lesser Common Rustic	
2343b	<i>Mesapamea remmi</i>	Remm's Rustic	
2357	<i>Amphipoea lucens</i>	Large Ear	Record as ' <i>Amphipoea oculea</i> agg. (Ear Moth agg.)' unless identified from genitalia – <i>A. oculea</i> is the most frequent species in Berkshire, but <i>A. fucosa</i> is also present, so it is safest to record the aggregate if in any doubt
2358	<i>Amphipoea fucosa</i>	Saltern Ear	
2359	<i>Amphipoea crinanensis</i>	Crinan Ear	
2360	<i>Amphipoea oculea</i>	Ear Moth	

If you use the MapMate database for your records, you may find that there are some additional aggregate species options, but please use the ones listed above, not the ones listed below:

Code	Individual species as listed in MapMate	English name	Name that should be used in MapMate (and elsewhere) to record the aggregate species
	<i>Amphipoea</i> sp.	<i>Amphipoea</i> sp.	DO NOT USE this taxon - use ' <i>Amphipoea oculea</i> agg. (Ear Moth agg.)' instead
	<i>Epirrita</i> sp.	<i>Epirrita</i> species	DO NOT USE this taxon - use ' <i>Epirrita dilutata</i> agg. (November Moth agg.)' instead
	<i>Mesapamea</i> sp.	<i>Mesapamea</i> species	DO NOT USE this taxon for the Common Rustic group - use ' <i>Mesapamea secalis</i> agg. (Common Rustic agg.)'
	<i>Oligia</i> sp.		DO NOT USE this taxon - use ' <i>Oligia strigilis</i> agg. (Marbled Minor agg.)' instead

The above lists do not show *all* the moths that are difficult to identify! One group in particular often causes problems: the pugs, *Eupithecia* spp. It is often possible to identify well-marked specimens from wing markings, but some species, and worn specimens of almost all species, require dissection for certainty.

Here are some additional species that frequently cause confusion, or else get entered under the wrong name where there are species with similar names.

Code	Individual species	English name	Comment
170	<i>Zygaena trifolii</i>	Five-spot Burnet	Often recorded in error for Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet - there are few recent records in Berkshire of true Five-spot Burnet, and a voucher specimen or other supporting evidence is required
1715	<i>Idea straminata</i>	Plain Wave	Easily confused with Riband Wave, a photo or other supporting evidence is preferred
1739	<i>Epirrhoe rivata</i>	Wood Carpet	Scarce in Berkshire - easily confused with Common Carpet
1800	<i>Operophtera fagata</i>	Northern Winter Moth	males are difficult to distinguish from Winter Moth, a voucher specimen is preferred
2051	<i>Lithosia quadra</i>	Four-spotted Footman	A scarce migrant in Berkshire, sometimes recorded as a data entry error for the fairly common resident Four-dotted Footman <i>Cybosia mesomella</i>
2108	<i>Noctua orbona</i>	Lunar Yellow Underwing	probably extinct in Berkshire, and easily confused with Lesser Yellow Underwing or Large Yellow Underwing - voucher specimen required
2317	<i>Cosmia diffinis</i>	White-spotted Pinion	Sometimes recorded as a data entry error for the common White-pinion Spotted - there are no recent records for White-spotted Pinion, and a photo or other supporting evidence is required
2381	<i>Hoplodrina alsines</i>	Uncertain	Please compare carefully with Rustic <i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>
2382	<i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>	Rustic	Please compare carefully with Uncertain <i>Hoplodrina alsines</i>
2488	<i>Pechipogo strigilata</i>	Common Fan-foot	Very rare in Berkshire, and sometimes recorded as a data entry error for The Fanfoot - voucher specimen or other supporting evidence required

And some general tips about similar moths that are widely separated in the books:

Group	Notes	Plates in Skinner (2 nd ed.)	Pages in Waring, Townsend, Lewington (1 st ed.)	Pages in Waring, Townsend, Lewington (2 nd ed.)
The 'hooktips'	Don't forget about Beautiful Hooktip	Mostly 5, see also 41	53, 337	206, 273
The 'emeralds'	Most emeralds are at the beginning of the geometers, but there are a few (e.g. Light Emerald, green form of Barred Red) towards the end as well	Mostly 6, see also 17	131, 156	207, 232
The 'waves'	Most waves are at the beginning of the geometers, but there are a few (e.g. Common Wave, Common White Wave) towards the end as well	Mostly 6, see also 11 and especially 17	132-133, 145, 156	208-209, 221, 232
Brown and grey noctuids	Tricky – look out for nutmegs, shoulder-knots, shears, arches, brocades, brindles	See especially 28-29, 37	316-317, 327-328	250-251, 262-263
The 'wainscots'	Most of the common ones are in the middle of the noctuids, but there are others (mostly wetland species) later on	31, 38-40	319, 329, 331-332	253, 264, 266-267
Can't find your 'geometer'?	There are some odd noctuids that look rather like geometers, e.g. Straw Dot, Waved Black, the fanfoots	Mostly 41-42	337-338	273-274
Can't find your 'noctuid'?	Don't forget to check families Hepialidae, Thyatiridae, Notodontidae and Lymantriidae	1, 5, 20-21	46, 53, 229-231	199, 206, 238-240

Remember that if you have found something unusual it is always best to get as much supporting evidence as you can to confirm the record. Such evidence might include:

- Keeping a specimen of the moth ('voucher specimen') to pass on to the county moth recorder (a live specimen may do the job if it can be passed on quickly).
- Getting a good photo (preferably several photos from different angles, and record the size as well).
- Getting a second (and third, fourth ...) opinion from another experienced moth recorder.

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