

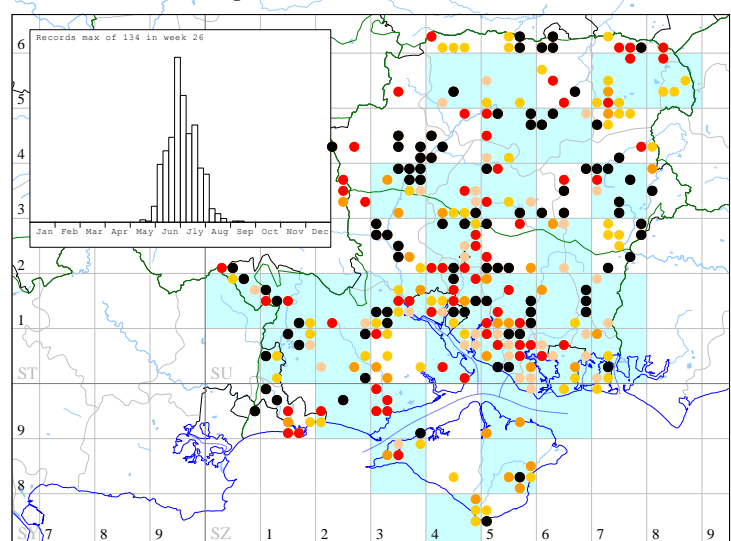
Moth Quest for June – Searching for the Ghost Moth *Hepialis humuli*

Lynn Fomison & Tim Norriss

Records of Ghost Moth are well distributed through the two counties. However almost all of the records are of between one and three individuals that have come to light. At the National Moth Recorders' Meeting in January 2013 we heard a very interesting talk by Nick Picozzi describing the phenomenon of the males displaying at dusk – the so-called lekking. This intriguing behaviour is something well worth watching out for and so hopefully the following information will help people see this wonderful display for themselves (and submit records).

Most records come from the mid June to end July period. The earliest record in the database of lekking at dusk comes from Barry Goater – five seen in Otterbourne on 12th June 1946. A most interesting record came in 2012 from Patrick Fleet who saw a dozen males lekking at 10pm on the 14th June. The onset of dusk is the time to make a search. A record of ten flying at another site on the edge of Basingstoke dates back to 2003 and in three other years five were seen at that same site. Tim also saw several lekking at Rotherlands LNR near Petersfield in 2007.

0014 Ghost Moth (*Hepialis humuli*)



The moth breeds on a variety of plants including the roots of grasses, nettle, dock and burdock, and it is over this sort of rank vegetation that the moths choose to display. The males are a ghostly white, hence the name, while the females are a golden orange, and mating pairs can be conspicuous on low vegetation.



Hovering male showing the orange brushes on his hind legs.
by Nicholas Picozzi

For a bit more inspiration have a look at

<http://www.leopardmag.co.uk/feats/299/ghost-moths-on-deeside-a-rare-photograph>) Eager to learn more, his research led to a scientific paper by James Mallet in 1984. (web link <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/taxome/jim/pap/mallet84%20ghost%20moths.pdf>