

Although the classics are taught in few but the independent schools today the binomial system first suggested by Linnaeus is standard throughout the world – and it is surprisingly easy for entomologists to remember the scientific names. Furthermore, the scientific names are simply internationally recognised identification tags and it is quite unnecessary to have studied classics in order to feel at home with them. The innumerable English names on the other hand – some species having been accorded more than six different titles – do little to enhance our knowledge of these insects and merely remind us that Goethe – not Goater – once wrote of the ‘fog’ surrounding such names that ‘a name is but sound and smoke veiling heaven’s splendour.’— MICHAEL SALMON, Avon Lodge, Woodgreen, New Forest, Hampshire SP6 2AU.

On the creation of English names for British insects

I will not add to Barry Goater’s lament regarding exasperating vernacular names, but would point out that it seems a pity that those who feel they have the need and opportunity to name a newly discovered British moth should do a bit of homework first. The ‘Minsmere Crimson Underwing’ *Catocala conjuncta* has a perfectly good English name already. A look at plate 17 in W. Wood’s – *Index Entomologicus*, published in 1839 refers on page 77:

Linn. names.	Engl. names	Synonyms and new genera	Habitat, and when found
443 Conjuncta	Lesser Crimson Underwing	St.3, p. 135. 6429 <i>Catocala</i>	Mr. Stephens’s Cabinet; very rare

Then there is the instance of *Harpyia milhauseri* (Fabricius), now known as the ‘Tawny Prominent’. R. R. Picketing (1966. *Entomologist’s Gazette* 1966, **17**: 100) announced the moth as new to Britain in, but did not raise a vernacular name for it. The first use of the name ‘Tawny Prominent’ seems to be that published in I. R. P. Heslop’s Fourth Supplement to the Revised Indexed Check-list of the British Lepidoptera, (1968. *Entomologist’s Gazette* **19**: 147), part of the then on-going Check-list that remains a vast source of curious vernacular names to this day. In Edward Step’s *Marvels of Insect Life* (circa 1910), an article on pages 66-69 refers to *Hoplitis milhauseri*, ‘The Dragon-Moth’, the name referring to the appearance of the larva.

I expect others can add many more, and a quick glance at J. D. Bradley’s – Checklist of Lepidoptera (2000) shows duplicate vernacular names for a number of insects recorded over relatively recent years. Surely the publication of a new name even if an English one, is also the responsibility of an editor. Before spattering our literature with duplicate names some check should be carried out to ensure their novelty.— DAVID WILSON, Lark Rise, Dunwich Road, Blythburgh, Suffolk IP19 9LT.



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The entomologist's record and journal of variation 117, 90–90.

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