

The distribution of *Araschnia levana* in Macedonia is presented on Fig. 1. Specimens from The Shar Planina, Jakupica, Ograzhden and Galichica Mountains and the Skopje and Kratovo regions were summer forms, collected from late June to the end of July. The only spring forms were recorded in the Kavadarci region, recorded in April.

The habitats from which the adult *Araschnia levana* were recorded were beech forests on Shar Planina Mountains, oak forests on Jakupica Mountains and riparian habitats along the Rivers Pchinja and Kriva Reka and near a mountain stream on Ograzhden Mountain. The record on Galichica Mountain refers to agricultural land, but this is situated in the oak belt of the mountain.

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### Square-spotted Clay *Xestia rhomboidea* (Esp.) (Lep.: Noctuidae) in Essex, first discovery of the caterpillar in the county

On 15 March 2004, a caterpillar of the Square-spotted Clay *Xestia rhomboidea* was found at Free Wood, Elmdon, in Essex, the first ever found in the county, providing proof that the moth is resident in Essex. It was found by Robin Field at 20.47 hours, at rest head downwards on a dead stem of Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* above fresh nettle foliage at the end of a search by nine of us from 20.20 to 20.50 hours. The larva was in an area of fairly sparse ground vegetation just inside the edge of the wood. The accompanying photograph, taken at the time, shows the habitat at the exact spot. Colin Plant (centre) is pointing at the larva with his torch. It is between him and the bag on the ground. There are shrubs within three metres, but the larva is in a more open situation and there are scattered grass tussocks for shelter.

It is instructive to examine how this result is the culmination of the combined efforts of various members of the mothing community, coupled with an increasingly





Standing over the first larva of *X. rhomboidea* discovered in Essex, at Free Wood, Elmdon, 25 March 2004.

focused and strategic approach resulting from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan process. The search was stimulated by the recent publication of *The Moths of Essex*, compiled by Brian Goodey (2004), which was launched at the annual meeting of the Essex Moth Group, on 28 February 2004. The status of the Square-spotted Clay in Essex is given therein as vagrant, rare, with 2002 the most recent record, but a note that Phil Jenner has been recording the adult as frequent in the Chrishall area, in the extreme north-west of the county, suggested the moth might be resident. As a result PW contacted Phil Jenner and was able to propose the search at the Essex Moth Group meeting. It transpires that Phil moved to Chrishall in 2000 and has been recording about half a dozen adult Square-spotted Clay annually at sugar patches. He had kept some voucher specimens which supported the records and had taken the trouble to send the data to the county recorder. Meanwhile, John Chainey and Jenny Spence had noticed and reported two adults nectaring on some flowers of a teasel *Dipsacus* on 9 August 2002 along the north edge of Free Wood, which is just 3 km to the east of Phil Jenner's garden. By day on 15 March 2004, Phil and PW reconnoitered the environs of Phil's garden and went to Free Wood and three other nearby woodlands with records of the moth, one in Essex and the others across the county boundary in Hertfordshire. PW was able to select the most promising places to search for the larvae, based on knowledge gained and the many successful searches we have made as part of the project. As soon as it was dark, all three of the Essex sites were searched by a team of volunteers, and the larva was found exactly where John Chainey had seen the adults at Free Wood. The volunteer searchers who came forward were, in part, motivated by the chance see the caterpillar of this nationally scarce moth for the first time and to learn how to search for it. Armed



with this knowledge, they were able to plan searches for larvae at other sites. Subsequently, on the night of 16 March 2004 Jim Reid searched Melwood, a small woodland near Meldreth, Cambridgeshire and found six Square-spotted Clay larvae in ten minutes searching. On 17 March Ted Ponting found two more larvae in Essex, feeding on Common Nettle next to an elm copse in Langley Upper Green.

The map for the Square-spotted Clay in *The Moths of Essex* shows that all the records for that county since 1990 are from two 10 km squares in the extreme north-west. Only one of these has earlier records, from 1960-89. However, shading of eight additional 10 km squares scattered around the periphery of Essex shows that the Square-spotted Clay was recorded more widely prior to 1960.

The larval search was undertaken as a part of a three year Biodiversity Action Plan project on this moth, being co-ordinated by the authors for Butterfly Conservation's Cambridgeshire and Essex Branch, with assistance from the Centre for Environment and Rural Affairs at Writtle College, Essex and a grant from English Nature. An abbreviated account of the discovery has already been presented in *British Wildlife* 15(5): 361-362). One correction has been made to that work – Phil Jenner moved to Chrishall in 2000, not 1999 as previously stated.— PAUL WARING and ROBIN FIELD, Centre for Environment & Rural Affairs, Writtle College, Essex. Contact address: Windmill View, 1366 Lincoln Road, Werrington, Peterborough PE4 6 LS (E-mail: paul\_waring@btinternet.com).

### **Larval foodplants of the Barred Sallow moth *Xanthia aurago* (D. & S.) (Lep.: Noctuidae)**

Some of the species of moths of the genus *Xanthia* are Nationally Scarce, others of Local status. Most are associated with woody plant species which are often minor components of the tree and shrub layer. As such, they are of great use to ecologists and conservationists. Presence of these moths helps in making the case for surveys to find out the distribution of such tree species on site. It also provides justification for special conservation measures to ensure adequate representation of such plants for all dependent invertebrates when felling, thinning, coppicing and other forms of management are planned. The Orange Sallow *X. citrargo* feeds on limes *Tilia* spp., the Dusky Lemon Sallow *X. gilvago* on Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* and the Pale Lemon Sallow *X. ocellaris* on Black Poplar *Populus nigra* and hybrids. The much more widespread, well-distributed and numerous Sallow *X. ictcritia* and Pink-barred Sallow *X. togata* feed on a range of sallows and poplars but begin larval development in the catkins and are of great use in flagging up the need to maintain trees of these species large enough to produce catkins, which are hugely important as sources of nectar and other food for a great many insects. Furthermore, the genus *Salix* is now recognised as supporting more species of insects in Britain than any other plant genus, including *Quercus* (Kennedy & Southwood, 1984. The number of species of insects associated with British trees: a re-analysis. *Journal of Animal Ecology* 53: 455-478).



Waring, Paul and Field, Robin. 2004. "Square-spotted clay Xestia rhomboidea (Esp.) (Lep.: Noctuidae) in Essex, first discovery of the caterpillar in the county." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 116, 275–277.

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