

## The migrant moth, small marbled *Eublemma parva*, in central Scotland in 2011

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The small marbled *Eublemma parva* is a small noctuid moth resident in southern Europe and parts of Africa and Asia. As an immigrant from southern Europe to the UK, it is most often recorded from the coastal counties of southern England with the density of records decreasing northwards. It sometimes produces larvae and late season adults, but there is no evidence of overwintering in the UK. Most UK sources give common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* and ploughman's spikenard *Inula conyzae* as larval foodplants. Other foodplants have been noted elsewhere in Europe, including several species that are on the British list.

In appearance, the small marbled is very small for a member of the family Noctuidae, and quite likely to be mistaken as belonging to one of the microlepidoteran families. The base of the forewings have a washed-out tan colour, increasing in intensity toward the central band where there is usually an abrupt change to white, thus forming a central line, followed by a renewed darkening toward a second crossline which has a shape that has been likened to a question-mark (when viewed from the trailing edge of the right forewing). Beyond the second crossline there is another somewhat diffuse tan-coloured band which extends toward the wing tip.

According to South (1920) the small marbled (referred to by South as *Thalcopares parva*) was first noted in Britain in July 1844 in South Devon. It is widely reported that there was a particularly dramatic influx in 1953. As far as can be ascertained, the first Scottish record was by R. Knill-Jones at Parkgate, Dumfriesshire, VC72, inferred 1km grid reference NY0287, where it was attracted to mercury vapour light on 10th July 1982 (Bretherton & Chalmers-Hunt, 1983, p149). Bretherton and Chalmers-Hunt noted (p89) that this was the only record of an adult in that year though many larvae were found in south Devon in August and September and adults were reared from these larvae. The second Scottish record, also in the south-west, was by R. Mearns at Clanyard Mill,

Drummore, Wigtownshire, VC74, inferred 1km grid reference NX1037, on 20th June 1998 (Skinner & Collins, 2000, p246). The latter specimen is now in the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh. In

England too, 1998 was a good year for small marbled with records from seven English vice-counties, from the Scillies in the south-west to Holy Island in the north-east, plus a record from the Isle of Man. Larvae were found in Portland.

In 2011, there were two further Scottish records of adult small marbled, both in Central Scotland. On the east coast, the first author, C.C., caught one on 04 July 2011 in an 8W actinic portable Heath trap in her garden in Abercorn, West Lothian VC84, grid ref NT080789. Subsequently, in the west, D.C. and G.C. caught one on 27 July 2011 in a 40w actinic trap in their garden in Ascog, Isle of Bute, VC100, grid ref NS105639. Informal reports indicate that 2011 has been a good year for small marbled in the UK as a whole.

Thus, as far as we are aware, there have now been just four records of the small marbled in Scotland, in four different vice counties, the furthest north being the West Lothian record.

### REFERENCES

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