Notes for Moth Recorders in Worcestershire VC37.

These notes are intended to help those recording Moths in VC37 with submitting records for inclusion in the county Moth database. This database is held on MapMate recording software and recorders are encouraged to use this software and submit their data via sync file. If you do not use MapMate we would, of course, still like to receive your data. The easiest form for us to handle is as a spreadsheet, but if you are unfamiliar with spreadsheets then simple text will do. The sections below will explain where and how to submit your records. There are additional notes covering the county moth list giving advice regarding what is needed to substantiate records of rare or difficult species. If recorders can refer to these notes and provide supporting photographs or specimens when suggested pro-actively it will help enormously and reduce the County Recorder's workload. Useful contact details are at the end of this document.

MapMate.

The VC37 database on MapMate is one section of a larger database covering the West Midlands counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire. Until recently these were all administered as one entity by one person. The dataset has grown along with the number of active recorders and it is now impractical for one person to cover the entire area. The individual county databases are now to be administered by the county recorders, in some cases with technical help dealing with the data input.

In an effort to improve the quality of the VC37 data it has been decided to run two versions of the database side by side. The existing data will be imported into a second 'clean' database under a single cuk. This will give the administrators the ability to easily deal with any problems in the data without having to track down recorders who may have moved away from the area etc. Recorders are assured that the intention is not to undermine their 'ownership' of records. For example, any issues with identification will be referred back to the original recorder wherever possible. It is anticipated that records will only be altered unilaterally when the owner is not contactable. With this in mind please make sure that the VC37 MapMate administrator has your email address or other contact details.

The clean database will eventually be available to all as a read only reference.

The cuk for the VC37 database is agh.
Please set filters in the MapMate replicator to:

sites: VC37
records: My Records
taxa: lepidoptera

To do this open the Replicator and set the current sync partner to be cuk agh.
Then use Special – Set Filters to set your filters as above.
Once set, you should not have to re set the filters for cuk agh.

Unfiltered syncs can carry in all sorts of unwanted or outdated data that can corrupt the database, so syncs arriving that have not been correctly filtered will have to be rejected.

By default you will receive a return sync of the existing VC37 data. If you do not want this please let me know.

When it is ready for publication, the clean VC37 dataset will be made available to all as a download from the Web. This can be used in a similar way to the example 'Pyralids of Somerset' dataset included with the program. Full instructions for this will be packaged with the data when it is available.

MapMate data entry conventions.

Much of what follows is taken from Dave Grundy's 'Guidence Notes on MapMate data entry' and should be familiar to existing recorders. There have been no changes since Dave sent these out so existing recorders need not change how they enter things.

1. **Taxon**: Several species are unidentifiable in the field and should therefore be entered in an aggregate form. For guidance on species where aggregates are commonly used please refer to the County list. The taxon lists in MapMate have aggregates already in place for those species commonly dealt with in this way.

2. **Quantity:** always try and count everything you see. Even if you are inundated with Large Yellow Underwings, for example, please make an effort to at least estimate the total number of individuals caught.
    If you are looking at plentiful leafmines over a wide area for example, then you can use '0' for 'present'. If the sex of a species can be easily determined this can be added as 'm' or 'f' after the number.

3. **Stage:** should usually be entered as adult with most field work, but do make sure you remember to enter egg, larval, mine, pupal case etc if it is not an adult - otherwise it will mess up adult flight period data!

4. **Site:** In most situations this is straightforward. For large sites that need 'sub sites' to be included in the site name we have settled on the convention of using the hyphen '-' as a separator. In practice in Worcestershire this is, more or less, limited to the Wyre Forest and the Malvern Hills. In these cases site names should be in the form:
    Wyre Forest - New Parks - Park House
    or
    Malvern Hills - Worcestershire Beacon

    Your home site might be something like:
    Pershore - Festive Road

    For the most part, we have tried to stick with the spellings and structure of names as they appear on the OS maps. There is one exception that comes to mind. You will find that Monkwood is 'Monk Wood' (2 words) on the maps, but the majority of existing sites on the system for the area are Monkwood (1 word). Since it would be a nightmare to change it we have decided to stick with the 1 word version.

    Since the Wyre Forest is such a large area it is something of a special case. Dave Grundy and others have devised a system subdividing the forest into compartments. In practice the forest has been so well covered in the past that it is likely that you will find a suitable site description on the system already. If in doubt please ask. Dave has maps available that show the compartment names.

    A quick way to see if there is a site already in the database is to key in a Grid Reference in the site field in Data Entry and press return. You will be presented with a list of the closest available sites on the system. If one matches and is in the correct format as described above please use it.
    There are currently far too many site names on the data-base for the same places and this is one of the things that we hope to sort out in the 'clean' version of the database. Please help by not introducing new site names unless you need to - always check before you add a new

site name that there isn't already another site name with the same grid ref. (also check that if there is, then it is in the correct hyphenated form) If in doubt always check for standard site names with the Mapmate administrator.

Do please try and take care with entering grid references correctly - if you have a GPS then you should enter an 8 figure grid ref whenever possible. If not, then please use a detailed map carefully and fill in a six-figure reference. (several websites such as Multimap can now help you to locate grid refs.) Please try and avoid using 2 or 4 figure or tetrad information unless unavoidable.

Please also check that if you are entering a new site, that Mapmate gives it the correct Vice County name and number. In some cases close to county boundaries, Mapmate is slightly inaccurate eg. along the Dowles Brook in the Wyre Forest.

5. **Date:** this should be straightforward, again try and give the exact date and not just the week or month or year. Remember that one record of Poplar Grey present in 2005 in your garden is nowhere near as useful as listing all the dates the moth was seen with an exact count of how many were seen on each of these dates as several records. You might say that this doesn't matter as the species is common, but if you don't record how common it is now and on which dates, then if it declines suddenly we will have no figures to show how much the decline has been.

   For moth-trapping, the date should always be for the day the moth trap is switched on and not for the following morning when the trap is switched off.

6. **Status:** This field is not really very relevant to lepidoptera recorders, most people just fill in either Unknown or Not recorded in this field.

7. **Recorder:** Our convention for recorder names is to use the form:
Surname, initial.
For example Grundy, D.
The comma and full stop are important.

   Another goal of the 'clean' dataset is to try to reduce the number of names on the system that do not adhere to this convention. It would be great if we could get to the point when there is only a single instance of each recorder on the system. This would make searching for an individuals records very much easier than it is at present.
   If your name is already on the system and is in the correct format please use the existing instance rather than creating a new one.
   In the past groups of recorders have often been entered in this field. This is something we really want to avoid. Please use a single name which would normally be the Trap owner.
   If you really have to use more than one name in the recorder field then they should be listed in alphabetical order eg. Prior, A. & Weston, V. or West, A. & West, M. (Note in order to standardize entries then West, A. & West, M. is used in preference to West, A. & M.) Do try and keep to a maximum of two recorders in this field, as otherwise it becomes unwieldy. If you want to mention additional recorders then please list their names in the comments field.

8. **Determiner:** This will usually be the same name used as recorder. If you have sought confirmation of an identification from someone else, say the county recorder, then use that name here.

9. **Method:** As with recorder and determiner there is quite a confusion of methods in the Mapmate database due to people entering the same method in several differently worded ways! For instance 125 W MV trap, 125W MV trap, MV Light Trap (125w), Skinner Trap (125W MV), Skinner Trap (125W).

I would suggest that the best standardized form for Skinner traps is:
Skinner Trap (125W MV)
As with the other fields, only enter a new method if it is essential.

10. **<u>Reference:</u>** This field should help people to be able to look up records if needed. In its simplest form this could be for instance D. Grundy, 2005, Lepidoptera Field Notes or D. Grundy, 2005, Excel spreadsheet for site, but it could also be a reference to a record in a published book.

11. **<u>Comment:</u>** Any additional note that are relevant can be entered here. In particular, if identifications are confirmed by dissection the comment should indicate this. Other useful details might include, for example, foodplant for larval records and weather data such as temperature and cloud cover.

In all cases do feel free to seek advice from the Database administrator if you need help with any of the above.

Spreadsheet.

If you are sending records on spreadsheets there are some things you can do to make life easier for us when we come to add the data to the system.

1. Please make sure that your name, the date, method and the site details are included at the top of the sheet along with contact details.
2. The minimum data needed to constitute a record are:
Date, Site: Name and Grid ref, Method, Species, Quantity.
3. If you can include Latin names for the macros please do. This is a big time saver.
4. Under method enter the type of trap you are using and the wattage and type of the bulb:
e.g. 'Skinner 125W MV'

I have prepared 4 spreadsheet templates which might be of help to less experienced recorders. They are cut down lists covering the a selection of species commonly found in Gardens in Spring, Summer, Late Summer and Autumn. Just fill them in and add any missing species in the same style. The Latin names are particularly useful and save a lot of time when importing data. It might be easiest to copy and paste them from a website like UK moths to ensure correct spelling.
Please be aware that the spreadsheets are only a starting point. You will see plenty of moths that are not on them. Just add them as you go.

If you are more familiar with spreadsheets and the Bradley and Fletcher numbering system for moths you can use the MapMate import spreadsheet. This has a backsheet with all the latin names and their numbers so all you have to do is enter the number on the top sheet and the taxon formula column will be filled in automatically. Leave Taxon blank. Do not make any changes to the backsheet. If you can fill in the other columns sticking to the conventions detailed above in the MapMate section it will save us a lot of work. If this sheet is filled in correctly it is very easy for us to import the data.

A Word about GMS data.

We would welcome data recorded on Garden Moth Scheme nights. The VC37 database is a separate entity from the one run by GMS and is not limited to a specific list of species, so please send us records of all moths you catch on the GMS nights, not just the GMS listed moths. If you can not identify everything, that's fine, just send what you are sure about.

The County List and recording criteria.

Attached is a list of all the species recorded so far in VC37 as prepared by the county recorder Tony Simpson and Jeff Rush.
It is colour coded to indicate status in the county and the requirements needed to establish a record. Where indicated the County Recorder may want to see a photo or the specimen to confirm the record before it is accepted.
In general a record will only need to be proved once or twice at a site to establish its presence there. The county recorder can give advice on this on a case by case basis.

If you are lucky enough to find a species that is not on the list, please alert the County Recorder and retain the moth if possible. See below.

Voucher Specimens.

As can be seen from the attached County List recording criteria, for certain species a Voucher specimen is required to establish the identification beyond reasonable doubt. In most situations a good photograph will suffice, but there will be occasions where the actual moth is needed for dissection or setting if a specific identification is to be made. Recorders who are uneasy with this idea should be reassured that taking the odd individual in this way will In no way effect the viability of a colony of moths. It is, of course, accepted that some will prefer not to provide specimens for identification.

Acknowledgements.
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Danny Arnold
Dave Grundy
Jeff Rush
Tony Simpson

VC37 Contacts.

County Recorder:
Tony Simpson
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MapMate admin:
Oliver Wadsworth
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Dave Grundy
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Professional Lepidoptera surveys.
Advice regarding the Wyre Forest. Moth ID training, Traps, Moth Pots etc.

Ian Machin
Wyre Forest Moth Group coordinator
ian.machin@tiscali.co.uk

Websites:

Butterfly Conservation, West Midlands branch
http://westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk/

Garden Moth Scheme
http://gms.staffs-ecology.org.uk/

WWT
http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/

UK Moths
http://ukmoths.org.uk
A very useful ID resource.

Teme Valley Wildlife Group
A group of enthusiast in the north west of the county. Plenty of Moth related information on the web site.
http://www.temevalleywildlife.com/

Dissections:

The following local lepidopterists can undertake dissection identification of difficult species:

Danny Arnold: danny.arnold@waterwide.com

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