

Micro Moth Vernacular Names

A Nomenclatural Checklist of British Microlepidoptera



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Forward

Unlike our larger UK moths, the smaller micro moths do not share the common use of a common name. While the use of scientific names throughout the world goes without question, many have trouble learning, remembering, spelling and pronouncing scientific names. I hope, by providing an updated checklist of English language vernacular names, this publication will make our smaller moths more accessible and also encourage people new to the subject, including the media and general public, to become interested in micro moths.

Introduction

It is now fifteen years since the publication *A Label and Checklist of the British Micro-Lepidoptera with Vernacular Names* was written by Jim Porter, and I believe an updated list is needed. In the most recent UK moth checklist *Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles (2013)* Agassiz, D. Beavan, S. Heckford, R., only 192 micros have been given vernacular or "common" names out of the 1633 listed here. The named are mainly pest, distinctive, or relatively large species. So why not the rest?

Published in 1839, *Index Entomologicus; A Complete Illustrated Catalogue of the Lepidopterous Insects of Great Britain* by W. Wood, was one of the earliest publications to list the "English name" of micro moths. This was followed by several more Victorian publications to include vernacular names, including works by Humphreys & Westwood and later W. Kirby. In 1945 Ian Heslop produced the first post-Victorian checklist of British Butterflies and Moths to include common names of the micros. Heslop notes that the development of Nomenclature of the Microlepidoptera seems to have been abruptly arrested during the previous eighty years. Heslop also notes that substantive portions of the English names he used were for the most part crystalized from existing material. Unfortunately, Heslop's inclusion of vernacular names for micro moths was ridiculed by many. The 2002 checklist by Jim Porter brought the Heslop list up-to-date, with new additions to the British list, while keeping to Heslop's established family groupings. Porter's publication was also dismissed by many entomologists and has never been widely accepted and often vigorously derided. It is not uncommon to see vernacular names referred to as "artificial", "manufactured", "twee" or "of no practical use" along with much more colourful statements! This publication will no doubt do little to change opinions of many, however, a growing number of people *are* becoming increasingly familiar with micro moth vernacular names, helped by social media, publication in multiple recent books and on several well-established websites.

In this publication I have continued to revise and expand the Heslop and Porter nomenclature, that Jim Porter passed to me on retiring in 2015. New species are constantly being added to the British list, and these have been assigned logical names targeting either foodplant, habitat, distribution, diagnostic features or other anomalies that distinguish them from closely allied species. While I have retained many of the Heslop and Porter group names, I have revised several groups to modernise and fit logically with new family/subfamily listings in the current UK checklist *Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles (2013)*. Changes include the Tortricidae Twist group replaced by the very familiar Tortrix. The inclusion of new family groups, Bagworms, Diamond-backs, Metal-marks and Leafcutters, often matching group names used in other English speaking countries, have replaced the Smoke, Sweep, Bright, Smudge and Twitchers. Ermel has also been changed to Ermine for the whole Yponomeutidae family. Several families, including the Gelechiidae, have been rearranged to fit new taxonomic order by interchanging some of the group names to fit with modern subfamilies, for example Lichen Sober to Lichen Crest. I chose not to revise some problematic groups, including the Bent-wing group which is now split across four small families that were once subfamilies.

Ideally vernacular names should be brief and descriptive. The least descriptive ones are often translations of scientific names, but help bridge the gap between the two modes of nomenclature. Some names describe where first recorded, for example London Dowd was first recorded in London 1946, but is now common throughout the UK. It is also worth noting that only a few of the so called "Clothes Moths" will eat your best woolly jumper! Very occasionally micro moth species new to Britain are named by the captures, and I have retained these in the list. This new checklist also sequentially lists and gives vernacular names to adventive species recorded in the UK.

While I do not endorse the use of micro moth vernacular names in any professional or scientific capacity, I believe a reference list of these names is needed. The vernacular name can also provide a much-needed anchor when the scientific names and species codes are constantly changing. An example of this can be found with the False Cacao Moth, having had several recent name changes from *Ephestia parasitella* to *Ephestia unicolorella* and most recently *Ephestia woodiella* ! The vernacular name remains a constant.

The increased use of micro moth vernacular names, as we have seen with macro moth vernacular names, are popular with many people and often encourage, enthuse, enlighten, amuse and occasionally anger the growing army of moth-ers in the UK. Like them or loathe them, I believe the vernacular names of micro moths are here to stay, and whilst this publication is not intended to fix micro moth nomenclature irrevocably, I present my revision here for future reference.

All new nomenclature presented here is created by the author and presented as provisional.

I would like to dedicate this book to my late uncle, Nick Nottingham, whose famous Norfolk *wine and moth nights* fuelled my love of moths.

This checklist data will be regularly updated and available as a FREE spreadsheet download by visiting: imoths.com/micromoths

Jim Wheeler 2017

Abbreviations

Denis & Schiffermüller - **D. & S.**; Humphreys & Westwood - **H. & W.**; Kaila, Bengtsson, Sulcs & Junnilainen - **K. B. S. & J.**; van Nieuwerkerken, Lastuvka & Lastuvka - **van N., L. & L.**; Herrich-Schäffer - **H-S.**; Fischer von Röslerstamm - **F. von R.**; Bechstein & Scharfenberg - **B. & S.**; Adventive species - **Adv.**; Checklist 2013 code - **ABH**; Checklist 2000 code - **BF** (*=provisional)