

1. Identifying micros – starting out!

There are lots of micros – perhaps over 1,600 species in UK, so you have to ***start with modest intentions and get better slowly with experience!***

Perhaps it's best to start by defining a 'micro'. Well, they are *not* Swifts, Clearwings, Burnet moths or Leopards or Goat moths, but they are otherwise just *all* the moths, including the Pyralidae and Crambidae, *apart from the more familiar macro-moths that come later in a checklist!* They include tiny, pollen chewing *Micropterix* species, and many others, including the gorgeous 'plume' moths, which are like little floating feathers, and other 'large' micros, like Crambid grass moths.

Start by trying to learn how to recognise the main different types of micros and then you can organise your thoughts and begin to learn the easiest groups initially.

At first *don't bother with horribly worn specimens*, which will be too hard – wait until you are more experienced. Sorry - there are no English names used here but don't worry about pronouncing scientific names correctly – hardly anyone really knows what is correct anyway.

Are there any books or guides that illustrate examples of the main types of micros? Try these:

Sterling, P, Parsons, M and Lewington, R 2012 *Field Guide to the Micro-moths of Great Britain and Ireland*. British Wildlife Publishing. (ISBN 978 0 9564902 1 6)

This generally excellent book has revolutionised micro recording! *It is a huge advance* and so please do use it but there are some quirks that need to be borne in mind, so do be careful.

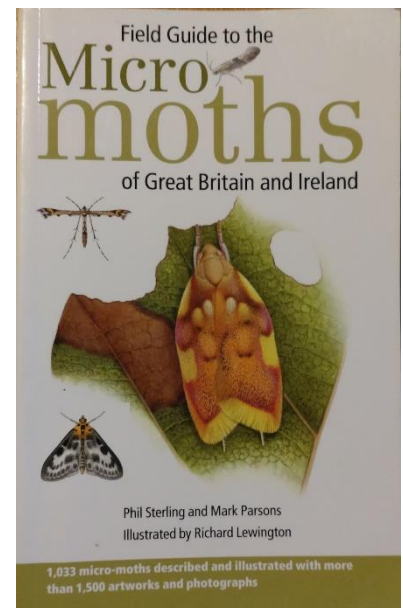
As the authors tell you very firmly, this book only covers about 1,000 species and so around 600 are NOT included, and you may find that your moth is not illustrated – **please don't just assume that your moth is species xx, without considering if it is more likely to be one of the similar missing ones.**

The choice of species included is rather interesting, so all the rare case-bearing Psychids are present, but whole groups of common Gelechiids, such as the widespread and pretty genus *Caryocolum*, are excluded.

Most of the illustrations are excellent but a few are misleading. Some (for example the very common *Celypha lacunana*) just don't look quite right. Some species (such as the abundant *Bactra lancealana*) are very variable, but only one form is illustrated. Some (such as the 'china marks') are not quite the right size. In other words, treat your identifications cautiously, until you gain confidence, and do annotate your copy with explanatory notes to remind you about difficulties. Some moth recorders scribble all over their copies!

The pictures of caterpillars and feeding signs are excellent and very helpful. The text for each species is helpful, and the maps provide a good indication of the species distribution. Key features are usually noted, together with habitat and flight time but the feeding time of caterpillars is omitted, which is not helpful.

If you like micros, you **must buy this book!** The second edition is due out in December 2023.



Manley, C 2021 (3rd Edn) *British Moths and Butterflies. A Photographic Guide.* A & C Black, London (ISBN 978 1 4729 7520 1)

Chris Manley's 3rd edition is the **only** book that illustrates *all* British moths, including the micros. **It is now the essential guide.** However, Manley warns that some groups of moths are so similar that they need dissection to be sure of their identity. Some species are variable, but often only one or two examples are shown. The text has to be brief for each species, but there are thumbnail maps to help guide you.

Berkshire Moth Group 2013 *Common Micro-moths of Berkshire* 2nd edition. (ISBN: 9780 9926 9811 9)

The second edition of this great book covers more than 200 of the commonest micros. Not all are widespread but, even so, many are found throughout Great Britain and Ireland and the 900 photos illustrate them nicely. The text shows and describes distinctive features of confusion species and common variation is included.

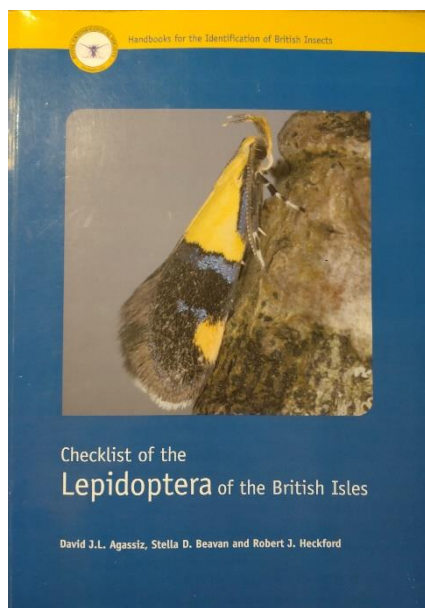
Smart, B 2017 *Micro-moth Field Tips. Vol. 1* Lancs and Cheshire Fauna Society. (ISBN 978 1 9997312 0 5)

And Smart, B 2021 *Micro-moth Field Tips. Vol. 2* Lancs and Cheshire Fauna Society. (ISBN 978 1 9169034 2 5)

These are a marvellous introduction to the life cycles of common micro-moths and are arranged seasonally and are very user-friendly.

Langmaid, J R, Palmer S M & Young M R 2018 *A Field Guide to the Smaller Moths of Great Britain and Ireland.* BENHS (ISBN 978 1 899935 08 6)

There are no pictures here but for *every* British species the life cycle is set out in a standardised format. The species index allows you to look up where, when and how to search for any particular species and the index to foodplants helps you identify which species you have found, by setting out the feeding signs on the foodplant in question.



Agassiz, D J L, Beavan, S D & Heckford, R J 2013 *Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles.* Royal Entomological Society (ISBN 978 0 901546 96 8)

This isn't a pictorial guide but a check-list of all British Lepidoptera and it will quickly become your constant companion. Unfortunately, there have been many changes in the names of all moths but fortunately the other recent books already use these new names.

This checklist is also available as an Excel Spreadsheet which can be downloaded [here](#):

Here are two of the many general web guides:

<http://ukmoths.org.uk/> The main UK web-based guide. Many species are included, but there are no photographs of a small number of species, so beware. The main difficulty with using this guide is knowing where to start!

<http://www.lepiforum.de/lepiwiki.pl> This is an excellent foreign website which includes micros, but it is a bit cumbersome to navigate.

The text in these materials has been adapted from that originally created by Mark Young.

The *Supporting Science* project aims to improve data flow and better support our recorders and volunteers.

We will improve access to natural heritage and grow digital skills by developing tools and collaboration. This project received DCMS and National Lottery funding, distributed by The Heritage Fund as part of their Digital Skills for Heritage initiative. We are also grateful to Henry C. Hoare Charitable Trust, Sophia Webster Ltd. Sabina Sutherland Charitable Trust, and The Lochlands Trust for their support.



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