

Holtspur Bottom Reserve, Caterpillar Crawl & Moth Trap. Evening of 5th May 2006

Although it had been a glorious day the temperature was already falling by the time we gathered at 7.30pm. A walk around our reserve gave a delightful view of the lower field where the cowslips ran into four figures. We also had our first moth without even switching on the light trap – a Green Carpet flying in one of the hedges. Back in Riding Lane the Garlic Mustard plants were inspected and produced three Orange Tip eggs (two white and one orange) and a Green-veined White egg laid on the back of a leaf.

As dusk and the temperature fell we searched for caterpillars in the neighbouring LNR Holtspur Bank but without success. By then Paul Bowyer had got the light trap running but it was some time before our first moth arrived and that was so worn as to be unrecognisable!

We switched the trap off at half past ten by when our moth catch had risen to eight individuals and four identified species – Brindled Pug, Nut-tree Tussock, Hebrew Character and Early Thorn. The four Nut-tree Tussocks were of interest – three were the normal form *medionigra* but the fourth was the melanic form *melanotica* – which was a first for me. Reference to the books showed the Chilterns are the stronghold of this form – at last a moth which had read the books.

David Redhead.