

URESIPHITA REVERSALIS (GUENEE, 1854) (LEP.: PYRALIDAE) NEW TO BRITISH ISLES AND POSSIBLY EUROPE

TONY DAVIS AND DOUG MILLER

ABSTRACT

Uresiphita reversalis Guenee is added to the British list on the basis of a specimen taken in Somerset in September 2006. Details of the life history and distribution are given and the likelihood of natural arrival is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

On the night of 23 September 2006 – National Moth Night – DM ran a Robinson MV trap in his garden at Westonzoyland (ST3434). The trap was placed next to the cream-coloured garage wall as some of the more unusual moths do not enter the trap and are found resting on the wall. Westonzoyland is located on the edge of the Somerset Levels which has very few trees or shrubs and can be affected at times by strong winds. DM's garden can best be described as untidy and is thus a haven for wildlife. The weather was warm with a little rain at times and a light wind from the south-east. Interesting moths recorded included Four Spotted Footman *Lithosia quadra* (Linn.), *Palpita vitrealis* (Rossi), Silver Y *Autographa gamma* (Linn.), Vestal *Rhodometra sacraria* (Linn.), *Udea ferrugalis* (Hb.) and the first Pinion Streaked Snout *Schrankia costaestrigalis* (Steph.) for the site.

The *Uresiphita reversalis* was immediately visible upon checking the trap. It looked familiar to DM but checking through all the books available to him, failed to produce a suitable match. Somerset Moth Group have always asked members to retain unusual or unidentified species so the specimen was passed to David Evans who gave it to TD at the Annual Exhibition of the British Entomological and Natural History Society (BENHS).

IDENTIFICATION

The specimen was shown to various lepidopterists at the BENHS exhibition but its identity was not clear to anyone as it was unset. Upon relaxing, it was immediately apparent that it was related to *Uresiphita gilvata* Fabricius. However it was significantly smaller than typical *U. gilvata*, had greatly reduced black on the hindwing and a relatively poorly marked forewing. A scan of internet images suggested that *U. reversalis* was a good match. After setting, the moth was photographed and the image sent to Martin Honey and Michael Schaffer at the Natural History Museum, London, who kindly confirmed the identification.

The wingspan of the Somerset specimen was 26.5mm, which is below the range of 29–37mm given for *U. gilvata* by Goater (1986). Unfortunately, Munroe (1976) does not give a size range for *U.*

reversalis and it seems likely that there may be a small overlap in size between the two species

Both species have an orange-yellow hindwing with a blackish border but the border of *U. reversalis* is usually limited to the apex and rarely extends as far as half way along the border. In *U. gilvata* there is frequently a complete blackish border although it can occasionally be reduced, as in the illustration in Goater (1986). A couple of specimens in the Natural History Museum collections have the dark markings reduced to the hindwing apex (Martin Honey, pers. comm.).

The forewing of *U. reversalis* is generally poorly marked and is often more orangey-brown than *U. gilvata*. The central part of the forewing is often the same colour as the rest of the forewing and if a dark bar is present, it is just a slightly darker shade of brown.

BIOLOGY

Munroe (1976) states that the larvae feed on the leaves and tender bark and shoots of broom *Genista* sp., lupins *Lupinus* sp., Wild Indigo *Baptisia tinctoria* (L.), Necklace Pod *Sophora tomentosa* (L.), honeysuckle *Lonicera* sp., and other plants and shrubs, especially legumes. Leen (1995) gives the distribution as being from Nova Scotia, Canada, down the eastern side of North America into parts of Mexico and extending west into Arizona and California. The current distribution in central and northern California is attributed to an expansion of range in the early 1980s. Munroe (1976) states that in the northern part of the range there are years of sporadic abundance, possibly sustained by migration from the south and that it is an occasional pest of nursery stock and ornamental plantings. There is no mention of the species in Karsholt and Razowski (1996) or on the Fauna Europaea website so this appears to represent the first European record. Munroe (1976) gives the flight period as being from February to November in the southern part of its range.

ORIGINS

Whilst it is always impossible to know for certain the origins of a particular specimen, and the fact that *U. reversalis* can occasionally be a pest of nursery stock points towards accidental importation, there

are several factors which are indicative of natural arrival. The relatively rural location of the capture, on the western side of Britain during September is more indicative of natural arrival and fits with the predominant pattern of arrival of Nearctic birds and insects. In the days immediately preceding the capture of *U. reversalis*, several Nearctic birds were found on the western side of Britain. Of particular interest is the discovery of two Buff-breasted Sandpipers *Tryngites subruficollis* and a Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* at Slimbridge on 22 September. Slimbridge is c. 80km north-east of Westonzoyland and the arrival of these birds indicates that the air currents in that part of the country were suitable for transatlantic vagrancy.

CONCLUSION

Uresiphita reversalis can be added to the British list on the basis of a specimen trapped at Westonzoyland, Somerset on 23 September 2006. It is suggested that it is allocated a logbook number of 1369a.

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