

Three species of snout moths previously unrecorded for the United Arab Emirates (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae: Hypeninae)

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The larger moths (Macro-Heterocera) are one of the best known of the major groups of insects in the UAE. This is due almost entirely to the indefatigable collecting efforts of Belgium-based Albert Legrain during the 1990s. Legrain's strategy was to make almost annual one- or two-week intensive collecting trips to the country. At different seasons, he visited much of the national territory used nocturnal light-trapping as well as other techniques to collect and record moths. His results have yielded an apparently remarkably complete inventory of the macro-moth fauna of the UAE (Legrain and Wiltshire, 1998).

However, much of Legrain's work was concentrated in the northern emirates with little attention being paid to collecting in Abu Dhabi Emirate. It has thus been possible to complement this list with a few other species from the Al Ain region of Abu Dhabi that have, in most cases, been found quite by chance. They include single specimens of a carpenter moth (family Cossidae) (Gillett, 1998a) and of two migratory species of Plusiinae (family Noctuidae) (Gillett, 1998b*), and, most recently, the Savannah Hawkmoth, *Sphingonaepiopsis nana* (family Sphingidae) (Gillett and Howarth 2007). The Hummingbird Hawkmoth (*Macroglossum stellatarum*), recorded by Legrain and Wiltshire only from Oman, is also known from the UAE (Gillett, 1993). A few other species from Abu Dhabi, mainly from the family Noctuidae, in the collection of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, EAD, formerly the Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency, ERWDA, will also eventually be recorded as additions to the national list.

In the present note, three further species from the family Noctuidae are recorded for the first time for the UAE, all from the Al Ain region. All three are rather drab-coloured snout moths belonging to the genus *Hypena*, subfamily Hypeninae.

Hypena laceratalis Walker, 1858

There is a single record of this small brown moth with lighter markings on the forewing: it is from Al Muwaiji, Al Ain (at light on 6 July 1998), otherwise this species is known in the Arabian Peninsula only from Fife and Al Qatif in Saudi Arabia (Wiltshire, 1990). Outside of Arabia, this moth is well known and Kenyan strains have been introduced into Australia and elsewhere for control of the weed *Lantana camara* (Verbenaceae) (QNRM, 2003), which is presumably the larval foodplant in the UAE.

Hypena obsitalis (Hübner, 1813)

This brown moth is slightly larger than the preceding species and has fewer and less distinct lighter markings. There is a single record from Al Muwaiji, Al Ain (at light

on 13 March 1998), otherwise this moth is recorded in the Arabian Peninsula only from the Jeddah region of Saudi Arabia (Wiltshire, 1990). Elsewhere, this moth is widespread in Europe, being known as the Bloxworth Snout in English. Until recently, it was considered as a rare immigrant to mainland Britain, but is now thought to be established in Devon (Kimber, 2006). Foodplants in Europe include Urticaceae such as Pellitory-of-the-wall (*Parietaria judaica*) and probably Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), suggesting *Forsskaolea tenacissima* as a possible larval host in the UAE.

Hypena abyssinalis (Guenée, 1854)

Individual moths were recorded several times at light in the Al Ain region and at Al Lisaili (Dubai) in the early 1990s, but no more recent records are at hand. It is similar to *H. obsitalis*, but has more pointed forewings, is darker brown and has barely discernable lighter markings. Wiltshire (1990) mentions specimens collected from Jizan and eastern Saudi Arabia and states that the species is common at coastal localities in Oman. Elsewhere, the moth is restricted to Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia.

These records actually double the number of species from this subfamily known from the UAE. Legrain and Wiltshire recorded *Rhynchodontes revolutalis* (Zeller, 1752), *R. orientis* (Brandt, 1938) ssp. *richteri* Wiltshire, 1961 and *Hypena lividalis* (Hübner, 1790). Compared to the other UAE species, this last mentioned is much more attractively and distinctively marked with a large chestnut brown area at the base of the forewing delimited by a diagonal white line. It is also known from the Al Ain region, a single individual having been collected at light on 11 March 1998 at Al Muwaiji. Compared to most noctuids, the members of the genus *Hypena* are delicate moths and their wings are easily damaged. None of the specimens of the three species newly recorded were encountered in perfect condition and all were unsuitable for photography. However, typical specimens of all three species, together with *H. lividalis* (as *Ophiuche lividalis*), are illustrated in the catalogue of macro-moths from Saudi Arabia (Wiltshire, 1990). All species, except *H. abyssinalis*, are also well illustrated at various sites on the internet.

The published list of Legrain and Wiltshire (1998) included 200 species of macro-moths from the UAE, plus 19 others known only from adjacent areas of Oman. In comparison, the number known from Saudi Arabia is much greater at 641 (Wiltshire, 1994). The number of UAE species can now be increased to 208. However, the additions mentioned above or included here are relatively few and mostly consist only of fortuitous captures of single specimens by enthusiasts resident in the UAE and in all cases, the moths have previously been recorded from Saudi Arabia or elsewhere in the Arabian

Peninsula (Wiltshire, 1991). Nevertheless, the activities of such individuals and of the Emirates Natural History Group and affiliated groups are likely to bring further recording successes for macro-moths, especially since more focused collecting activities including mercury-vapour lamp trapping are coming into wider use.

*Since this record, a second specimen of *Autographa gamma* (L.) has been captured in the UAE (Al Muwajji, Al Ain, 9 December 1998).

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