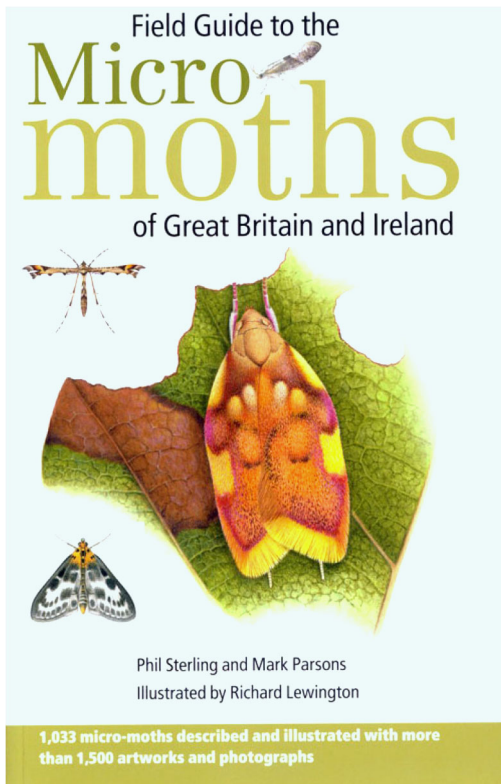


## Book review

Phil Sterling, Mark Parsons & Richard Lewington (Illustrator), 2012. **Field Guide to the Micro-Moths of Great Britain and Ireland.** British Wildlife Publishing. Paperback or Hardback, 416 pages, 1400 + colour photos and colour illustrations, 900 colour distribution maps. ISBN 9780956490216 (sb), 9780956490223 (hb). Price resp. approximately €35.00 or 53.00.



A few years ago the Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland by Paul Waring and Martin Townsend was the start of almost a revolution in identification of larger moths in the British Isles, and also in many other European countries: no longer are all species illustrated as set specimens, but in

their natural resting posture. The previous guide was also exceptional that these illustrations were not photographs, as is usually the case, but very detailed and lively water colours by Richard Lewington. Now Phil Sterling and Mark Parsons in collaboration again with Richard Lewington have undertaken the daunting task of making the first ever fieldguide to the majority of the smaller micro-moths. Understandable, a full coverage of the more than 1600 British species was not possible, not only because many of the smaller moths cannot be identified by external characters alone, but with more than 1000 species covered this is the most complete guide treating the micro moths in Europe.

After some introductory chapters, including references, notes on the field study and a lengthy key to families, the bulk of the book is devoted to treatment of families and species. The descriptions are brief, and are printed alongside a small map of the distribution in the British Isles, and contain respectively a note on abundance, forewing length, brief diagnosis, notes on similar species, Flight season, Habitat and Foodplant. The descriptions are accompanied by many photos of life history: larvae and feeding patterns, and also family introductions contain a lot of information. The watercolours of adult moths are grouped in full page plates to allow comparison of related species. The book ends with a chapter explaining the technique of genitalia dissections and shows some photos of genitalia of difficult groups.

The authors are to be congratulated for the way they have made this a very handy and useful guide. The quality of illustrations is very high, the texts are short, but provide just the information one needs and refer to the characters that one should examine. Also the keys are interesting and helpful, although some of the recognised groupings are still a bit complicate. Identification of so many different species remains difficult and many earlier attempts failed to come with something useful to identify families or groups. I find this attempt much better, although it could probably be improved in future, and would probably still work better as an interactive key on internet.

In future a combination with a website might be an interesting option.

There is always a risk with such guides that users think they can identify all species just by externals and photographs, and that collecting is not needed. Luckily the authors are well aware of this risk and warn repeatedly that not all species can be identified with this guide and that genitalia dissections are essential in several groups, and they even explain this method, although the few photos of genitalia will obviously only help in a few cases. The authors provide much of the needed extra literature and websites.

In all I have very little comment, or it would be that my choice of the adult Nepticulidae treated

would be different, or a bit more extensive: in my opinion it is much more likely that *Ectoedemia albifasciella* or *subbimaculella* are taken at light than the two species shown. Finally in the key one should read that the antennae of the adelids are longer than 1.5 forewing length rather than shorter.

Finally I hope that this book, although still built upon the unscientific separation between macro- and micro-moths will gradually lead to the end of this separation and grant these smaller moths the important place they deserve amongst the Lepidoptera. Nobody working seriously on European Lepidoptera can miss this book.

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