

Foreign mothing by Graham Ekins

I have very much enjoyed mothing abroad. It all started with trips to rural Dordogne in southern France where it was so exciting catching moths that were scarce or rare in the UK. Taking moth traps was relatively easy as we always went by car. I usually took ALS pro Robinsons with 125MV or 2X30watt Actinics, these stack easily and so take up less space. Later we started mothing in southern Portugal and so we had to decide on traps suitable for carrying in hold luggage. Initially this was with 20watt actinic bulbs with a collapsible netting trap. This was OK but very fiddly trying to extract moths without many escaping, especially if the catch was a large one.

On teaming up with Dave Grundy in Andalusia I decided to take out a different trap to use at Huerta Grande, our base. I decided on the collapsible white compact skinner with 2X20 watt actinics when main supply was available as well as 2X2watt LEDS. The latter I only use in the UK where there is no light pollution. These are great as they last 2 nights with one lightweight 8Amph Lithium battery, the largest that can be taken in cabin luggage and not at all in the hold. This is now my standard travelling kit. I have now used this kit successfully in France, Portugal, Spain, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Vietnam, Guatemala and Brazil. I also take quite a few egg trays as so many moths rest on these outside the trap and they are great at protecting the mothing gear in transit. I also borrow a sheet where available to hang on walls or on trees.

In dry Dipterocarp forest in southern Cambodia at Tmatboey Forest Lodge in February I used the 2X2watt LEDS. I logged 250 species and 800 moths, a significant proportion were pretty Crambids and Erebidae. In such places I place the trap above ground as Reptiles are attracted as well as rodents, they both can cause havoc if they get in the trap.



In Vietnam I was astounded by the sheer quantity and variety of moths attracted with 2 X2watt LEDS. The higher level rainforest catches eclipsed anything I have experienced elsewhere, even in Central / South America. At 1,400 metres in the superb Bach Ma National Park in east central Vietnam we were lucky enough to stay at the old French research station. This was surrounded by forest and with no light pollution.

Within minutes of lighting the trap moths arrived and by morning 2,500 moths of 400 species were logged. In fact I took so many images that my flash batteries ran out and I had to resort to a head torch. It was amazing to see so much variety with very limited replication. As I had placed the trap on a balcony many moths were on the walls and ceiling as well as on the egg boxes and inside the trap.



I had a similar experience at Bach Mai National Park in the cloud forest. Here I logged 2,500 moths of 250 species.



I have so far never had any problems with security checks over my hold luggage and the ALS kit I use is robust enough to survive the rigours of travelling.

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