

TRAVELS WITH AN LED MOTH TRAP



We have never been fans of using LED for recording moths in the UK, numbers are always low and using 12V actinic light will always give a bigger catch result. These experiences are normally also reflected by many other recorders although I do hear from a few that say LED can give good results in the UK.

When going overseas where the moth density is higher, then this is a very different story all together and we will always take LED. Not only is taking the smaller powerbank batteries used to run the LED traps easier by air, the small compact netting traps we use also pack away and store in hand luggage so much easier.

We have been taking LED traps to many overseas locations over the past few years, usually testing LED lights, the traps, or, as this year when visiting the Italian Alps and touring Greece mainland, we were trying out various sized powerbank batteries to see how they performed.

In July we spent a few days at Bormio in the Italian Alps (4500ft altitude), armed with our ALS Hanging Holiday Netting Trap, which runs a single 2w LED light and is powered by a 10,000mAh tiny powerbank battery like those used for topping up mobile phones. This powered the trap for 12+ hours, and we were more than happy to see up to 100 moths of approximately 35 species per night. The trap was deployed on the edge of alpine meadow and a large wood dominated by both pine and deciduous trees.



Good numbers of Pale Shining Brown were seen on most nights along with good numbers of species such as Feathered Beauty, Jersey Mocha and Lace Border. Marbled Green were usually seen in small numbers, as were Purple Marbled.

Chalk Carpet were often found outside the trap as was the one and only strikingly marked crambid *Catoptria myella*. Other species that were particularly pleasing to find and new to us were the Noctuids *Chersotis alpestris* and *Lasionhada proxima*, two species which are widespread but rare throughout the Alps, usually occurring above 2500m.



The all white tortricid *Eana argentana* was also recorded. Rare in the UK and only known from a few mountainous areas in the Scottish Highlands, this was another species new to us!



One species we have been on the lookout for many years when trapping overseas is the Spruce Carpet look-alike *Thera variata* and one was found on the outside of the trap (and confirmed later).

Our next trip overseas was a tour of the Greek mainland in mid-September. This time we took the ALS Holiday Trap which runs two 2w LED lights. The trap had the added bonus of having feet so could be placed anywhere on the ground or hung from vegetation to suit the local conditions. Run by a 26,000mAh powerbank battery the size of a mobile phone, it ran the trap for 12+ hours.



The first site we used this trap was in the north of Greece in the Balkans, north of Ioannina, amongst beautiful woodland valleys and gorges consisting of oak and hornbeam woodland.

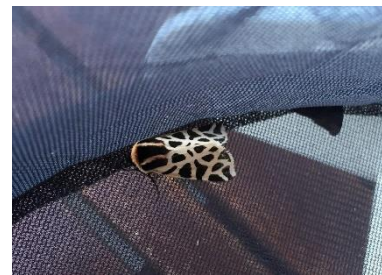
One of my all-time best moth memories occurred here when each night we would see up to eight *Catocalids* (red underwing species) inside the moth trap! These consisted of three different species, *Catocala conjuncta*, the so called Minsmere Crimson Underwing, *Catocala elocata* French Red Underwing and *C.puerpera*.



Good numbers were also seen of species such as Jersey Tiger, *Odonestis pruni*, *Cymbalophora pudica* and *Dysauxes punctata*.



Other species that graced the LED trap were Mediterranean Brocade, Speckled Beauty, Portland Ribband Wave and several Scarce Bordered Straw.



One species still awaiting identification is an unusual *Thaumetopoea* (processionary sp.) which is believed to be *T. solitaria* but has not been confirmed as of time of writing this.

Our second Greek site was several hundred miles further south in the Peloponnese, at a coastal site near the Corinth Canal, consisting of much pine and olive which reflected the catch. Here numbers were a little lower than in the north of Greece due to very high temperatures and the less varied landscape, but still upwards of 75 moths of around 25 species were seen nightly, mainly consisting of Pine Processionary, which overran the trap on some nights.



Fair numbers of the Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing look-alike, *Noctua tirrinica*, Vestal and Dumeril's Rustic (*Luperina dumerilii*) were caught, along with single *Idaea filicata* which is known by some authorities as Lustrous Least Carpet, and the beautiful little *Pseudozarba bipartita*. Some oddly marked, dark examples of *Hellula undualis*, Old World Webworm were also seen.

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Photos by Tim Green & Jon Clifton