

2439 (9053) Gold Spot *Plusia festucae* (Linnaeus, 1758)

2440 (9054) Lempke's Gold Spot *Plusia putnami* (Grote, 1873)

ssp. gracilis (Lempke, 1966)

Common

Local

History and status

The existence of the taxon that we now know as *Plusia putnami* ssp. *gracilis* was not known until as recently as the 1960s, when it was described and compared with *festucae* by Lempke (1966, 1969). Lempke concluded that it was a new species and named it *Autographa gracilis*. Dufay (1969) recognised its association with the North American *putnami* and corrected the name to *putnami gracilis*.

Diagnostic external characters

The two species appear very similar upon first examination, and hence *putnami gracilis* was overlooked for a very long time. Close examination using the characters listed by Waring *et al.* (2009) will suffice to confirm the identity of most examples. However, *festucae* varies such that some closely resemble *putnami* in one or more respects, indeed one such specimen from Wester Ross was dissected as a possible *putnami* for the preparation of this guide. Therefore, in cases of doubt the genitalia should be examined for a positive identification. These show clear differences.

Diagnostic morphological characters of the males

Clavus (Fig. 134, A) shorter and thinner than harpe (B) (the latter thicker than in *festucae*).

Everted vesica narrow with single short cornutus (C).....*putnami*

Clavus (Fig. 136, A) longer and broader than harpe (B) (the latter thinner than in *putnami*).

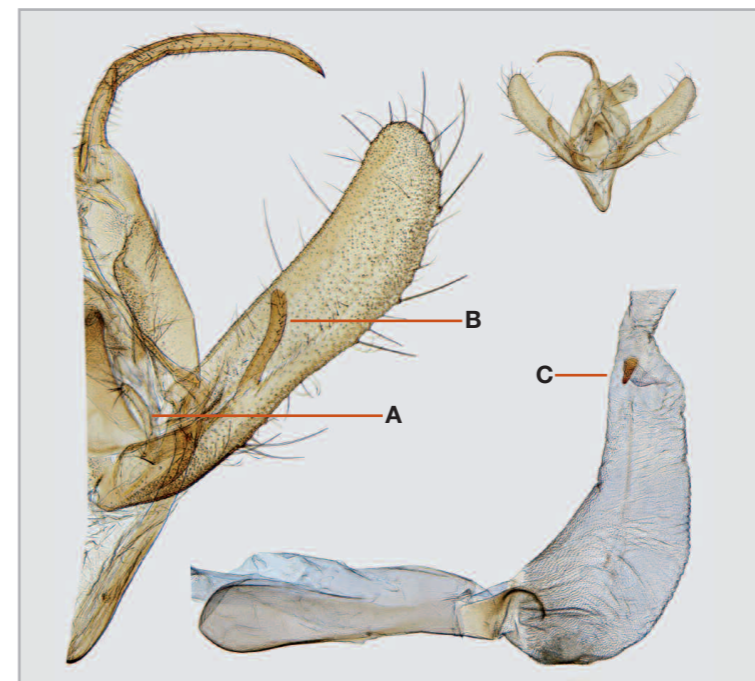
Everted vesica broad with a single long and pointed cornutus (C).....*festucae*

Diagnostic morphological characters of the females

Bursa copulatrix long and narrow with a large area of sclerotisation (Fig. 135, A).....*putnami*

Bursa copulatrix long and broad with a small area of sclerotisation (Fig. 137, A).....*festucae*

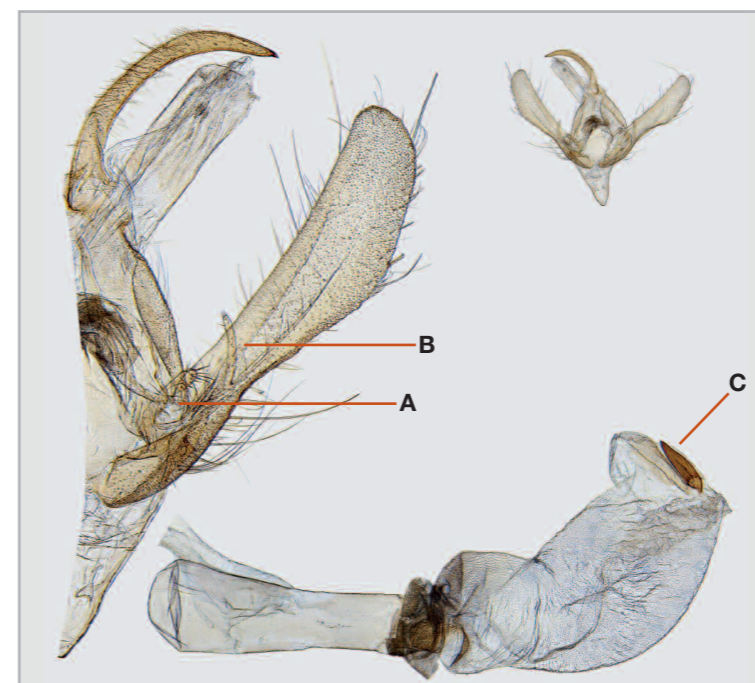
Other differences in the shape of the bursa copulatrix, the width of the ostium bursae, and the length of the ductus bursae are provided by Heath and Emmet (1983), but these have proved to be inconsistent.



134. *Plusia putnami* male



135. *Plusia putnami* female



136. *Plusia festucae* male



137. *Plusia festucae* female