

Identification of the Ear Moth (*Amphipoea oculea*) and Saltern Ear (*A. lucens*) via the pinch method.

This method has been widely practised by some moth recorders for identifying male Grey and Dark Dagger in the field via a hand lens for many years where the moth is held between finger and thumb and the tip of the abdomen very gently squeezed so the valva open to reveal the three protruding arms, two for Grey and three for Dark. A method which works most of the time in the field and does no harm to the moth if done correctly other than removing scales and thus being far better than killing the insect.

This can also be done for the male Ear Moth and Saltern Ear if a good quality x20 hand lens is used but will generally only work in areas where only these two species occur*.

It would not work for instance where Saltern and Large Ear occur as a full dissection would then need to be performed.

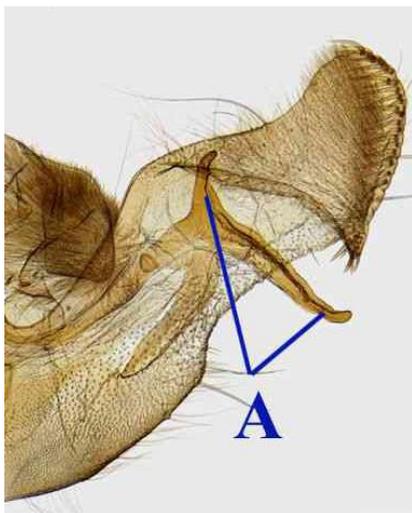
What you are looking for is the shape and length of the harpe **A** (see images)

In the Ear Moth the two arms of the harpe are short and of roughly equal length, in Saltern Ear the two arms are of very unequal length, the longest arm reaching the angle of the cucullus.

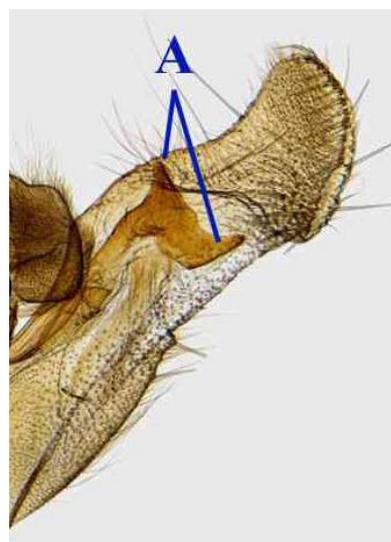
As mention above, it is better than killing the moth but will only work if the moth is handled correctly and if a good hand lens is used. If the insect will not open the valva or is troublesome in handling then the recorder should let it go and move on otherwise, constant handling and the need to get a determination could result in damage occurring to some of the internal organs of the moth.

When sending in your records, please note if this method has been performed otherwise it will be listed as Ear Moth Agg.

*This method can also be used for Crinan Ear (*A. crinanensis*)



Saltern Ear



Ear Moth