

E-moth

Moths Count Update October 2011

What a bizarre moth-ing season it has been. I've received numerous reports from County Moth Recorders that species have been flying at strange times, some species earlier than normal, no doubt due to the warm spring we encountered and some later than normal. It seems that on the whole the number of moths trapped is down again, whereas other methods, sweeping, dusking and wine-roping have produced similar numbers of moths in relation to previous years.

Tigers on the prowl

Jersey Tigers have had a great year. This moth certainly appears to be expanding its former range. One was trapped in Monmouthshire on the 12th August, becoming the first county record. Jersey Tigers are well established in London south of the Thames, but this year they have also been reported from new areas in and around London such as, Wembley, Epping, Greenwich and Wimbledon Common. Another was recorded on 21st August at the RSPB's Northward Hill nature reserve in North Kent.



Jersey Tiger (M. Parsons)

National Moth Recorders' Meeting

The date for the second National Moth Recorders' Meeting is **January 28th 2012** at the Birmingham and Midlands Institute, central Birmingham. The programme for the day has been drawn up and the line up features both amateur moth recorders and academic researchers. We are really pleased to have Professor Gareth Jones from the 'Batlab' at Bristol University speaking about how bats and moths try to out-wit one another in their predator/prey relationship. The draft programme for the day can be found at the end of this newsletter. It will also be available on the Moths Count website (www.mothscount.org) in due course. This year there is a £5 (per person) registration fee for attendees. This includes morning and afternoon tea/coffee and a buffet lunch all subsidised from Butterfly Conservation budgets. It has been necessary to impose a charge this year as we no longer have Heritage Lottery Funding to cover holding such an event. Advanced booking is essential, to book your place please contact info@butterfly-conservation.org or telephone 01929 400209. We hope to see you there.

National Moth Recording Scheme

A total of 1.1 million records have been received by the Moths Count team since the publication of the provisional atlas at the end of last year. In addition to this just over half a million moth records have been incorporated in to the NMRS database since the publication of the hardcopy annual

newsletter in July. These recently refreshed datasets have been submitted by the following County Moth Recorders and we are very grateful to all of them:

Tony James, West & East Cornwall (VC 1 & 2); Norman Lowe, Breconshire (VC 42); Pete & Ginny Clarke, Radnorshire (VC 43); Keith Dover, Durham (VC 66); Tom Tams, South & North Northumberland (VC 67 & VC 68); Duncan Davidson, Fifeshire (VC 85); John Knowler, Stirlingshire, West Perthshire & Dunbartonshire (VC 86, 87 & 99); Mark Young, Kincardineshire, South Aberdeenshire & North Aberdeenshire (VC 91, VC 92 & VC 93); Alan Skeates, Mid Ebudes, (VC 103); Margaret Currie and Andrew Scott, East Ross (VC 106); Tony Mainwood, East Sutherland (VC 107) and Neil Money, Caithness (VC 109).

The first step in understanding moth ecology and distribution has been taken in the publication of the *Provisional Atlas of the UK's Larger Moths*. However, there is plenty of work still to be done. There are still areas where recording coverage could be improved. Targeting of 'white holes' or 'square bashing', as it is known in the biological recording world, is another key challenge for the moth recording community and NMRS team. To date only 10% of 10km squares have no records or species attributed to them. Ultimately, in time, we wish to produce a full atlas of the larger moths of Great Britain and Ireland. In order to do this recording coverage needs to be improved. This can be achieved by organising field meetings in under-recorded 10km squares. To find out what 10km squares are under-recorded in your area please contact your County Moth Recorder, the list of CMR's can be found [here](#).

Historical Records – a plea!

Another area in which the NMRS database can be improved is through increasing the historical baseline. The NMRS database now holds 12.4 million moth records. Of these less than 5 million (c.40%) are from before the year 2000. The oldest record in the database is that of a Puss Moth recorded in 1761 at Nunwick Hall, Simonburn near Hexham in Northumberland by Rev. J. Wallis. This record pre-dates the former oldest record of the Death's-head Hawk-moth, also recorded by Rev. Wallis, in Felton north Northumberland by eight years.



Puss Moth (L. Hill)

Some vice-county datasets in the NMRS contain no historical records at all. In comparison, 61% of the Hertfordshire (VC 20) dataset are from pre 2000. The Hertfordshire dataset contains the highest number of historical records (335,505) within the NMRS. The three vice-counties with the highest percentage of historical records are Ceredigion (VC46) and Oxfordshire (VC23) each with historical records forming 85% of the datasets and North Ebudes (VC 104) with 96% historical records.

Our next priority is to increase the number of historical records across the NMRS database in order to assess species distribution changes more accurately. We are therefore appealing for County Moth Recorders and the moth recording community to incorporate important historical records into their datasets and pass them on to the NMRS as soon as possible. We repatriated some 640,000 Biological Record Centre (BRC) records to County Moth Recorders in the summer of 2010. In addition to this the 10 million or so historical Rothamsted Insect Survey (RIS) data were repatriated in the spring of 2009. Many of these records have already been incorporated in to local datasets, however some have not been. It would be great if the next refresh to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway, which is planned for December, included as much historical

data as possible. We also encourage all moth recorders to submit their records to their County Moth Recorders' as soon as possible so that they can be included in the NMRS as rapidly as possible.

Scottish Moth Surveys

Two moth surveys ran in Scotland this year. The Scottish Garden Tiger Safari took place in August; so far 75 records of the moth have been submitted from 21 vice-counties. Sightings came from Thurso on the north coast right down to the Mull of Galloway (Scotland's most southerly point). This year was the third and final year of the Scottish Cinnabar moth survey run by Barry Prater. The Cinnabar moth is scarce in Scotland and previous records show that it had a mainly coastal distribution. However, early indications are that the moth is moving inland in Scotland. Barry will be publishing the results from this survey next year.

Big Butterfly Count 2011

Two moth species were included in this year's Big Butterfly Count. There were mixed results, sightings of the Silver Y were down by 85% compared to last year. Sightings of the Six-spot Burnet were up by 34% on 2010 taking the moth in to number 10 in the chart. This is the first time a moth has made it in to the Big Butterfly Count Top 10!

Moth appeal

In September 2009 we launched an appeal for funds to support the National Moth Recording Scheme. There has been a fantastic response so far, but it is certainly not too late to contribute either a one-off donation or a monthly pledge by direct debit (see www.mothscount.org for details). So far we've received donations amounting to over £23,000. A huge thank you to all of you who have supported the appeal and the National Moth Recording Scheme to date! Your support is more important to us than ever as unfortunately this year we suffered an 85% reduction in our core funding from Natural England which supports Butterfly Conservation's species conservation work.

Membership offer – 3 months free

By becoming a member of Butterfly Conservation you can help support our moth conservation and moth recording work. [Join](#) today to receive 3 months free when you sign up by direct debit.

Alternatively from Monday 14th November 2011 **half price gift membership** will be available, that's just £14 for a single, £16 for joint and £19 for family membership for a whole year. Not only is this an ideal Christmas present for your friends and family, but it will also support our vital moth conservation work and help to reduce the declines that many species are suffering.

Moths Count Contacts

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www.mothscount.org

DRAFT PROGRAMME

NATIONAL MOTH RECORDERS' MEETING 2012

Lyttelton Lecture Theatre, Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham
Saturday 28 January 2012

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| 10.00 am | Arrival and coffee |
| 10.30 am | Welcome <i>Dr. Martin Warren, Chief Executive of Butterfly Conservation</i> |
| 10.45 am | National Moth Recording Scheme Update <i>Richard Fox, Butterfly Conservation</i> |
| 11.10 am | Uncertain and Confused – automated validation of moth records <i>Les Hill, Butterfly Conservation</i> |
| 11.30 am | A Snapshot of Ireland - recording in the Republic of Ireland <i>Don Hodgers, Republic of Ireland Moth Recorder</i> |
| 11.50 am | What makes Sussex Moth Group tick? <i>Graeme Lyons, Chairman Sussex Moth Group</i> |
| 12:10 pm | Discussion session |
| 12.30 pm | Lunch |
| 2.00 pm | Insect High Flyers: studying long-distance migration of moths <i>Dr. Jane Hill, York University</i> |
| 2.30 pm | Warriors of the Deep and other Welsh Wonders <i>Dave Slade, County Moth Recorder, Glamorgan</i> |
| 2.50 pm | A 'big' book of little moths <i>Dr. Phil Sterling, County Micro-moth Recorder, Dorset</i> |
| 3.10 pm | What difference does a decade make? <i>Mark Parsons, Butterfly Conservation</i> |
| 3.40 pm | Tea |
| 4.10 pm | Sky Wars: Moths v Bats <i>Professor Gareth Jones, University of Bristol</i> |
| 4.45 pm | Discussion session & closing remarks |
| 5.00 pm | Close of meeting |