



## Contacts

### **Derbyshire Wildlife Trust**

East Mill  
Bridge Foot  
Belper  
Derbyshire DE56 1XH

*Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is a registered charity with more than 8000 members supporting its work to protect the county's wildlife.*

01773 881188

*To find out how to join, visit our website or phone 01773 881188.*

[www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk)

### **Butterfly Conservation**

Manor Yard  
East Lulworth  
Wareham  
Dorset BH20 5QP

### **Derbyshire Moth Recorder**

Ian Viles  
8 Lancaster Avenue  
Sandiacre  
Derbyshire NG10 5GW

[www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

## Further Information

Leverton (2001). *Enjoying Moths*. Poyser

Majerus (2002). *Moths*. The New Naturalist Library, HarperCollins, London.

Waring et al (2003). *Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland*. British Wildlife Publishing, Hampshire.

Skinner & Wilson (1998). *The colour identification guide to Moths of the British Isles*. Viking, London

UK Moths, an online guide to the moths of the British Isles  
[www.ukmoths.force9.co.uk](http://www.ukmoths.force9.co.uk)

Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies, specialising in moth traps  
[www.angles.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.angles.btinternet.co.uk)

What's this caterpillar?, an online guide to caterpillar identification  
[www.whatsthis caterpillar.co.uk](http://www.whatsthis caterpillar.co.uk)

## Derbyshire Wildlife Trust



Most people are familiar with the ten or so species of common butterflies that feed in our gardens, but how many of us are aware that the average suburban garden may play host to more than two hundred species of moths?

With more than two THOUSAND species present in Britain, moths greatly outnumber butterflies and can be found in every habitat, from saltmarshes to ancient oak woodland, from reed beds to moorland. Moths can be found throughout the year, can be extremely colourful and the largest species are the size of a mouse! Yet moths are often overlooked and ignored.

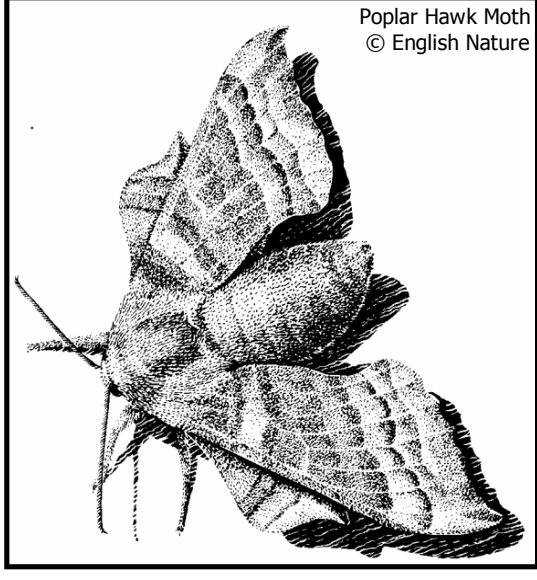
## *an introduction to moths*



# an introduction to moths

## ***What is a moth?***

Together with the butterflies, moths make up the order of insects known as the Lepidoptera. There are nearly 2500 species of moths to be found in the British Isles, alongside the 70 species of butterflies. They range in size from the micro-moths, which may have a wing span of less than 5mm, to the largest British moth the privet hawk moth, which has a wingspan of almost 11cm and a body the size of a small mouse!



## ***What is the difference between a butterfly and a moth?***

In reality, there is very little difference between butterflies and moths. The butterflies tend to be brightly coloured and come out during the day light. They all have clubbed antennae and lack a specialised structure on the wings called the 'frenulum'. However, there are also colourful day-flying moths with clubbed antennae!

## ***Day-flying moths***

Although most moth species are nocturnal, there are a number of species that fly during the day and can be very obvious.

In rough grassland, road verges and gardens, the cinnabar moth can often be seen, a large black and red moth whose striking yellow and black caterpillars feed on ragwort and groundsel. Better quality grassland is home to the similar black and red burnet moths, which can often be seen on the wing on sunny days.

Dappled sunny woodland glades are the favoured habitat of the speckled yellow, another colourful species, while the chimney sweeper is almost entirely ashy black in colour, with a pale tip to each forewing.

In the height of summer, one of our most appealing day-flying moths, the hummingbird hawk moth can sometimes be seen hovering at red valerian or other favoured flowers to feed. This species is a migrant from southern Europe and north Africa, flying hundreds of miles to spend the summer in our gardens.

## ***Observing moths at night***

The majority of moths are strictly nocturnal and will fly and feed only under the cover of darkness, making them difficult to track down and observe at close range without resorting to traps and lures.

One of the most effective methods is to take advantage of the moths' attraction to bright lights. This can be done very simply by leaving an outside light on overnight and checking the walls around it during the night. For the real enthusiast, a purpose-built moth trap, using special fluorescent lights with a high ultraviolet content to maximise their attractiveness for moths, will often prove to be a worthwhile investment.

Another very useful method of attracting moths at night is the technique known as 'sugaring'. In this case, the 'sugar' is in fact a mixture of treacle, brown sugar and brown ale which can be painted on to fence posts and tree trunks where the visiting moths can be easily observed. Warm, humid nights in sheltered areas often produce the best results.

## ***How can I help moths in my garden?***

- In common with much of the wildlife that makes its home alongside us, moths will do best in the less manicured, wilder parts of the gardens and will respond well to 'wildlife gardening'.

- Avoid hoeing between herbaceous perennials: this can damage pupating moths in the soil.
- Leave dead stems and flower heads over the winter: many species hibernate as eggs, small caterpillars or pupae in these microhabitats.
- When cutting hedges, leave the clippings for a day or two to allow caterpillars to climb back into the bushes.
- Plant native species as food plants for caterpillars and night-scented flowers as nectar sources for the adults: particular favourites include honeysuckle, evening primrose, white jasmine and night-scented stock.

