

## E-moth

### Moths Count update October 2007

Welcome to the first in a regular series of updates sent by email to all those on the Moths Count project mailing list. We hope that these will keep you better informed about project progress, particularly regarding the National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS). Hopefully you will all have seen the project newsletter produced in July (if not, it is available to download from [www.mothscount.org](http://www.mothscount.org)), but much has happened since then and many people have asked us about the progress of the project and 'when is it all going to happen?'

The Moths Count project started in September 2006 so has, on paper at least, been running for a year. However, the full project team were not in place until April this year. This caused an inevitable delay in work during the early months of the project and meant that we had to focus on setting up those parts of the Moths Count project that had to take place during the main field season. These included organising Garden Moths Count and National Moth Night, and running a programme of over 30 public moth events and over 20 training workshops across the UK.

Work on the National Moth Recording Scheme began in earnest during spring and summer and has proceeded well. All the necessary hardware and software is now in place: we have a NMRS database, although there are no moth records in it yet! This has been a significant task as we expect the NMRS to develop one of the largest data sets of biological records anywhere in the world. We are using Recorder 6 for the NMRS database but, as we have previously promised, we will be willing and able to receive computerised local data sets from County Moth Recorders in whatever format best suits them. At the same time, we have been liaising with all of the County Moth Recorders (including many new ones who have been recruited in Scotland) and have received a very positive response. A new, up-to-date list of County Moth Recorders is now available at [www.mothscount.org](http://www.mothscount.org). We are preparing a short and simple NMRS Data Policy that will be made widely available to moth recorders so that you can make an informed choice about submitting your records. This will be covered in more detail in a future update. In addition, we have been working with the Biological Records Centre and Rothamsted Research to try to make moth records collated under their recording and monitoring schemes available to County Moth Recorders and to the NMRS.

The upshot of all this effort is that we will soon start to approach County Moth Recorders one by one, requesting copies of their local data sets of moth records, and the NMRS will start to grow. The NMRS will only cover larger (macro-) moths from the UK, Isle of Man and Channel Islands, but it will include both historical and current records. The extent of historical data will depend upon how much is already in computerised data sets – sadly, we will not be able to capture moth records that currently reside only on paper in journals, notebooks or specimen labels. A key aim of the NMRS is to make extra use of the records that you already collect, rather than to impose any additional burden upon moth recorders. The route for your moth records to enter the NMRS is via your County Moth Recorder, so most recorders will not need to do anything different.

As the NMRS database begins to fill with moth records, we intend to make these available as provisional distribution maps via the project web site during 2008. Anyone with internet

access will be able to view distribution maps down to a 2km x 2km square (tetrad) summary level. We hope that this will be a very useful and informative feature for moth recorders. For example, it could enable you to put your own sightings into context, help with record verification and encourage targeted recording of under-recorded areas or important species. Over time, changes in the distribution (range) of species will provide an assessment of how species are faring (to feed into conservation initiatives at local and national levels) and an understanding of what factors might be causing change. At the local scale, distribution records underpin almost all efforts to conserve moths and their habitats – you can't conserve something unless you know where it is! The National Moth Recording Scheme will not be a 'black hole' for moth records. The records **will** be used.

2008 will also bring new expanded programmes of training events aimed at moth recorders, of all levels of experience, and public moth events to engage the general public. Keep an eye on the Moths Count website for details of events.

### **English Moth Recorders' Conference**

Following on from events held earlier in the year in Scotland and Wales, the Moths Count project organised a very successful English meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> October in Birmingham. Well over 100 moth recorders attended the free day from all corners of England, with participants ranging from beginners to County Moth Recorders. The main focus of the day was to discuss the Moths Count project and, in particular, the National Moth Recording Scheme, and there were many positive suggestions and contributions from the audience. However, the conference also provided an important opportunity for moth recorders to meet each other and to hear about other moth projects, local and national, which stem from the collection of moth records. Thus, we were treated to presentations by County Moth Recorders, such as Steve Palmer and Colin W. Plant, as well as research scientists, Thomas Merckx from Oxford University and Zoë Ringwood from Writtle College. Last, but by no means least, Mark Parsons from Butterfly Conservation gave a review of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan in relation to moths (see article below). It was a thoroughly enjoyable day and we would like to thank all of the speakers and all those who attended and participated in the meeting.

There will be a similar meeting for moth recorders in Northern Ireland during the winter (date and location to be confirmed), to complete our first set of national conferences.

### **National Moth Night and Day 2008**

The Moths Count project organises National Moth Night in partnership with Atropos. Details for NMN 08 have recently been confirmed and are as follows. The date is Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2008 and the event will include daytime recording as well as the usual nocturnal activities. Targets are a bit different this time. There are two day-flying species including, for the first time ever, a micro-moth, as well as a possibly extinct species and even a target habitat! We hope that the targets offer plenty of scope for group/public moth events, as well as yielding important data:

1. **Anania funebris** – a day-flying Pyralid moth, which is a new UK BAP priority species found in Britain and Ireland.
2. **Bordered Gothic** *Heliophobus reticulata* – a night-flying species that comes to light and sugar. It is a UK BAP priority species that was found formerly in southern England and Wales, particularly East Anglia and South East England. There are no known British colonies at present!
3. **Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth** *Hemaris tityus* – a day-flying, UK BAP priority species, which is found mainly in western Britain and Ireland.
4. **Orchards** – a new NMN departure to have a target 'habitat'. Traditional orchards are a new UK BAP priority habitat and very important for wildlife, but are generally under-recorded for moths.

Please remember that you don't have to follow the suggested targets! You can make up your own local targets or simply go moth recording somewhere you've not been before. The key thing is to have fun, raise awareness of moths where possible, and to send in your results.

It is not too late to send in your moth records for NMN 07 (11 August). The deadline is 1 December 2007. See [www.nationalmothnight.info](http://www.nationalmothnight.info) for details of how to send in your records. The online recording form is no longer available, but our thanks to those of you who used it and, in particular, those who provided feedback on it. It wasn't anywhere near as good as we would have liked this year and we will try to do much better for NMN 08.

### **New UK Biodiversity Action Plan moths**

As you may be aware, after several years of review, the Government published a new list of UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species and habitats at the end of August. This process has seen an increase in the number of moths listed as priority species, from 53 to 150 species. There is good news for micro-moths, which were all but ignored by the original BAP list, but now have over 20 species listed. These 150 priority species are split into two very different groups and this has led to some misunderstanding of the UK BAP. Sixty-nine of the 150 species are widespread and common moths found to be declining rapidly by the study undertaken by Rothamsted Research and Butterfly Conservation, published in *The State of Britain's Larger Moths* in 2006. These include common moths, such as the White Ermine and Knot Grass, as well as moths that have become scarce in many areas (e.g. Spinach, V-moth, Garden Tiger etc.). These moths meet the criteria for BAP priority species status laid down by the Government, but it would clearly be inappropriate to try to conserve them in conventional ways on the ground. No one is suggesting that nature reserves are managed to promote White Ermine populations!! Our understanding is that they will be grouped together into a single action plan for which the only required or suggested action will be academic research to better understand the causes of their decline. The remaining new UK BAP moths, 81 species, will be the moths upon which Butterfly Conservation and many other organisations will focus recording and conservation effort. These 81 are listed at the end of this update.

There are many ways that you can get involved in the conservation of UK BAP moths, such as by raising the profile of the new species (e.g. through county moth group newsletters), encouraging survey and monitoring of these species in your area, and getting involved with specific projects and training events organised by Butterfly Conservation.

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Sarah-ann Boon is the first point of contact for project enquiries.

## Existing UK BAP priority species retained

Slender Scotch Burnet <i>Zygaena loti scotica</i>	Cousin German <i>Protolampra sobrina</i>
New Forest Burnet <i>Zygaena viciae argyllensis</i>	Northern Dart <i>Xestia alpicola alpina</i>
Fiery Clearwing <i>Pyropteron chrysidiformis</i>	Ashworth's Rustic <i>Xestia ashworthii</i>
Basil Thyme Case-bearer <i>Coleophora tricolor</i>	Pale Shining Brown <i>Polia bombycina</i>
Dingy Mocha <i>Cyclophora pendularia</i>	Bordered Gothic <i>Heliophobus reticulata marginosa</i>
Bright Wave <i>Idaea ochrata</i>	White Spot <i>Hadena albimacula</i>
Silky Wave <i>Idaea dilutaria</i>	Striped Lychnis <i>Shargacucullia lychnitis</i>
Chalk Carpet <i>Scotopteryx bipunctaria</i>	Sword Grass <i>Xylena exsoleta</i>
Netted Carpet <i>Eustroma reticulata</i>	Orange Upperwing <i>Jodia croceago</i>
Barberry Carpet <i>Pareulype berberata</i>	Heart Moth <i>Dicycla oo</i>
Argent & Sable <i>Rheumaptera hastata</i>	White-spotted Pinion <i>Cosmia diffinis</i>
Drab Looper <i>Minoa murinata</i>	Marsh Mallow Moth <i>Hydraecia osseola hucherardi</i>
Barred Tooth-striped <i>Trichopteryx polycommata</i>	Brighton Wainscot <i>Oria musculosa</i>
Netted Mountain Moth <i>Macaria carbonaria</i>	Marsh Moth <i>Athetis pallustris</i>
Dark Bordered Beauty <i>Epione vespertaria</i>	Reddish Buff <i>Acosmetia caliginosa</i>
Belted Beauty <i>Lycia zonaria britannica</i>	Light Crimson Underwing <i>Catocala promissa</i>
Black-veined Moth <i>Siona lineata</i>	Dark Crimson Underwing <i>Catocala sponsa</i>
Straw Belle <i>Aspitates gilvaria</i>	Four-spotted <i>Tyta luctuosa</i>
Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth <i>Hemaris tityus</i>	Common Fan-foot <i>Pechipogo strigilata</i>
Speckled Footman <i>Coscinia cribraria</i>	Clay Fan-foot <i>Paracolax tristalis</i>
Lunar Yellow Underwing <i>Noctua orbona</i>	Olive Crescent <i>Trisateles emortualis</i>

Total: 42 species

## New UK BAP priority species added ('scarce moths')

<i>Stigmella zelleriella</i>	<i>Grapholita pallifrontana</i>
<i>Lampronia capitella</i>	<i>Epermenia insecurella</i>
<i>Nematopogon magna</i>	<i>Pyrausta sanguinalis</i>
<i>Nemophora fasciella</i>	<i>Anania funebris</i>
Goat Moth <i>Cossus cossus</i>	<i>Agrotera nemoralis</i>
Forester <i>Adscita statices</i>	<i>Sciota hostilis</i>
<i>Eudarcia richardsoni</i>	Rest Harrow <i>Aplasta ononaria</i>
<i>Nemapogon picarella</i>	Sussex Emerald <i>Thalera fimbrialis</i>
<i>Phyllonorycter scabiosella</i>	False Mocha <i>Cyclophora porata</i>
<i>Phyllonorycter sagitella</i>	Scarce Pug <i>Eupithecia extensaria occidua</i>
<i>Coleophora hydrolapathella</i>	Grey Carpet <i>Lithostege griseata</i>
<i>Coleophora vibicella</i>	Sloe Carpet <i>Aleucis distinctata</i>
<i>Coleophora wockeella</i>	Scarce Vapourer <i>Orgyia recens</i>
<i>Aplota palpellus</i>	Small Dark Yellow Underwing <i>Anarta cordigera</i>
<i>Agonopterix atomella</i>	Concolorous <i>Chortodes extrema</i>
<i>Agonopterix capreolella</i>	White-mantled Wainscot <i>Archanara neurica</i>
<i>Syncopacma albipalpella</i>	Fenn's Wainscot <i>Chortodes brevilinea</i>
<i>Syncopacma suecicella</i>	Sandhill Rustic <i>Luperina nickerlii</i> ssp. <i>leechi</i>
<i>Scythris siccella</i>	Shoulder-striped Clover <i>Heliothis maritima</i> ssp. <i>warneckeii</i>
<i>Celypha woodiana</i>	

Total: 39 species

+ 69 rapidly declining 'common and widespread' species listed for research action only.