

Hampshire Moth Conference 14th January 2012

Dan Hoare welcomed over 70 people to the conference and his introduction gave a perspective on 2011 and on mothing in the Branch area.

Tim Norriss detailed the “The Mothing Year” highlighting early emergence dates, high numbers of moths caught or observed with Glynne Evans’ 5,550 moths in one trap being the most remarkable mothing experience. Another awe inspiring sight for several people had been the vast numbers of *Adela reaumurella* flying around trees in May. Tim also drew attention to the interesting first county records for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and a graph comparing the number of new records in each of the last sixteen years. He concluded with accounts of the migrants that had been found mainly in the splendid autumn weather.

Jon Stokes of The Tree Council spoke about Trees, Hedgerows and Moths. Whilst having great sympathy for anyone affected by a death caused by a falling tree, he registered his concern at what he regarded as the unnecessary felling of trees. To put it into perspective he estimates that there are six billion trees in the country and in an average year six deaths arise from tree related incidents. However each storm leads to trees being felled as possible hazards. His slide illustrating this was the sad sight of a line of old oaks felled from a roadside hedgerow. He also quoted statistics showing that too few new trees are getting planted or established in hedgerows. He suggested that the diminishing number of hedgerow trees, as well as diminishing the beauty of the landscape, would be a problem for many moths in reducing their habitat and the corridors across otherwise hostile intensive agriculture.

He also reported that very few Horse Chestnut trees were now being planted as a result of the Horse Chestnut leaf miner *Cameraria ohridella* and that the state of the leaves of affected trees was leading to many being felled as unhealthy. On the positive side he referred to schemes to tag hedgerow trees to avoid them being flailed and he spoke of a relatively new idea of planting fruiting hedges.

Illness prevented Zoë Randle from coming along to speak about Moths and the Media, which was a shame as she and the Moths Team have achieved much positive publicity to advance the interest in moths and promote their conservation.

Lynn Fomison provided a talk on Gardening for Moths instead. At the very start Lynn ascertained by a show of hands that around 75% of the audience were already taking action to make their gardens moth friendly. Lynn promoted the three SSS’s approach – shelter, sustenance and sympathy. Provision of shelter is easy with walls or fences clad with climbers - hops, ivy and honeysuckle, and native shrubs such as goat willow, wild privet and hawthorn along with cultivated lilac, buddleia and hebe on other boundaries. All these species also help to provide sustenance by way of nectar or larval food plant or even both. Sympathetic gardening techniques were to reduce hoeing and to provide log piles. Records both of moths hibernating in gardens and caterpillars found will be welcomed by Tim.

Bats and Moths – An Evolutionary Arms Race was a very interesting talk by Paul Hope and all present will have learnt many new things about bats they did not know previously. Paul described how different species of bats hunted and located their prey. He went on to describe the tactics that moths had evolved to avoid being caught and eaten. Interesting some moths have auditory organs and can hear bats & some species can give out clicks to jam the bats echo-location.

Glynne Evans recommended nothing in under-recorded squares by the approach “Over the Garden Fence - Chatting up the Neighbours”. Using the approach of locating good gardens through friends and other contacts, Glynne had run his trap in fifteen different gardens within a few miles of Chilbolton. He described the location and nature of the gardens and the most interesting moths that he had found there. This had been very effective in achieving coverage in squares that would not otherwise have been possible. It was hoped that this idea would be taken up by others – the map showing the squares with few or no records can be found in Newsletter No 17 on the Hantsmoths website.

Mike Wall reported on the success of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Moth weekend which took place on 22-24 July 2011 and made the awards that had been promised. These were given to:
Richard Dixon for the Most Significant Record

Elaine Rice for the most new 10km square records

A third extra award was given to David Evans in recognition of his considerable effort in targeting a great number of tetrads near Christchurch & submitting over a thousand records.

Mike also referred to the importance of records given that a new moth atlas for the two counties is currently being planned. The likely publication is around 2017 produced using records up to 2015.

Many people expressed their appreciation of the programme and some of the audience are pictured below. Photo John Nundy. Report by Lynn Fomison

