

Moth Night & Star Gazing - Saturday 21st August 2021

Last Saturday we held a Moth Night at the Wick Country Park with a telescope available for star gazing. We were lucky with the weather as we managed to avoid any showers and the weather was fine for the whole evening. The moth attracting light was set up at around 8.45pm and was attracting moths more or less straight away. Several species were identified with such wonderful names as Old Lady, Ruby Tiger and Flame Shoulder. The variety of moths coming to the light was fascinating being of various sizes, shapes and colours. In addition to the moths, the resident flock of Canada Geese were very active, flying around calling to each other, and we also saw/heard a couple of Foxes. A Pipistrelle Bat was also identified with a bat detector – probably feeding on the moths!

After an hour or so, the skies started to clear and it became noticeably colder, and this reduced the moth activity to more or less zero! They obviously don't like clear cool nights. However, we were then able to do a bit of star gazing and managed to get great views of Jupiter with 3 moons and then Saturn with its rings. As discussed on the night, at the moment Jupiter is 600M km from Earth which is approx. 373,000,000 miles. Saturn is a ridiculous 1,347bn Km from Earth which is 853,000,000 miles!! This illustrates how large Saturn must be if we can see it from 850 million miles away!

By 11pm the sky was completely clear and no moths were being attracted to the light, so we decided to call it a day and head home. Overall this was a very enjoyable evening and we did manage to see quite a few moths and do some star gazing as promised.

Details:

Birds – 1 Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Date	Total Count	Comments
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	21/08/2021	12	The park goose flock was very active calling and flying around well into darkness.

Mammals – 2 Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Date	Total Count	Comments
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	21/08/2021	1	At least one identified by Stuart's bat detector flying next to the pavilion.
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	21/08/2021	3	One seen on the road to the car park, at least one or two heard in the park, and one seen on the edge of the park going home.

Moths – 19 Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Date	Total Count	Comments
Brimstone Moth	<i>Opisthagraptis luteolata</i>	21/08/2021	1	Nice yellow moth with chestnut markings. Common resident.
Cloaked Minor	<i>Mesoligia furuncula</i>	21/08/2021	1	A common resident with extremely variable markings.
Common Wainscot	<i>Mythimna pallens</i>	21/08/2021	2	A pale moth and again a common resident.
Dingy Footman	<i>Eilema griseola</i>	21/08/2021	1	Common in Southern Britain.
Flame Shoulder	<i>Ochropleura plecta</i>	21/08/2021	1	Has a bright straw coloured band on the forewing. Common resident.
Gypsy Moth	<i>Lymantria dispar</i>	21/08/2021	1	Incredible antennae that looked like bird feathers. Sat for ages so we all had good views. An immigrant from the Continent in Southern England.
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua janthe</i>	21/08/2021	1	Nice orange/yellow underwing. Again a Common resident.
Lime-speck Pug	<i>Eupithecia centaureata</i>	21/08/2021	1	A pale moth with dark markings on the wings. Another common resident.
Oak Processionary	<i>Thaumetopoea processionea</i>	21/08/2021	1	Identified by Colin at home. An immigrant from the Continent
Old Lady	<i>Mormo maura</i>	21/08/2021	1	The largest moth we had on the night – large dark brown moth. A local resident in the UK.
Orange Swift	<i>Hepialus sylvina</i>	21/08/2021	1	Dark orange wings with white markings. Common resident.
Ruby Tiger	<i>Phragmatobia fuliginosa</i>	21/08/2021	1	My favourite on the night – ruby red body with dark red wings. Common resident.

Silver Y	Autographa gamma	21/08/2021	1	Has a metallic silver Y mark on the wings. An immigrant from Europe that breeds every year.
Straw Dot	Rivula sericealis	21/08/2021	1	Pale yellow moth with dark "kidney" mark. Resident and possible immigrant.
Straw Underwing	Thalpophila matura	21/08/2021	2	Dark forewing with white cross lines. Common resident.
Water Veneer	Acentria ephemerella	21/08/2021	2	A moth who's larvae spend their lives under water. Common resident.
White-point	Mythimna albipuncta	21/08/2021	1	Orange brown wings with white spot. A regular immigrant to SE England.
Willow Beauty	Peribatodes rhomboidaria	21/08/2021	1	Light brown moth with feathered antennae. Common resident.
Yellow Shell	Camptogramma bilineata	21/08/2021	1	Nicely marked yellow moth with waved wing patterns. Common resident.

Trust everyone who attended enjoyed the night and we will look to do something similar next year.

We will now look at an autumn trip to Abberton Reservoir to try and see some migrating birds – I will be in touch with the details of this soon.

regards

Martin