

10 Moths of London



About the London Natural History Society

The London Natural History Society traces its history back to 1858. The Society is made up of a number of active sections that provide a wide range of talks, organised nature walks, coach trips and other activities. This range of events makes the LNHS one of the most active natural history societies in the world. Whether it is purely for recreation, or to develop field skills for a career in conservation, the LNHS offers a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities. Beginners are welcome at every event and gain access to the knowledge of some very skilled naturalists.

On top of its varied public engagement, the LNHS also provides a raft of publications free to members. The London Naturalist is its annual journal with scientific papers as well as lighter material such as book reviews. The annual London Bird Report published since 1937 sets a benchmark for publications of this genre. Furthermore, there is a quarterly Newsletter that carries many trip reports and useful announcements.

The LNHS maintains its annual membership subscription at a modest level, representing fantastic value for money.

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The selection of species is a subjective decision of the contributor(s) and not based on quantitative criteria such as population numbers, database records or presence on recording grids in surveys. These PDFs are not available in print form from the LNHS.

Taking your interest further

Details of other organizations with an interest in wildlife and a whole host of information is on the LNHS website. Past copies of the printed LNHS publications are available from Catherine Schmitt. Details on www.lnhs.org.uk.

Contributing to the LNHS Education Series

If you would like to contribute to LNHS Learning please get in touch with one of the following section chairpersons in the LNHS or Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne who is coordinating the series.

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Version Date: 1 July 2016

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Box Moth

(*Cydalima perspectalis*)



Classed as a micro-moth, this colourful member of family Crambidae is larger than many of Britain's macro-moths! It was introduced into Europe through the horticulture trade, and first reported in the UK in 2008. It is now a widespread pest in the LNHS recording area, where the larvae can be found on cultivated garden Box plants; feeding within a small protective silken web.

Great Oak Beauty

(*Hypomecis roboraria*)



One of the largest and more impressive moths in the UK. The caterpillars of this scarce species feed on the leaves of mature oak trees. It has a stronghold in the south London suburbs, particularly around the Royal Parks. The ability of the caterpillar to resemble a small twig, combined with the cryptically patterned wings of the adult make them hard to find during the day.

Elephant Hawk-moth

(*Daphnis elpenor*)



A real crowd-pleaser amongst our summer moths that is instantly recognisable from the beautiful pink markings on its wings. Fortunately, this is a common sight in gardens across the country, flying from May until August. Look out for the impressive caterpillar (which bears a resemblance to an elephant's trunk!) feeding on willowherb and bedstraw in the autumn.

Oak Processionary

(*Thaumetopoea processionea*)



The poisonous and defoliating nature of its caterpillars has led the Oak Processionary to become the unintentional villain of the moth world. It is a non-native species, originally introduced into the London area through imported oaks, and has since spread rapidly throughout. The adults fly in August and can be attracted to light.

Gypsy Moth

(*Lymantria dispar*)



After going extinct as a native species in the early 1900s, a small population of this charismatic but damaging species was found in London in 1995. The moth has since spread widely throughout many London boroughs, but it is rarely seen in any numbers. The males are instantly recognised by their plumed antennae and charcoal-coloured forewing, but the larger pale females are rarely seen.

Jersey Tiger

(*Euplagia quadripunctaria*)



A stunning and very distinctive moth that has recently become increasingly common in suburban gardens in the LNHS recording area, despite historically being restricted to the south coast. The exotic-looking adults are attracted to light in July and August, but can also be found nectaring at flowers during the day.

Small Ranunculus

(*Hecatera dysodea*)



A delicately-patterned member of family Noctuidae; fresh specimens often have a small dusting of gold scales on the forewing. This species has made a rapid recovery in the UK, after becoming extinct in the 1930s. The caterpillars can be found feeding on wild and cultivated varieties of cabbage, particularly on London's brownfield sites.

Double-line

(*Mythimna turca*)



A former Biodiversity Action Plan priority species that has a stronghold in south-west England and Wales. Populations in Bushy Park, Richmond Park and Wimbledon Common are the only localities in the LNHS recording area (and indeed the rest of the UK!) where this species is known to occur. Wet grassland is the favoured habitat, and adults can be attracted to sugary substances after dark.

Tree-lichen Beauty

(*Cryphia algae*)



Another recent colonist to the LNHS recording area that has gone from being a rarely recorded migrant to a regular visitor in south London moth traps. The adults can be variable in colouration, but are always well camouflaged against lichen-encrusted tree trunks upon which they rest during the day.



Toadflax Brocade

(*Catophasia lunula*)



A once rare moth, previously confined to shingle beaches along the south coast. This attractive species is now rapidly increasing its range northwards, and is now well established across the London area. Adults are attracted to light between May-August and the striking caterpillars can be found on Toadflax plants in gardens.

