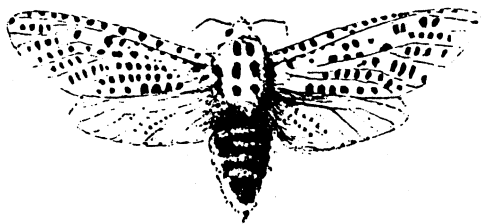


Turvey Moths

It is seven years since we first started tracking the moths of Turvey using a Robinson ultra-violet moth trap and the grand total of species so far recorded is 322, made up of 262 species of macro-moth and 60 micros. Since 379 macros were recorded in this 10km square by 1997 and similarly 397 micros, we have now recorded the bulk of the larger moths to be found in and around Turvey but only a small proportion of the micros.



One needs both an expert eye and often a microscope to work out these smaller moths and so I send them up to David Manning at Sharnbrook for identification. Some of the larger moths can be difficult too but time and patience usually yields a result. When we first began virtually every night's catch yielded something new but now of course the proportion of new moths has inevitably declined. This year has produced eight new macros and four new

micros. But this year has also produced 42 species not seen last year including a Satellite not seen since 1997, a Sallow Kitten not seen since 1996, a Pale Shouldered Brocade not seen since 1998 and a Pine Hawk Moth not seen since 1999. Conversely 59 species were seen last year and not this. This is partly due to the fluctuating fortunes of the various species but even more so perhaps to the infrequency of the trapping. Just as flowers and birds mark the passing of the seasons, so too with moths – many emerging within a day or two of previous years. This means that a week or two without trapping may result in some species being missed for that year. As well as the fascination then of watching the year unfold through the coming and going of the various species there is the pleasure, and discipline, of reacquainting oneself with old friends.

As the year progresses so the number and variety of species increases, usually peaking in midsummer but much depends on the weather and observer activity (i.e. me). Last year's peak was on 23rd July with 139 moths of 47+ species, while this year's was on 18th June for variety but 2nd September for bulk – 110 individuals. The quieter

months can in fact be much more satisfying as there is more time to look at the moths and often in more comfortable temperatures (in a room upstairs which becomes their temporary refuge). October, for example, can be very rewarding, with the possibility of a Merveille du Jour, or a Large Wainscot, or a sudden

flush of The Streak. But this year already seems to have fizzled out with only solitary individuals in the trap on two occasions, a Green-brindled Crescent on 18th October and an Epirrita species on 25th October. Time perhaps to pack up the trap until next year. But one never knows...

Br. John