

More Turvey Moths and the Return of the Bat

Despite eight years' trapping, new species of moth continue to appear and, despite all the precautions, a Long-eared Bat has once again been patrolling my monastic cell in search of an easy supper. - perhaps bats have longer memories than we surmise!

The highlight of the spring, so far, has been the capture of a moth which may be new to the county: a Pale Pinion. This came to the trap on the night of the 16th/17th March and was kindly taken by Tony Smith of Carlton to an expert in Buckinghamshire, George Higgs, for confirmation, and then brought back here for release. It's surprising what moths can put up with. It is not a particularly distinctive moth, being pale sandy brown with a subtle array of brown markings, but it matched the pictures in the books and has an interesting 'bumpy' outline at rest (i.e. in profile - I believe these are known as thoracic crests). It has been recorded in Shenley Wood, Milton Keynes, and overwinters as an adult, coming to Sallow blossom in the spring. Some eighty-four other moths were also present on this occasion, the majority being Small and Common Quakers, but with also the odd Hebrew Character, and a Twin-spotted Quaker by the front door - we are a very ecumenical establishment.

Other highlights have been a very early Hummingbird Hawkmoth feeding from the flowers of an Oregon Grape on the 1st April during a time of southerly winds. Others were reported even earlier and we may be seeing a new trend here with both earlier arrivals and overwintering adults. This may also be true of the Red Admiral butterfly seen on the 22nd March, a species now known to overwinter and increasingly seen even in January and February, in marked contrast to only a few years ago.

A more recent capture, on the 3rd May, was of the delightful Least Dark Arches, a tiny moth but with beautiful brown and black markings on a white background. This too may be a new record for this area but is also found just across the border in Buckinghamshire.

As for the bat, animals are often associated with holy people - one saint being kept awake by a mouse at prayertime and having a fly mark his place in the book, so give it time (rather a long time in my case) and we may yet see a bat as a permanent member of the Turvey community.

Br. John