

# SOME MOTHS OF SUMMER

Summer sees an explosion in moth activity, with the highest species diversity being seen in late June and July. The species diversity is lower in August, but the overall moth population is still high.

In addition to the majority of nocturnal moths, summer sees the appearance of a number of species which are exclusively day-flying, such as the burnet moths.



*Six-spot Burnet moth*



*Burnet moth cocoon*

These attractive moths are active in bright sunshine and can be seen in areas where their larval foodplant (Bird's-foot Trefoil) grows. The bright colours advertise to predators that they are distasteful. The toxin is derived from the larval foodplant.

The Cinnabar larva can be seen fully exposed feeding on Ragwort. This species obtains its protection by virtue of a similar mechanism to the burnet moths. The adult is active both on sunny days and at night



*Cinnabar moth larva*



*Cinnabar moth*



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In terms of the nocturnal moths, the hawk-moths are probably the most spectacular and are certainly among the largest.



Lime Hawk-moth



Poplar Hawk-moth

The Lime hawk-moth is a relative newcomer to our region and can be seen in parks and gardens in the vicinity of lime trees.



Small Elephant Hawk-moth



Elephant Hawk-moth

The Hummingbird Hawk-moth is a day-flying immigrant species which is active in sunshine. It can be seen hovering around Valerian and *Buddleija* as it feeds using its long proboscis. Its hind wings which are hidden in this image are bright orange and can be seen when the insect is in flight.

Hummingbird  
Hawk-moth



A number of species obtain their protection from predators in resembling bird droppings! Several of these are shown below:



Lime-speck Pug



Clouded Magpie - a species associated with elms

Cryptic camouflage is a protection mechanism used by many summer moths. Examples include:



Buff-tip - a moth which is cryptically coloured as a broken twig.



Drinker moth - very well camouflaged as it rests among dry grass stalks



Common Emerald

Some other moths of summer include:



Garden Tiger - formerly common, this species is now declining nationally

Magpie moth



Peach Blossom



Buff Ermine



Small Phoenix

Brimstone moth



Peppered Moth

*Text & Photographs  
by Robert Woods*