

MOTH TRAPPING IN A HARTBURN GARDEN

Hartburn Village, on the edge of Stockton-on-Tees, is close to fields, becks, ponds, hedgerows and gardens and therefore home to a wide variety of moth species.

I use a 'Skinner' trap with a 125W mercury vapour bulb. I made this myself to a design given to me by another enthusiast. The bulb, choke and fittings I obtained



from a site on the Internet and these were wired up for me by an electrician friend. A mercury vapour lamp is used because moths are particularly attracted by light from the ultraviolet end of the spectrum.

I prefer to stay out with the trap and catch the moths in jars so I can identify them straight away and if kept in a cool place they can be left till morning for daylight photography. I set the trap up with a white sheet underneath which helps attract far more moths than the trap alone and egg boxes give the moths somewhere to hide. I find my stamina usually peters

out about midnight; but if there is no rain forecast I sometimes leave the trap out all night. This gives me the opportunity to catch late night moths and those that favour the dawn. However I do sometimes find that moths caught in the trap overnight have the chance to escape before I have a look in the morning.

The results have been very varied and on a number of occasions I have disappointingly caught nothing - but now and then there is that absolutely superb evening when the air is cloudy with moths flying round the light. At first it was a bit daunting being buffeted by large brown moths of a type that had you quivering under the blankets when they got into your room at night, but I soon got used to it. Once or twice there has been the excitement of opening the trap to find a huge hawk moth hidden inside. Identifying the moths is a time consuming process as they are often very faded and battered which masks their individual patterns and I content myself with trying to identify the macro moths alone. The pleasure I get from a successful identification makes it definitely worth the effort.

As a beginner it has been invaluable to join others for a moth trapping evening and Rob Woods from INCA (Industry and Nature Conservation Association) invited me to join a group to do some trapping at Maze Park at the Tees Barrage and at Gravel Hole Nature Reserve in Norton. Paul Forster from the Cleveland Naturalists' Field Club also ran a similar event this year in Guisborough Woods. These events have given me the opportunity to learn the names of the moths caught and to take photographs that I use alongside a good field guide in my own attempts to identify the moths caught in the garden.

I was advised that the best evenings for trapping are warm, still and cloudy when rain is not forecast. I therefore thought that rain would inhibit the moths from flying but the evening at Maze Park was very wet though warm. It rained steadily but not too heavily for the whole time and yet we still caught 85 species. (The bulb must be well protected from the weather, as rain on the very hot bulb makes an explosive combination!).

Jo Scott
01/09/2010

Some of the moths caught in the garden



Green Carpet
12/06/09



Light emerald
24/07/09



Mother of Pearl
24/07/09



Lesser Broad Bordered
Yellow underwing
24/07/09



Burnished Brass
30/07/09



Plume Moth
31/07/09



Gold spot
01/08/09



Red Underwing
09/08/09



Lime Hawk Moth
24/06/10



Buff Ermine
28/06/10



Elephant Hawk Moth
30/06/10



Brimstone
26/07/10



Dot Moth
26/07/10



Ribband Wave
26/07/10



Swallowtail
30/07/10



Buff Arches
31/07/10



Flame Carpet
17/08/10



Yellow Tail
17/08/10



Sallow
24/08/10



Scalloped Oak
02/09/10



Frosted Orange
06/09/10



Gothic
09/09/10



Canary Shouldered Thorn
09/09/10