

MOTH TRAPPING AT THE BUNGALOW

2025



Poplar Hawk Moth

1. Introduction

This is the fourth sequential year that moth recording by light trap has been carried out at The Bungalow. The long periods of warm weather well into the autumn were good for both butterflies and moths and numbers were high again – at least compared with the terrible year of 2023.

In addition to the moths, we have a couple of caterpillars, and even some eggs to show you this year, so read on!

2. Method

The trapping procedure was the same as that of previous years, with the trap contents inspected early doors, photographed and, hopefully, identified before being released into the shrubbery.

3. The Trap

The Skinner-type moth trap, fitted with 2x10w LED blacklight strip lamps with a UV output of 365nm and a 6W strip of LEDs with a UV output of 395nm, as used last year was used again unmodified as it worked well.



4. Recording

At the end of the year, the results were submitted to the County Moth Recorders (CMRs) for inclusion in the national database and to contribute towards a Surrey County database which is now in the development stage. For further information see last year's Report.

Photographs of each species were taken with gender, colour and pattern variations where appropriate. In some cases, other shots such as ventral views were taken to aid species verification. These are included in the list of photographs accompanying this Report. Where it is not possible to differentiate between species within a group or genus without dissection the specimen is listed as an aggregate (agg.).

To cut down on unnecessary storage space, the attachments now comprise a photographic list of all moth species in alphabetic order of all species caught or found to date rather than a list of species caught/found this year. This will supersede that issued the previous year.

5. Findings

From 21 sessions and other searches in the garden and close by, a total of 744 moths were identified yielding 199 separate species. Per session it compares favourably with 2024, when from a total of 29 sessions, a total of 899 moths were identified yielding 202 separate species. Both compare very favourably with the 2023 results when from 50 sessions, a total of 684 moths were trapped yielding 154 species.

2023 was a particularly poor year for insects in general due to the very wet late spring. The higher count is therefore no doubt due to the better performance of the Skinner type trap with the two separate wavelength LED lights.

A spreadsheet is attached comparing the species identified for the years 2022, 2023 and 2024 and now 2025. This will hopefully continue to be updated every year to show the cumulative total number of species trapped at the Bungalow to date

The total number of individual species identified up to the end of 2025 is 335, with 38 new species being added to the list in 2025.

5.1 The Eggs

At the end of April, whilst trying to let some light into next door's greenhouse, I tackled the overgrown Hazel. A lump on one of the branches turned out to be the cocoon of a Vapourer moth. The cocoon was covered with about 300 eggs, a few of which had recently hatched. The rest proceeded to hatch over the next couple of weeks.



Empty Vapourer Pupa inside Cocoon



Vapourer Eggs on Cocoon

The Vapourer is unusual in that the flightless female emerges from the cocoon about September time, pumping out pheromones into the air to attract male moths; then quickly mates, proceeds to lay her eggs on her own cocoon and dies. Job done in the space of a few hours. On hatching in the spring, the tiny caterpillars let out a long filament of silk and float off in the wind. On landing, they look for something edible. Hopefully, some of the males won't drift too far and will visit my trap as adults next September.

5.2 About a Micromoth (or two)

When emptying the trap in the early morning, there is an initial chaotic period, on first opening, when those moths that haven't settled try to escape before being identified. One tiny moth sat tight on an egg box, right through this, and through to the stage when I was putting the egg boxes back in the trap. I saw it at the last minute. This one: 🦋! It was about 7mm long and turned out on magnification to be this little beauty:



Caloptilia falconipennella (female)

The caterpillar of *caloptilia falconipennella* is a leaf miner. It lives between the top and bottom skin of a leaf; in this case Alder, eating the green cells (parenchyma) between.

Speaking of oddball micros, how about *Tachystola acroxantha*, the Australian Orange-tip. It first arrived in Devon 1908 but didn't settle down in any great numbers, making do with London Plane instead of its native Eucalyptus. However, in the early 1970s, colonisation suddenly gathered pace and lo and behold here it is in Shamley Green.



Tachystola acroxantha

5.2 Moths and their Caterpillars

My wife kindly spared this striking Pale Brindled Beauty Caterpillar after discovering it on her Blackcurrants. The moth that it turns into is on the right.

The term “Beauty” is used loosely with many moths. In cases such as this it is difficult to ascertain the reason why the Georgian and Victorian naturalists used it with such abandon.



Pale Brindled Beauty Caterpillar



Pale Brindled Beauty Imago

This moth too is an oddball in as much as the female is apterous, i.e. completely wingless. She emerges in late winter, mates and climbs a tree or shrub then lays her eggs to await the bursting of the buds in spring.

Many of you will have seen the striking little beast below. The Pale Tussock caterpillar’s colouring warns of its irritating hairs. When full size it goes walkabout and can often be seen on a sunny autumn day looking for a suitable pupation spot. I found this one on the wheely bin. Like the Vapourer above, co-incidentally, it even incorporates its irritant hairs into its cocoon for additional protection.



Pale Tussock Caterpillar



Pale Tussock Imago

As you can see from the photo on the right, the moth itself is somewhat more modest in its attire.

6. Bycatch

High numbers of parasitoid wasps, particularly *Ophion obscuratus*, were noted in the mild early winter months. These were under-recorded as they came out of the trap in droves as soon as the lids were lifted. They must take a heavy toll of the overwintering caterpillars.

7. Review

The Bungalow garden has thrown up 335 species of moth in less than four years of, by no means intense, trapping. It seems quite a lot for a small garden, doesn't it? But this is typical of virtually any garden in Shamley Green. Yet these numbers are in freefall. A 40% decline in the south in 50 years. Are we being too tidy in our gardens? How many times have you raked up some leaves and disturbed a rolled-up caterpillar. Many, such as various Underwings and the cryptic Angle Shades need these overwinter sheltered spots at the edge of the lawn say or under the hedge to survive. Would you mind your garden being a little less tidy?



Angle Shades

8. Attachments

Note:

As stated above, instead of issuing a list of photos of moths identified each year, from now on an annual list of photos of each species identified to date, in alphabetical order, will be issued to supersede that issued previously.

2025BungalowMothTally (xl)
2025BungalowAllMothPhotos (jpeg)
2025CumulativeBungalowMothTally (xl)
2025BungalowBycatch (pdf)
2025BungalowBycatchPhotos (jpeg)

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