

Our moths in the AONB

Arnside and Silverdale are renowned for some very scarce species butterflies but less well known are the great variety of moths that occur in our area. We are blessed with a lot of varied habitat, mixed woodland, limestone pavements, wildflower meadows, reed beds and coastal vegetation.

Most moths fly at night, so we rely on ultraviolet moth traps for most of our records. There are some that are only day flyers many that can be searched for by day as larvae on their foodplants. A most enjoyable way of seeing moths is to go for a walk with a headtorch and net as dark is falling and net them as they start to fly.

In our AONB we have recorded 502 macro moth species since 2000 and many more micro moths. The micro moths are the least developed and often tiny and only have Latin names. The macro moths are generally the big ones, and all have English names.

There are over a dozen people regularly recording moths in our area with garden traps. All of us are seeing new species, mostly those from the south that are moving north and conversely a similar number are disappearing. The best series of data come from Leighton Moss where we have consistent macro moth records since 2005 where the same trap has been run every night from Mid-March to Mid-November. The yearly totals range from 12,000 for the best to 5,000 for the worst made up of 355 species. Happily, we see no downward trend although we know from national data that there has been a very significant decline in many species.

All the records from our area are scrutinized by vice county moth recorders and passed on to the national moth recording scheme hosted by Butterfly Conservation. In 2016 they published a wonderful atlas of all their macro moth records of Great Britain and Ireland showing the changes in distribution since recording began. We are really happy to contribute to all this data which is such a sensitive index of all the environmental changes around us.

Leighton Moss reserve has an excellent book shop with a series of small booklets covering our most of the fauna and flora including butterflies and day flying moths that can be found in our area.

We have a team of volunteers who check the moth trap at Leighton Moss daily and most of us meet at 9.30am on Saturday to open the trap and to share our own catches. This is in the 'bandstand' behind the main building. You are welcome to join us and will do our best to answer any of your questions about moth trapping.

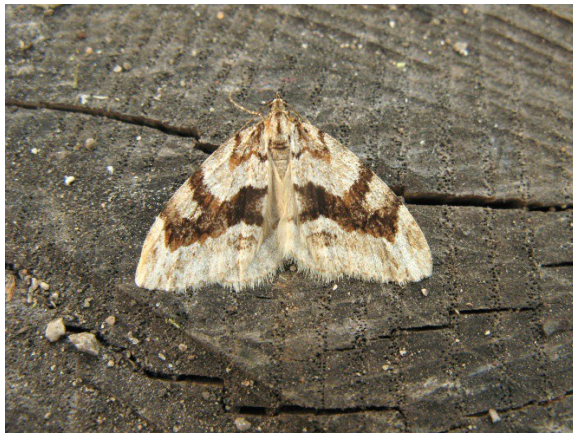
On our website you can find a file consisting of a checklist and status all the macro moths in the area.

The Arnside and District Natural History society has a battery-operated moth trap to loan out but beware moth trapping can be seriously addictive and once you are familiar with the macro moths, then there are always the micros to tackle.

The following is just a sample of a few of the lovely species that have in our area.



Oak Beauty, a regular spring species. Larval food plant Oak.



Barred Tooth-striped. Nationally rare but regular in spring here. Larval foodplant Ash and wild Privet.



Lilac Beauty. Found in June/July. Larval foodplant Honeysuckle and Ash.

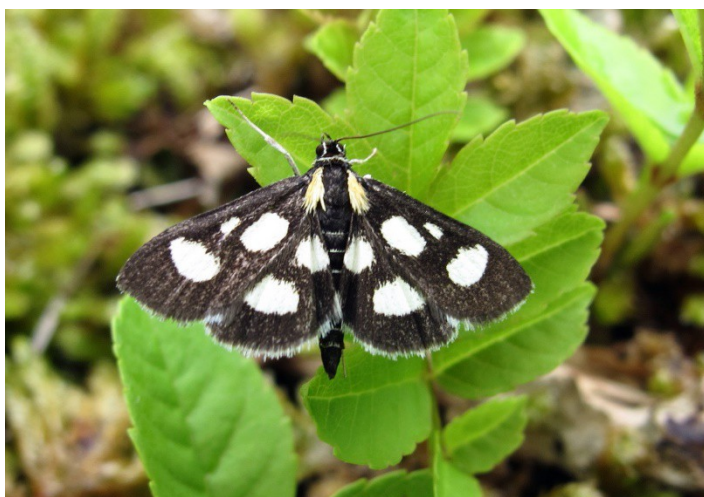


Netted Pug a speciality of our region. Larval foodplant Bladder Campion.



Speckled Yellow, a day flyer in May/June on limestone pavements.

Larval foodplant Wood Sage



A beautiful small Micro moth *Anania funebris*. A day flyer in May on our limestone grassland. Larval foodplant Goldenrod



Blood Vein. One of several new arrivals, that are spreading northwards due to our changing climate.



Feathered Thorn, a late autumn species still out in November. Larval foodplant a wide range of broadleaved trees.