



MOTH / BUTTERFLY SPECIES OF THE DAY



Here is a little bit of information about a few of the butterfly + moth species that might be found in gardens



(c) Steve J. McWilliam

The **RED ADMIRAL** is common sight in gardens and just about any other habitat. **Strikingly coloured adults** feed on nectar-rich plants like buddleia whilst **spiky caterpillars** enjoy common nettle. We hold **5952 Red Admiral Records**. They're part of a family of butterflies called '**Nymphalidae**' of which there are 15 regularly breeding UK species. This family is sometimes called '**Brush-footed butterflies**' owing to tufts on their tiny front legs. These legs are in fact so small that they don't use them for walking and can only be seen on close inspection, making it appear from a distance that they only have 4 legs! Our Nymphalidae records from the last 10 years total 59,252..

EARLY THORNS are different from almost all other moths in that they rest with their wings closed together above their bodies (like a butterfly). Adults are often attracted to the light of both moth traps and bright windows and caterpillars love **hawthorn** amongst other foodplants. Both are active at the moment. This species belongs to the '**Geometridae**' family of moths of which there are many UK species. Total records for this family in the last 10 years is 5402. Out of this there are only **90 early thorn records**.

(c) Mel Bellingham



Adult **HEBREW CHARACTER** moths are flying at the moment and are often attracted to light in gardens. Look out for the **distinctive marking** on its wings (which gives it the name). Caterpillars like native trees such as **Oak and Birch**. This moth is part of the '**Noctuidae**' family. One of the most commonly recorded moth families (9189 records), moths in this group almost always rest with their **forewings covering their hindwings**. We hold **259 Hebrew Character records**, placing this species in the top 10 for the family and within the top 20 most recorded moths.

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The **COMMON BLUE** is the most widespread of all blue butterflies and can be seen in a **range of habitats** including gardens April-October. Males and females look very different – **males are bright blue and conspicuous** whilst **females are more secretive** and can vary from almost all brown to predominantly blue. Caterpillars enjoy **birds-foot trefoil** and **white clover** amongst other plants. 'Blue' butterflies are part of the '**Lycaenidae**' family which also includes '**Coppers**' and '**Hairstreaks**'. Common blue is the **MOST RECORDED** in this family with **2586 records** out of a total of 8559s.

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We've put the **LARGE WHITE** (top) and **SMALL WHITE** (bottom) in together because it can sometimes be hard to tell them apart! IDding them is not that difficult though if you get close enough to them. The large white is, as the name suggest, the **larger** of the two. The **black tip** on its forewings extends down to the wing edge and only the females have two black spots on the forewing. The small white is **smaller** in size and the black tip on the forewing is confined to the corners. Both males and female have black spots on the forewing. You can find both species in a **range of habitats**, especially in allotments and gardens where **cabbages** are grown. Both species are part of the '**Pieridae**' family of butterflies of which there are only 10 UK species. Out of this family, the **SMALL WHITE** is the **most recorded with 10,709 records** since 2010.

ELEPHANT HAWKMOTHS have got to be one of the most spectacular species out there... Bright pink/green adults and caterpillars that look like an elephant! Nocturnal adults feed on honeysuckle and caterpillars enjoy willowherbs + fuschias, this means gardens can be perfect habitats for them. When threatened, caterpillars make themselves bigger to show off their **eyespot**s and scare away predators. This species belongs to the '**Sphingidae**' family (hawkmoths). There's only 11 UK species in this group but they're all large and impressively coloured. Elephant hawkmoth is the **TOP RECORD SCORER** in this group with **110 records** since 2010..



(c) Steve J. McWilliam



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Tiger-striped **CINNABAR MOTH** caterpillars are very noticeable and can be seen from early Spring feeding on **common ragwort** (a great reason to let this 'weed' grow where you can). Adults are **DAY-FLYING** rather than nocturnal so be sure to look out for them in **grassy habitats** like gardens and waste ground. Cinnabars belong to the '**Erebidae**' family of moths, which is really **diverse**, also including some other stunning species like garden tigers, white ermines and pale tussock moths. Amongst this group cinnabar is by far the **most recorded with 351 records** from the last 10 years. Given how often cinnabar caterpillars are seen and how distinctive they are, we think there should definitely be more records than this!

For the **#MyPatch** campaign we're looking for any records of garden wildlife, or wildlife seen out your window. There are a few ways you can send us this information...



1

Sign up to iNaturalist and become a member of the project. Add observations through the app or website and any which fit the criteria will automatically be added to the campaign



2

Email us with what you've seen: info@record-irc.co.uk. Make sure you include all the details. Or send us paper records.



3

If you already use Rodis, iRecord or other recording platforms you can carry on with these if you'd like and we will pick up your records as we normally do

