

Moths at a Searchlight.

War conditions have not tended to help the study of Entomology, and the activities of the lepidopterist in particular have been very much restricted. On the evening of Sunday September 17th. 1944, however, a local searchlight in operation provided some of the members of the Bishops Stortford Natural History Society with a unique opportunity of seeing the largest gathering of night-flying moths that has ever been recorded in the locality.

Attention was first attracted to the searchlight by the presence, in the beam, of many moving points of light, clearly visible at a distance of at least a quarter of a mile. Fortunately, owing to the existence of a public footpath, it was possible to approach quite close to the station, when these points of light were found to be due to large numbers of moths of varied size, flying through and in the beam, and rendered almost incandescent in appearance by the powerful rays.

They must have numbered many thousands, as they crowded the beam of light as far upwards as the eye could follow. Moreover, hundreds of confused insects swarmed and fluttered on the large disc of glass from which the light emerged, whilst many hundreds more rested on the surrounding auxiliary apparatus. More still filled the nearby atmosphere, striking the faces of the onlookers and alighting on their clothing, whilst several bats swooped and circled around, taking toll of the abundant prey.

An attempt was made to determine what species were present, and in what proportions. Real accuracy was of course, out of the question, but it was at once evident that by far the greater number consisted of the Angleshades moth, (*P. meticulosa*), and the Silver Y. (*Plusia gamma*). The former was estimated to make up 50% to 60%, and the latter possibly about 40% of the whole. These two species are both common in the locality. As many insects as possible of species other than these two were collected for identification, and the result proved highly interesting. They included five examples, (3 male and 2 female) of that beautiful immigrant the Convolvulus Hawk and no less than ten specimens of the Large Wainscot (*A. lutosa*), a moth which has only once previously been recorded in the neighbourhood.

A list of the ~~other~~ moths noted, with approximate numbers is appended.

In addition to moths, the light had attracted many Hornets, (a common insect locally) with a few Crane flies and ichneumonidae.

Further visits were made on subsequent nights, but on no later occasion was the number of insects seen comparable with those seen on the first visit.

Hersi Convolvuli.	Convolvulus Hawk. (5).
Trichiura crategi.	Pale Oak Eggar (59).
Phragmatobia fuliginosa.	Ruby Tiger. Several.
Agrotis ypsilon.	Dark Swordgrass (5).
" Saucia.	Pearly Underwing. (1).
" C.-nigrum.	Setaceous Hebrew Character. (many).
Triphaena comes.	Lesser Yellow Underwing. (Several)
" pronuba.	Large " " "
Lampra fimbria.	Broad Bordered " "
Eumiditis protea.	Brindled Green. "
Aporophyla lutulenta	Deep Brown Dart. (1).
Antitype flavicincta.	Large Ranunculus. (4).
Phlogophora meticulosa.	Angleshades. (very numerous)
Hydraecia micacea.	Rosy Rustic. (2).
Arenostola lutosa.	Large Wainscot. (10).
Leucania palleas.	Common " (many)

Amathes lychnidis.	Beaded Cheatnut. (several)
Anchoscelis litura.	Brownspot Pinion. "
Tiliacea aurago.	Barred Sallow. "
Orthosia fulvago.	Sallow. "
Cirrhia gilvago.	Dusky Lemon Sallow. "
Conistva vaccinii.	Chestnut. "
Orrhodia ligula.	Dark Chestnut. "
Scoliopterix libatrix.	Herald. (a few).
Plusia gamma.	Silver 'Y' (very many).
Catocala nupta.	Red Underwing. (a few).
Deuteronomos fuscantaria.	Dusky Thorn, (several).
Chiasmia clathrata.	Latticed Heath. (one).

(Total of 31 species).

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clothing, while several buzzed and circled around,
making a soft hum of the whirring wings.