

Moorside Moth Survey

I am contacting you to ask about the possibility of trapping moths in Moorside Allotments. As you may know our knowledge of the distribution and abundance of moths is much poorer than it is for butterflies since their nocturnal habits make them rather under studied and under-appreciated. Nevertheless they are just as interesting and much more varied than butterflies and of course face similar threats to butterflies so any monitoring of them that takes place is valuable. At present I run my moth trap in my back yard which is a very unsuitable location being surrounded by a high wall on all sides and lacking much in the way of vegetation. The allotments would be a much more suitable location to see what species are flying in the Fenham area and so I would be very grateful if you would consider my request to run my moth trap there on a regular basis.

To give you an idea of what this would entail the trap is essentially a lamp on top of a container with a sort of lobster pot arrangement so that once the moths fly in they cannot easily escape again. It would be placed on one of your pathways, probably at an intersection to maximise visibility to moths. It would not be necessary to enter anyone's allotment. I would usually run the trap from just after dusk onwards. Whilst it is possible to leave the trap running by itself all night, for security reasons I would wish to attend the trap and so would normally close it down at about midnight depending on the level of moth activity. Depending on weather and work commitments I would hope to run the trap up to once or twice a week although in practice it is likely to work out as less than this. All moths caught are released alive once they have been identified and all records would be passed on to the county moth recorder so that they can contribute to our overall knowledge of the moths of Northumberland (which for biological recording purposes includes the City of Newcastle).

I would of course be happy to provide you with a summary of what I catch and could also provide pictures of some of the more photogenic species for your website if you would be interested. Of course a few moth species are considered as pests by gardeners so it is perhaps important to stress that the moth trap only draws in moths from a relatively short range and anything it catches is almost certainly already present in the allotments and will not have been lured in from further afield!

I do hope that you will agree to this and, in addition, to providing me with a key to access the site. Since at least a few species fly in every month of the year I would be keen to begin as soon as possible

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Wallace