

**Report on Moth Training ID Event in the  
Gearrhoille Community Wood Ardgay on 16 June 2010  
under the Biodiversity Training for Community Woodland Groups Scheme**

**Introduction**

No community woodland can thrive without the involvement of woodlanders to take care of its biodiversity. It was with this in mind that the GCWA decided to run a series of events to raise awareness of biodiversity in our woodland involving representatives from other community woodlands.

**Purpose**

The purpose of our event on 16<sup>th</sup> June was threefold:

- We wanted to improve our skills (among young and old) in identifying the great variety of moths found in our woodland,
- We wanted to give the future guardians of our woodland a stake in its biodiversity by involving them as actively as possible in the event, and
- We invited representatives from other community woodlands (CWs) to participate in the event in order to observe and comment on the process and possibly be inspired to copy the model for application in their own CW.

**Preparation**

The financial assistance offered by the CWA's biodiversity training scheme for community woodland groups gave us the opportunity to invite an excellent team of trainers who, between them, combined the skill of identifying moths with that of enthusing adults and children alike. Invitations (complete with programme and booking form) were extended to the entire membership of CWA by mailround and in its e-newsletter and to North Highland Forest Trust members, but sadly only one representative from a community wood south of Inverness realised the benefit of the exercise. In the end, we had seven participants, mostly from our own ranks but also three from other more or less local community groups with interest in biodiversity.

A delegates' pack was handed out at the venue, containing a 2-page programme, list of delegates, expenses form, feedback form and a form for follow-up contacts, if so desired.

**Programme**

**Venue** – Gearrhoille Woods and Ardgay Village Hall, in the centre of Ardgay Village

9.45-10.00 Tea, coffee & registration, Ardgay Village Hall. Parking by hall opposite Alladale Stores.

10.15-11.45 Emptying moth traps and identification of moths, Gearrhoille wood

11.45-12.15 Return to hall for identification of difficult species.

12.15- 13.00 Talk on Moths, Ecology and Significance by Ian Paterson.

13.00 Refreshments and departure.

**Survey Work**

For details of the survey work, please read Ian Paterson's report (attached).

**Summary of Ian Paterson's Presentation on Moths**

Ian gave a fascinating slide talk. We heard that we have only 33 butterfly species in Scotland, but 1300 different moths. The main difference between moths (some fly during the day) and butterflies (some fly at night) is that moths have a hook - called 'frenula' - to attach the hind wings to the forewings.

Male moths detect the females' pheromones through their antennae. Although we caught a good cross-section of moths emerging in May/June, the so-called "antler" moths emerge a little later - in July.

Climate change creates problems as well as opportunities for some species: In 2009 Tony Mainwood reported the first record of Ringlet butterfly for Canmore Wood by Dornoch.

Ian's presentation contained many highlights, for instance:

- The Emperor moth has a bright green caterpillar - easy to spot.
- In the south of the UK, species can have two generations per year, in the North usually just one. Their trigger factors are day length and temperature. It will be interesting to see whether increasing global warming will produce two generations here too.
- Tony Mainwood reports that in recent years, he has observed two generations per year in the Common Blue butterfly on Dornoch Sands. Its caterpillar feeds on the Bird's-foot trefoil which grows in profusion around the dune system there.
- The Garden Tiger moth (as illustrated on the title page of our info pack) has a bristly caterpillar which should not be handled - its bristles can cause allergic skin reactions.

- When moths mate, the males are attracted by females releasing pheromones which can act over distances of more than 100 metres.
- The Poplar Hawk-moth is a very fast flyer - it can reach speeds of around 25 kmh.

To our great delight, we seem to have trapped a newcomer to Sutherland on 16<sup>th</sup> June: According to Barbara Ballinger, the official recorder for our area, the Poplar Grey moth has never been recorded here before. How exciting to have discovered a first for the Gearrchoille!

### **Resources used: Equipment and Books**

A "Skinner" trap with mercury vapour light and a "Heath" trap with a fluorescent or actinic tube.

Reference books used:

- Field Guide to Moths of Britain and Ireland, Paul Waring and Martin, Townsend, British Wildlife Publishing
- Field Guide to Butterflies and Moths, Dr Helgard Reichholf-Riehm, The Crowood Press
- The Natural History of Moths, Mark Young, Poyser.

NB For those moth enthusiasts who have not yet acquired a field guide, it may be of interest to know that good illustrations of moths can be found on the world-wide web, especially on the "UKMoths" website. Alternatively, digital photographs can be posted on the "iSPOT" website for identification.

### **Summary of Feedback**

Of the seven feedback forms issued six were returned.

- The location, organisation and catering were generally found to be "very good".
- The venue (village hall due for refurbishment) was generally found "good" although respondents did not realise that this question included the woodland. If there had been a category identifying the woodland as venue, the feedback would have been "excellent".
- Everyone felt that the event delivered their expectations.
- The reasons for attending were generally given as a specific interest in moths, some in community involvement. One feedback form sums it up by stating "interested in moths, community woodlands and schools involvement".
- The benefits to be derived from this event were "ideas for own events, fostering enthusiasm, knowledge of the GCWA wood, inspiration, meeting other enthusiastic people and better knowledge of lifecycle and variety of moths".
- Participants intend to use the experience to "develop events in own community wood, build on it, use it to create relationships with partners in other community groups, assist in study of moths, stop throwing away pupae found in garden, may take part in other local moth studies".
- Asked why they felt it would be beneficial, respondents called the event "a great way to find out how it's done, interchange ideas and info, encourage more interest in moths and local woodlands, new platforms to build on".
- To the question what the GCWA should be doing next, we were told to "keep up the good work, i.e. continue the strategy of involving both children and adult woodlanders in biodiversity training, e.g. the identification of lichens, our woodland's history, organising more events on other special subjects".
- Other comments: "Use these events to increase funding opportunities" "The home-made soup was very good and the welcome very warm" "Moth trapping to be continued in July"
- For list of delegates and age groups cf. Excel file attached. Age group analysis: 4 respondents 40-60; 1 26-40; 1 60+

### **Photographs**

Four photographs attached showing Ian Paterson, Christine Blanco, Poplar grey moth, Poplar hawk-moth

### **Key Learning Points**

- Participants seemed to really enjoy the event because of the prevailing spirit of exploration and camaraderie. There were many enthusiastic exchanges of information, ideas and thoughts
- The trainers have highlighted the use of butterfly nets as a necessary aid to be used in future events for recapturing escaped moths.
- The organiser feels she could have done more to attract delegates from other community woodlands, perhaps by sending posters to opposite numbers for public display in their

communities. The invitations seem to have provoked a very limited response, perhaps because the strategy was not made clear enough.

**Conclusion**

The event achieved its goal of raising awareness of biodiversity and training delegates in identification of moths. The survey report and leaflet will make a valuable addition to our own biodiversity database and records for Sutherland in general. The event was much enjoyed by all participants and we all felt we had benefited from the training exercise.

The GCWA considers biodiversity training as essential both as a conservation tool and for ensuring the cohesion and viability of community woodland groups. The GCWA is very grateful to the CWA for its support and hopes that the scheme can be continued in order to build on current achievements in 2011.

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| Participants List |                |   |
| Donnah            | Murray         | Woodland Officer, NHFT                    |
| Janet C           | Scott          | Strathnairn Community Woodlands, s of Inv |
| Faye              | Wilkinson      | Support Teacher, Tain Field Club Member   |
| Betty             | Wright         | GCWA, board member                        |
| Frank             | van Duivenbode | GCWA member, Ardgay                       |
| Phil              | Gurr, Dr       | Edderton & District Gardening Club        |
| Bill              | Stobo          | Chair, GCWA                               |
| Mary              | Stobo          | member, GCWA                              |



Brigitte Geddes, GCWA, 5 July 2010