

Moth Patterns

We often think of moths as being dull compared to butterflies, but just like butterflies, moths have beautiful and complicated wing patterns!

What are their patterns for?

Moths and their caterpillars have many predators. Over time they have developed features to help them avoid being eaten. Their intricate patterns and muted colours act as camouflage - allowing the moth to blend in with its surroundings. When you see a moth, you may notice that its wings and body resemble tree bark or mimic leaves and flowers.



Photo of a Knot Grass Moth by Laura Snell

Communication

Moths mostly communicate with pheromones, which are special chemical signals released into the air or left on surfaces. These signals act like secret messages that other moths can detect using their keen sense of smell.

Recently, researchers have learned that some moths use sound to communicate. These sounds are very quiet and too high-pitched for humans to hear! Perhaps that is why it took people a long time to discover this form of communication.

Moths developed super hearing to defend themselves against their main predators, bats. They have evolved specialised "ears" that can detect echolocation, the high-pitched sound bats use for hunting. This helps moths to avoid being eaten.

Conservation

Moths are vital to the environment as pollinators and a food source, but threats like pesticides, habitat loss, and light pollution are harming their population numbers. When people disturb moths like this, they struggle to reproduce, communicate, and get food.

Because moths are widespread and sensitive to environmental changes, they are known as 'environmental indicators'. By studying moths, scientists can understand how the environment is changing, and how healthy ecosystems are.

We want to keep moth populations happy and healthy. If you have a garden, there's one easy thing you can do to help them... do less!

Allowing your garden to grow a little wild in places gives moths the perfect habitat to shelter, find food and reproduce. It will also bring lots of other amazing insects, mammals and birds to your garden!