

I thought I would give you all a quick “heads up” to look out for interesting insects over the next week or two. Like us, many insects, particularly butterflies and moths, must have been hunkering down under a sheltered leaf, wondering what on earth had happened to summer. But now that the temperature has gone up a bit, all sorts of interesting things are appearing.

Probably the prize for the most spectacular insect must go to Bob McConnell who spotted this magnificent Poplar Hawk Moth on his door.



Hawk Moths are our largest moths in the UK and this one has a wing span of between 7 and 9cm!

As the name suggests, they lay their eggs on willows, poplars and aspens, and the caterpillars feed on the tree leaves.

They are regularly attracted to lights and can be seen at windows or at moth trapping events – more of that later!

On my dog walk on Wednesday, which was warm and sunny, I spotted lots of butterflies, particularly the grass eating species (at least the caterpillars eat grass, not the adult butterflies!), such as Ringlets and Meadow Browns. These were particularly common on the grassy track between Smithfield and Eastwood. As well as being grassy, there are some lovely large clumps of thistles which the adult butterflies come to, to feed on the nectar, and I saw Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral there too. But the best butterfly was yet to come on my walk, on a sunny branch in the woods beside the road between the Schoolhouse and the Cowdens path, a single Speckled Wood butterfly was guarding a territory! This is the first time I have seen this species in our area, although it is well known that they are spreading throughout Scotland. They are a woodland species, living in sunny glades and are territorial, chasing off any other butterfly which innocently flies past, or, of course, actively encouraging any Speckled Wood female which might come within range!

Finally, although it is not in our immediate area, at Fleecefaulds nature reserve near Ceres, where I was helping with a vegetation survey on Wednesday, I came across this beautiful Gold Spangle moth – the first time I have seen one!



So, hopefully I have whetted your appetite and you might like to come along to our moth trapping event on **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August, from 10am to 11.30am**. We will be joined by local moth expert, Susan Falconer, and together we will have the exciting task of opening the moth traps which will have been running all night in Burnturk, to see what amazing moths we have managed to catch, before releasing them safely back into the wild.

Cost £4, including refreshments.