

National Trust Press Release

13 August 2009

Survey reveals that Sissinghurst is a moth haven

The National Trust's Sissinghurst Castle Garden is a haven for garden enthusiasts, but the surrounding estate is also proving quite an attraction for our butterflies and moths.

Warden Peter Dear explained: "We are currently in the process of doing a moth survey and we have already recorded a total of 221 moth species on the property in just two months! Our survey has also highlighted 20 different butterflies, including the rare White letter hairstreak, which has suffered dramatic decline in recent decades due to Dutch elm disease which kills off elm, the only source of food for the caterpillars of the White letter hairstreak."

Peter is helped in carrying out the moth survey by local volunteer Steve Broyd.

Steve said: "We have been amazed by the sheer variety we have found in such a short time. The best time to record our finds is early morning, so the 4.30am starts have been tough, but watching the sun rise across the Weald is breathtaking and seeing the variety of different shapes and sizes of moths has been really rewarding."

Although not as well known or admired as butterflies many moths have unusual and exotic names like Chinese character, Elephant hawk and Bordered beauty and can be as colourful as many of the butterflies. Peter continued: "My daughter's favourite is the Elephant hawk moth because it's bright pink!"

"We've worked hard to improve the surrounding habitat for a range of wildlife in the last few years, and it seems to be paying off. By widening paths and creating glades in our woodland, for example, we have not only made the area more inviting for our visitors, but for the wildlife that rely on plenty of sunlight too. My aim is for 350 different species of moth and we're well on the road to reaching it."

Ends

For images and media enquires please contact:

Michelle Cleverley, Communications Officer (National Trust South East): 01372 455045
or michelle.cleverley@nationaltrust.org.uk