

## More marvellous migratory moths

“Hundreds of rare moths have flocked to the UK in what is being described as the best migration for years as a result of the recent record-breaking spell of warm weather” – this is a quote from the Butterfly Conservation website, and typical of many other quotes and comments in the press and online. But, I hear you ask, “What warm weather” and “I didn’t know moths migrated”.



Well the warm weather referred to was the southerly airstream that we had at the beginning of October – a few really warm days and some warm nights and ideal for wafting moths all the way from the tropics.

There are actually many species of migratory moths – some very large such as the Death’s Head Hawkmoth and the Convolvulus Hawkmoth; also the Hummingbird Hawkmoth which we see quite regularly in Pembrokeshire. It is not difficult to imagine these large and powerful moths flying large distances.

But many of the migratory moths are medium size or even distinctly small – think 1cm from head to toe. How do they do it?? Well nobody really knows. Some of them can be quite common and they rejoice in names such as Rusty-dot Pearl, Dark Sword-grass and Vestal - this latter moth is a delicate cream little thing with a beautiful pink stripe.

A pretty little brown and white moth called *Spoladea recurvalis* has recently given me a few moments of fame. I found one in my moth trap one morning and had no idea how rare it was - luckily I took a few pictures because it quickly flew away. Only later did I realize that I had seen a moth described like this:

"Amongst the highlights of the migration is *Spoladea recurvalis*. Prior to 2006 there had only been 19 records of this species in this country, with 19 recorded that year. More than 20 have been recorded so far this autumn, being found in Sussex, Dorset, Cornwall, Cumbria and the Isle of Man, additionally there have been the first records for Ireland. This is a widespread tropical species, its occurrence here this autumn being aided by the southerly winds."

Well now it has been recorded in Pembrokeshire too – my moth was a “first for Pembrokeshire” but regrettably not quite a “first for Wales” as Montgomeryshire beat me to it by a few days!