

The Autumn Sallow Moths

Throughout the mothing year, each season has its own particular species that contribute a 'wow' factor. In spring these are the beautiful Prominent species, and, in the summer, crowd pleasers like the Hawk-moths appear. However, the time of year I look forward to most is the autumn, when



Dusky Sallow
Photo: Peter Williams

migrant species are often swept to these shores on south-easterly winds and you can

never be quite sure what's going to turn up in your moth trap on any given day. Of course migrant moths in general are few and far between, and as nice as it is to see them, it's the resident species that I will concentrate on today, in particular the autumn Sallows.



Centre-barred Sallow
Photo: Mike Haigh

After a summer of frenetic moth trapping, when the relatively colourless *noctuid* species have reigned supreme, how wonderful it is to see that first Sallow species with its splendid yellow, orange or pink colours gleaming out like a ray of sunshine from the trap. These little gems never cease to make me smile! There are nine species of Sallow that can be seen at this time of year. They are not all taxonomically related but I've included them here based on the time of year the adults are on the wing.



Sallow
Photo: Mike Haigh



Pink-barred Sallow
Photo: Mike Haigh

Some Sallow species are more common than others depending on where you are in the UK. The first of the common species that you're likely to encounter in late August is the **Centre-barred Sallow**, a distinctive moth of yellow appearance with a pinkish central band across the wings. The larva feeds on the unopened buds and flowers of Ash. Around the same time the **Dusky Sallow** can be seen. Although this attractive species is rather more restricted to central southern England, where found, it can be quite common. It

feeds on the flowers and seeds of grasses. The **Sallow** and the **Pink-barred Sallow** are two species which can look similar. The main diagnostic difference between them is that the Pink-barred Sallow has a pink head while the Sallow has a yellow head; again both these species are quite common. Both species feed firstly on the catkins of Sallows and Poplars and later on herbaceous plants. The **Barred Sallow** and the **Orange Sallow** are the next to



make an appearance. The Barred Sallow which is common in central southern England and eastern Wales can vary in colour intensity from pinkish red to reddish brown and has a yellow or

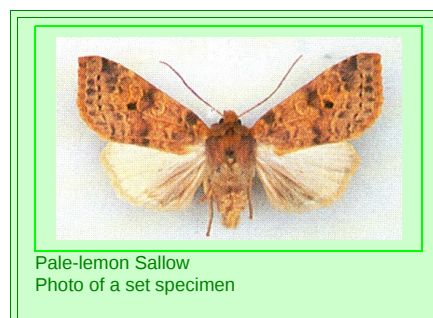


lightish band across the wings. It feeds on Field Maple and Beech. The Orange Sallow is a beautiful species which lives up to its name with its intense orange colour. It is found throughout Britain and can be common. It feeds mainly on Lime, but it has also been found on Weeping Wych Elm.



This just leaves the three scarcer species for us to look at. The **Dusky-lemon Sallow** found locally throughout Britain, has a base colour of a dull orange, yellow or brown and is irregularly banded with brown and clouded darker areas. It feeds mainly on the buds and ripening seeds of Wych Elm, but has also been found on Elm. The **Pale-lemon Sallow** is a 'Nationally scarce A' species, which means it has been recorded in only 16-30 10km

squares since 1980 throughout the British Isles. Even where it is found, it is very local. The moth is generally browner than other species of Sallow with some lighter areas; its hooked wing is a noticeable feature. It feeds firstly on the catkins of Black Poplar and later on poplar leaves and herbaceous plants. Finally we have the **Angle-striped Sallow**, a 'Nationally scarce B' species, which means it has been recorded in only 31-100 10km squares since 1980. This moth has been recorded throughout much of mainland



Britain but in general it's found in central England and central Scotland. It's thought that immigrants increase the resident population of this species each year. The colour of this species varies from plain yellow to a brown-orange and has very noticeable cross-lines on the wings. The larva feeds on Downy and Silver Birch.

All the Sallow species moths can be seen on mild autumn evenings feeding on ivy flowers, over ripe blackberries (on which they can become rather intoxicated), and other autumn flowers. As the nights draw in, these beautiful little moths fade away just as the last leaves fall off the trees. Winter is just around the corner, we'll have to wait until next year to enjoy them all again.

Peter Williams.

