

# NATIONAL Moth Week

## Global Citizen Science

### **National Moth Week, July 20-28, Engages Citizen Scientists Around the World to Observe and Document Moth Biodiversity**

Citizen scientists around the world will be setting up white sheets and lights in backyards, woods and fields July 20 through July 28 for the second annual [National Moth Week](#), a global science project begun last year to encourage the public to observe and document one of nature's most diverse – and misunderstood – creatures.

Moths are the Rodney Dangerfield of the *Lepidoptera* order. They don't get half the respect or admiration that their colorful daytime cousins – butterflies – do. Drawn to light, they're often swatted or zapped, and blamed for crimes against winter woolens. But how many people know that there are hundreds of thousands of moth species, many of them as beautiful as butterflies, and just as important or more to the ecosystem? Moths also can tell us a lot about our changing environment by their geographical and seasonal distribution.

National Moth Week literally shines a much-needed spotlight on moths and their ecological importance as well as their biodiversity. The event allows people of all ages to become “citizen scientists” and contribute scientific data about moths they observe in their own communities.

Participating in National Moth Week can be as simple as turning on a porch light at night and watching what happens, or going outside in daylight to find caterpillars and diurnal moths, often mistaken for butterflies. At night, participants can use ordinary light bulbs, UV lights, or mercury vapor lights to draw moths. And, they can also mix up a batch of sweet moth bait to brush on tree barks for an even bigger response.

National Moth Week grew out of local summer “Moth Nights” that David Moskowitz and Liti Haramaty began organizing in 2005 with the Friends of the East Brunswick (NJ) Environmental Commission, a nonprofit organization dedicated to local environmental education and conservation. The events typically attract 30 to 50 persons, some with scientific backgrounds, but mostly local residents and their children who want to experience a unique nighttime nature activity.

“National Moth Week is an opportunity for citizen scientists across the globe to contribute meaningful information about moths regardless of their level of expertise,” said Moskowitz, an environmental consultant and graduate student in entomology at Rutgers University. “All it takes is an interest in moths and the natural world.”

In its first year, National Moth Week became an international phenomenon, attracting participants from 49 states and 30 countries, who registered more than 300 event locations.

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“Participants ranged from individuals and families looking for moths in their own backyards or local parks, to conservation organizations and state agencies holding well-advertised public events,” said Haramaty, a marine researcher at Rutgers’ Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences. Moth events took place in diverse settings, from the streets of Manhattan to remote sites in Costa Rica, Kenya and Gambia.

As of May 2, participants in 31 states and 27 countries were registered for this year’s National Moth Week. The states include North Dakota, which was the only one that did not participate last year. New global partners include Biodiversity Bhutan, the Nizhny Novgorod Branch of the Russian Entomological Society, and the Gambia Wildlife Conservation Trust.

Numerous organizations around the world have partnered with National Moth Week and are supporting the event. Through partnerships with major online biological data depositories, National Moth Week participants can help map moth distribution and provide needed information on other life history aspects around the globe.

Partners include [Project Noah](#), [Butterflies and Moths of North America](#) (BAMONA), [Encyclopedia of Life](#), [Discover Life](#), [iNaturalist](#), [BugGuide](#), and [Moth Photographers Group](#) (MPG). Joining as a partner this year is the [USDA Agricultural Research Service](#). Many partner websites are repositories for data and photos about moths and other organisms. Last year, these partner organizations received more than 3,500 submissions as a result of National Moth Week, including nearly 1,000 moth photos that were uploaded into Discover Life’s albums. Moth spottings from around the world were added to Project Noah through its global “Moths of the World” mission.

The National Moth Week team also includes Elena Tartaglia, who holds a Ph.D. in ecology from Rutgers and has worked as an environmental educator for the New Jersey Audubon Society, and Dan Ford, an environmental scientist with EcolSciences, Inc., who holds a degree in entomology, agriculture and natural resource studies from the University of Delaware.

For more information about National Moth Week or to register an event, visit [nationalmothweek.org](http://nationalmothweek.org). National Moth Week also is on Facebook and Twitter (@Moth\_Week).

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