



Ask about Ireland



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Butterflies & Moths

Butterflies and moths both belong to a group of insects called Lepidoptera, which means 'wings of scale'. The wings of these insects are covered in tiny scales that produce the beautiful colours we see. There are 1,000 species of moth in Ireland compared with only 37 species of butterfly.

Irish (Butterfly):

Féilicán

Irish (Moth):

Féilicán oíche

Common Blue Butterfly



© John Keenach

Elephant hawk Moth



©Mike Brown

Which is which? Moths are usually dull in colour to help keep them hidden during the day, and butterflies are usually colourful creatures. However, some moths can be as colourful as butterflies, so it can be difficult to tell them apart. Here are some tips to help you:

- 1) Watch them as they are resting. Most butterflies hold their wings together above their back, while most moths rest with their wings folded flat.
- 2) When do you see them? Butterflies are usually seen during the day, while moths are generally seen at night.
- 3) Look at their antennae. Most butterflies have long club-shaped antennae, but moths have feathery antennae that are rarely club-shaped.

Months seen: The butterfly season runs from April to September, but the best months to watch them are June and July.

Food: They enjoy the nectar from flowers, such as buddleia, lilac, honeysuckle, lavender, bluebell, marigold and other flowers. Other essential foods for some species include nettles, ivy and trees such as hawthorn, gooseberry, and blackthorn.

Habitat: Gardens, parks, meadows, heaths, hedgerows.