



Study Says That Moths Are Super-Pollinators

What are pollinators?

- A flower must be pollinated in order to make a fruit or new seed grow.
- Insects, such as bees and moths, are pollinators that help to transport pollen from plant to plant.

Some people think moths are a nuisance because they gnaw at clothes. But a new scientific study has shed light on moth's night-time activities. It says that they pollinate so many plants that they are super-pollinators.

A team from University College London (UCL) studied different insects. They went to nine ponds in Norfolk to watch them.

During their research, they found out that moths were just as important as other insects, such as bees, at pollinating plants.

So what is pollination and why is it so important? Plants produce seeds to reproduce. To make a seed, pollination must happen.

The male part of the plant (the stamen) makes pollen. The pollen needs to get to the stigma, the female part.

Most plants can't do this on their own. As a result, they mainly rely on insects or the wind to help transport pollen from a stamen to a stigma.

Insects are often attracted by the smell of flowers and their brightly-coloured petals. When they're visiting a plant, pollen from the stamen sticks to the insect's body. The pollen is then rubbed on to the stigma when they visit another flower. This leads to new seeds being produced.

Moths play a more important role in pollinating than people had once thought. According to Dr Richard Walton, from UCL, the study shows how moths play a "critical" role in pollination. He also said that they visit



Photo: Moths are important pollinators.

a "diverse" range of plants. He went on to say that, "Nocturnal moths have an important but overlooked ecological role."

Whereas bees and hoverflies often pollinate during the day, moths do most of their work under the cover of darkness. The study also found that moths gather up pollen on their thorax rather than on their tongues.

Scientists now want to do further research. Jan Axmacher said that they need "more research to understand" more about how moths pollinate plants.

Glossary

diverse	A wide range.
nocturnal	Happens at night.
ecological	How different living things interact in a habitat.
thorax	The body of an insect.

Questions

1. 'But a new scientific study has shed light.'

The phrase 'shed light' suggests that...

- ☐ Scientists have found out something new.
- ☐ Scientists shone a bright light on moths.
- ☐ The experiment was done at night.
- ☐ Next time, scientists will do their research in a darkened room.

2. Name the two ways mentioned in the story that pollen is transported from a stamen to a stigma.

1. _____

2. _____

3. Put a number next to each step to show the order in which it happens during insect pollination. The first one has been done for you.

- ☐ Insect visits another flower.
- ☐ Pollen sticks to insects body.
- ☒ 1 Insect attracted by the smell and bright petals of a flower.
- ☐ Pollen rubbed on to stigma.

4. 'According to Dr Richard Walton from UCL, the study shows how moths play a "critical" role'.

Tick the word that is closest in meaning to 'critical' in this sentence.

- ☐ angry
- ☐ concerned
- ☐ kind
- ☐ important

5. What was the difference between the times when bees pollinate and those when moths pollinate plants?

6. Explain what the story is about in 15 words or fewer.

Answers

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Accept by the wind and by insects.

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- Pollen sticks to insects body.
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4. 'According to Dr Richard Walton from UCL, the study shows how moths play a "critical" role'.

Tick the word that is closest in meaning to 'critical' in this sentence.

- ☐ angry
- ☐ concerned
- ☐ kind
- ☒ **important**

5. What was the difference between the times when bees pollinate and those when moths pollinate plants?

Accept any answer that refers to bees being active during the day and moths at night, e.g. Whereas bees and hoverflies often pollinate during the day, moths do most their work under the cover of darkness.

6. Explain what the story is about in 15 words or fewer.

Accept any reasonable summary that is 15 words or fewer, e.g. A scientific study says that moths are important for pollinating plants.