

# Host a Moth Party!

North America has about 700 different kinds of butterflies to delight us by day but 11,000 species of moth to amaze us at night. They come in all sizes and patterns with colours ranging from drab to dazzling. Once you start watching you'll be hooked. Besides, who doesn't like playing outside after dark with flashlights and staying up past bedtime?

Moth watching is simple and exciting! You can just leave the porch light on or follow these steps for more fun.

To host a Moth Party gather a sheet, lights, bait and guests to share the experience with.

⇒ A sheet - A plain white sheet for the moths to land on will make it easy to see them. Hang the sheet from a railing, clothesline, rope, or wall. You may wish to put one on the ground to see that no wildlife ends up underfoot.



⇒ Lights - Moths are attracted to artificial light. Hanging a caged utility light (powered with an outdoor extension cord) from a stepladder will work well. Make sure your lights are secure and safely positioned in case they are bumped into in the dark. Direct the light onto the sheet. Some moths like bright white light and others like black (ultraviolet) light. Inexpensive black light bulbs are available at hardware and party-supply stores.

Using both light sources will greatly increase the diversity of moths attracted to the sheet and your party.

⇒ Bait - Some moths prefer sweets over bright lights. Here is a recipe for their favourite sweet treat.

- ◇ 1 very ripe (black peel) banana,
- ◇ 1 cup packed brown sugar,
- ◇ 1/2 cup beer

Mix all together until well blended. It is best if left to ferment for a few days but not essential.

To use the bait, simply paint the mixture, with a wide paintbrush or spatula, onto the bark of a tree or trees at eye level (or a wall you can rinse off). Paint a patch about 30 cm by 30 cm. The moths will be drawn to your sweet bait. Use flashlights to check as often as you like to see who is dining. Watch closely. Perhaps you will see a moth stick out its tongue (proboscis) and sip up the feast.

Other insects may join the party. They are each fascinating in their own way.

Nature is out there waiting for you day and night. Throw a party and celebrate the night life!

**Tip:** Here are a few sites to help you identify moths

[Ontario Nature Magazine](#)

[Insect Identification.org](#)

[Backyard Nature.net](#) with Jim Conrad

[Butterflies and Moths of North America](#)

And a good ID book

Peterson's Field Guide to Moths of Northeastern North America



Grape Plume Moth



Pink Underwing