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MAKE IT WILD DOING WONDERS FOR YORKSHIRE'S MOTHS

The team at *Make it Wild* has been reserving space for nature and creating wildlife habitats since 2010 and their efforts are being rewarded with some remarkable results.

At its Bank Woods site in Summerbridge, Harrogate, it has been carrying out a series of surveys to see if its tree planting and rewilding work is benefitting of some of the smaller inhabitants – its moths! In July 2018, prior to the planting of 5,000 new native, broadleaved trees, the local Nidderdale WildWatch team visited the site and recorded 34 species of moth. Then surveys were undertaken in July and October 2023 by local moth experts: Jill Warwick, Harrogate District Naturalists' Society on (HDNS) macro-moth recorder; and Charles Fletcher, HDNS micro-moth recorder and Yorkshire's macro-moth recorder. They identified 180 and 42 moth species respectively on these occasions. Finally, fast-forwarding to the most recent survey on the night of 17th July 2024, 122 different species were recorded, many of which had not been seen previously. This brings the grand total of recorded species using Bank Woods as their home to 265, several being extremely rare in Yorkshire.

Said Charles Fletcher, "Old upland woodland is a scarce habitat and Bank Woods is a fine example, with its mature oak, hazel and birch being particularly good. This provides a haven for many moth species that, at one time, used to be widespread across Yorkshire and it's great to see such a lovely range of species thriving here. Moreover, we are seeing the moths extending their range to the new planting on the site and it's exciting to see it already starting to attract such a wide variety of insect life. This improvement in biodiversity will only increase over the next few years and we will keep on monitoring this progress."

Christopher Neave, co-founder of *Make it Wild*, added, "We're very conscious of just how much nature is under threat from loss of habitat and from climate change and we create our reserves as places where wildlife can thrive without interference. Seeing this moth species list rise with each survey we undertake is really encouraging and inspires us to keep doing more for biodiversity."

END

Why are Moths important

Moths play a crucial and often overlooked role in our ecosystems, As prolific pollinators, they are involved in the pollination of many plant species, some of which are not attractive to bees and other daytime pollinators. This nocturnal activity helps ensure the reproduction of a wide variety of plants, contributing to healthy and diverse habitats. Additionally, moths serve as a vital food source for numerous bird, bat, and other predator species, helping to maintain the balance of these populations and supporting the food web. Their larvae are also important decomposers, breaking down dead

matter and returning essential nutrients to the soil, fostering a fertile environment for plant growth. By supporting moth populations, we help sustain the processes critical for all life in our ecosystems.

Community Involvement and Ecological Impact:

Bank Woods is a prime example of how local community support can enhance conservation outcomes. Supported by both by volunteers and business partnerships with organisations such as Biffa, De Vere Hotels and Footasylum

Make it Wild

Make it Wild has 10 nature reserves in Yorkshire and is developing a network of partner sites elsewhere in the UK. Its work is supported by individuals and local businesses by nature sponsorship, carbon offsetting and on-site team-building days.

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