

Hummingbird Hawk-moth

Macroglossum stellatarum



The hummingbird hawk-moth or sometimes the hummingmoth, is a species of Sphingidae. Its long proboscis and its hovering behaviour, accompanied by an audible humming noise, make it look remarkably like a hummingbird while feeding on flowers. It flies during the day, especially in bright sunshine, but also at dusk, dawn, and even in the rain, which is unusual.

Wingspan 50-58mm. The adults are generally brown with small distinctive white patches on sides of the abdomen. There is also a black anal tuft. The forewings are a dull brown with darker crosslines. The hindwings are mainly orange.

This migrant moth has been seen in Ireland as early as late April right through until the beginning of October. It is most commonly observed during June and July.

A day-flying species that migrates from southern Europe each year to Britain and Ireland. It can be found from dry rocky grassland usually in coastal localities, especially in the east and inland from urban and suburban gardens, where its characteristic feeding behaviour resembling that of a hummingbird attracts attention. It is particularly attracted to tubular nectar-rich flowers such as Buddleia Buddleja davidii, petunia, red valerian Centranthus ruber and many others in search of nectar. They are reported to trap-line, that is, to return to the same flower beds at about the same time each day.