

The Moths and Butterflies of Rathclooney and the surrounding district



By **KEN BOND**, Dept of Zoology, Ecology & Plant Science, **UCC**

The wide range of natural habitats found in and around Rathclooney are no doubt the main reason for the rich diversity of wildlife found there.

In addition to the more widespread butterfly species, several specialties occur, such as the “nationally vulnerable” Marsh Fritillary, which has been found on the section of bog east of the road. This area also contains another scarce and local species, the Large Heath, and the local Green Hairstreak. More recently the Holly Blue has been seen on the roadside at Rathclooney, as well as at Derrymore. Until fairly recently this species was almost unknown in County Clare, and it appears to be increasing here, no doubt supported by the good supply of holly on the road margin. Species which occur commonly in the area include the Peacock, Orange-tip and Green-veined White, in addition to the Brimstone, which is largely confined to the limestone further west, but also occurs locally in the Slieve Aughty area, as well as the Silver-washed Fritillary.

Probably the most noteworthy species of all is, however, the Purple Hairstreak, which has been found on the margins of the oakwood at Derrymore. This butterfly is found only in mature and native oak woodland, and is very scarce in Co. Clare, as in most of Ireland. The occurrence of this mature oakwood adjacent to bog is an unusual and striking feature of the site.

Many moths have also been recorded at Rathclooney, the more local and scarce species include the following: Clouded Buff, Heath Rustic, Neglected, Champion, Striped Wainscot, Haworth’s Minor and The Herald.