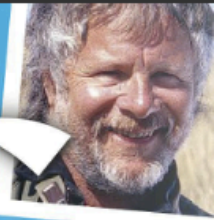


BBC**BILL ODDIE: HAMPSTEAD HEATH'S SECRET RESIDENTS**

Wildlife

The
**sea
otter**

VK.COM/STOPTHEPRESS

■ EVOLUTION

ILLUMINATING EVOLUTION

The rise of artificial lighting over the past 150 years or so has lured countless insects to their deaths like, well, moths to a flame. "It's a very recent environmental change for moths," said Florian Altermatt, of the University of Zurich. "They weren't prepared for it, and it's not very good for them." But at least one species is adapting to the situation.

Altermatt has led a series of experiments showing that small ermine moths are already evolving in response to the threat. Individuals living in well-lit, city habitats are less willing to fly towards light than those from rural populations, a difference that probably has a genetic basis. "The reduction in 'flight-to-light' behaviour is about



The small ermine is fairly common in the UK.

20 per cent in urbanised places," he explained.

The researchers are now investigating the mechanism behind the evolutionary change in behaviour. It could be due to alterations in the sensitivity of the moths' eyes, for example, or they may just be flying less in general.

SOURCE *Biology Letters* LINK <http://bit.ly/20PRCRT>