

Elephant Hawk-moth *Deilephila elpenor* (Linnaeus)

The Elephant Hawk-moth is a common and widespread species throughout England and Wales, but more thinly distributed in Scotland. Both the caterpillars and the adults possess distinguishing features that make this species particularly striking. The caterpillar is large and either green or brown, usually with large eyespots and is said to resemble an elephant's trunk, giving the Elephant Hawk-moth its name.



Photograph David Green/Butterfly Conservation

These eye-catching larvae can be found in a wide range of habitats where the foodplants, willowherbs, bedstraws and less frequently Enchanter's Nightshade and fuchsias occur, including gardens, grassland, disturbed ground, hedgerows, woodland rides, heathlands and sand dunes. The caterpillars are usually spotted resting on the foodplants on sunny afternoons, or walking over the

ground searching for a pupation site in which to spend the winter. The caterpillars construct delicate cocoons formed among vegetation on the ground or just below the surface of the soil.

The adult Elephant Hawk-moth is attractively and distinctively coloured with patterns of pink and olive-green on the forewings and body, with a pink stripe along the length of the abdomen. The moth emerges from May to early August and may occasionally be found in the daytime resting on the foodplant. This species flies at dusk, feeding on the wing at the flowers of honeysuckle and other tubular nectar flowers, and also can be attracted to sources of light, sometimes in considerable numbers.



Photograph Emily Funnell/Butterfly Conservation