

### **Pale Tussock *Calliteara pudibunda* (Linnaeus)**

The caterpillars of the Pale Tussock are rather distinctive and so, should make these caterpillars relatively easy to identify during the summer to early autumn. Pale to bright yellow or greenish yellow in colour, and up to 40mm long when fully grown, these caterpillars possess sometimes quite thickly tufted hair projecting from the sides and top of their body, with a longer red-orange horn-like structure at the tail end of the body. Black bands separate the yellow segments of the body and get progressively thinner from head to tail. These black bands become more obvious if the caterpillar curls up. Overall, this conspicuous appearance is a clear indication to predators that the caterpillars should not be eaten!



*Photograph Dan Hoare/Butterfly Conservation*

Feeding on a wide variety of trees and shrubs, including

hawthorns, Blackthorn, Crab Apple, oaks, birches and fruit trees, the Pale Tussock caterpillar is frequently found in gardens, hedgerows, woodlands, parks and scrubby areas, in England and Wales. The caterpillars have been referred to as "hop dogs" because they were frequently encountered in hop fields before the widespread use of insecticides.



*Photograph David Green/Butterfly Conservation*

The Pale Tussock moth can be found by day resting or mating on the foodplants, its silvery colouring, however, can make this moth look like silken webbing, camouflaging it from predators. The male Pale Tussock moth possesses considerably feathered orange/brown antennae, with the female often being larger than the male. A melanic (darker) form of this moth is becoming more frequent in parts of southern England.