

Munching Caterpillars

There are over **2,500** different kinds of **moths** found in Britain. There could be **100** species living in your back garden!

Identify moths and their caterpillars

There are over 100 day-flying moths in the UK, but far more only come out at night so to see them requires some detective work! You could build a moth trap using the instructions on our website, or you could hang up a white sheet with a bright torch shining on it. Many moth caterpillars can be found during the daytime, most commonly from May to September. You can also try looking in your garden with a torch on mild winter nights when some moth caterpillars come out to feed.



Brimstone Moth

This is a common moth and the adults can be found from April to October, depending on the habitat and location. The caterpillars feed on a range of trees and bushes, including Hawthorn and Blackthorn.



Privet Hawk-moth

This is our largest resident hawk-moth and it is usually found in woodland and gardens. As its name suggests, the caterpillars feed on Wild Privet, but they will also eat Lilac and Ash.



Poplar Hawk-moth

This is probably our commonest hawk-moth and has a distinctive shape when at rest, holding its hind wings forward of its front wings. The caterpillars feed on Poplar, Aspen and Willow.



Humming-bird Hawk-moth

This moth gets its name from the way it visits flowers to feed on nectar, hovering in front of them like a Hummingbird. It flies in the daytime, especially on sunny days, and can often be seen feeding on garden flowers such as Fuchsia, while its caterpillars feed on Bedstraw.

Most adult moths feed on nectar, but some have no mouth parts so they can only live a few days.



Butterfly Conservation:
Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468)
Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP
Tel: 01929 400 209
Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)

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Eyed Hawk-moth

This is a well camouflaged moth when resting, but if it is disturbed it will flash its hind wings which are marked with striking blue and pink 'eyes' to scare predators away. The caterpillars feed on several trees including willow and apple.



Elephant Hawk-moth

This is one of our most beautiful and recognisable moths with its pink and green colouring. Its caterpillar feeds mostly on Rosebay Willowherb and Fuchsia and it is the caterpillar that gives it its name, due to its resemblance to an elephant's trunk.



Jersey Tiger

This moth was once restricted to the Channel Islands but is now found all along the south coast and its range is expanding northwards. It flies during the day and at night from July to September, and its caterpillars eat a wide range of plants including nettles.

The Goat Moth caterpillar eats wood and because it is so hard to digest it can take four years to reach its full size.



Mullein

This moth is more commonly seen as a caterpillar than an adult, feeding on Mullein (as the name suggests) or Buddleia in gardens. They are found all over England and Wales, and the adults fly from April to May.



Buff-tip

This amazing moth looks just like a snapped twig of Silver Birch when it is resting with its wings closed. It is quite common, especially in southern Britain, and its caterpillars can feed on a wide range of broad-leaved trees.

Did you know?
Most moths fly at night but there are some that come out in the daytime.



Magpie Moth

This pretty speckled moth flies in July and August and is quite common in Britain, although it is declining in many areas. The caterpillar likes to feed on currant and gooseberry bushes so can be encouraged into gardens.



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Puss Moth

This fluffy white moth has one of the most bizarre caterpillars found in Britain! It feeds on Aspen, Poplar and Willow, and the adult can be seen flying from May to July.



Cinnabar

This is a fairly widespread moth that can often be seen in the daytime from May to July. Its distinctive black and yellow caterpillars feed on Ragwort; sometimes there are so many caterpillars on each plant that they completely strip all the leaves!



Garden Tiger

This beautiful moth was once common across Britain but has declined over the last few years. The caterpillars, known as 'woolly bears', feed on a wide range of plants, including nettles and docks.



Scarlet Tiger

The Scarlet Tiger is common in southern parts of England and Wales and flies during the day in May and June. Its caterpillars are not too fussy and will eat many plants, but they especially like Common Comfrey.



Angle Shades

This is a distinctive moth which is well camouflaged among dead leaves. It can be found throughout Britain in any month of the year but most commonly flies from May to October. The caterpillars feed on a wide range of plants including docks and nettles.



Silver Y

Named after the pale Y-shaped markings on the wings, this moth is very common and can be seen during the day as well as at night. Its caterpillars are not fussy eaters and will feed on nearly any kind of plant.



**Did you know
that bats are the
biggest predator of
moths?**



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Tips for looking for moths and caterpillars

Here are some tips to increase your chances of finding what you are looking for...

- Different species of moth like different habitats. Check in a book before you set your trap to choose which area to try.
- Larger moths tend to come out later in the summer than many smaller moths. Try setting a trap in July or August to catch hawk-moths.
- Moth traps need to be placed in a sheltered spot. Make sure there is a cover to stop rain getting in or hitting the bulb.
- Many day-flying moths like to live in grassy meadows, go for a walk on a warm, still day to have the best chance of seeing them.
- Caterpillars can be found low down on plants or among leaf litter as well as higher up in bushes and trees, remember to search all through the vegetation.
- Use a guide to help identify any moths or caterpillars you find.
- If you're not sure what species you have found, try to take a picture and upload it on our website for us to identify.



Buff Ermine

This is a pretty moth that looks very furry. It flies from May to July and will often visit moth traps or outdoor lights. The hairy brown caterpillars feed on many different herbaceous plants.

Find out more about moths...

If you have enjoyed looking for the moths on this sheet and want to find out more about moths, butterflies and their caterpillars there are lots of places to go for more information. There is also a lot you can do to help butterflies and moths, whether you want to make your garden more moth-friendly, send us records of caterpillars you have found or take part in a national survey to help our conservation efforts.

Munching Caterpillars

www.munchingcaterpillars.org

Butterfly Conservation

www.butterfly-conservation.org

The Big Butterfly Count

www.bigbutterflycount.org

The United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme

www.ukbms.org

The National Moth Recording Scheme

www.mothscount.org

Wild About Gardens

www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk

**Visit our
Website to find
out more!**



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