

## 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](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)

**Butterfly Conservation**  
[www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

**The Big Butterfly Count**  
[www.bigbutterflycount.org](http://www.bigbutterflycount.org)

**The United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme**  
[www.ukbms.org](http://www.ukbms.org)

**The National Moth Recording Scheme**  
[www.mothscount.org](http://www.mothscount.org)

**Wild About Gardens**  
[www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk)

Photos by kind permission of Robert Thompson, John Bebbington, David Green, Mark Parsons, Paul Pugh, James Peat, Shane Farrell, Neil Sherman, Roy Leverton and Chris Manley.

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



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)

[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)



# 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.



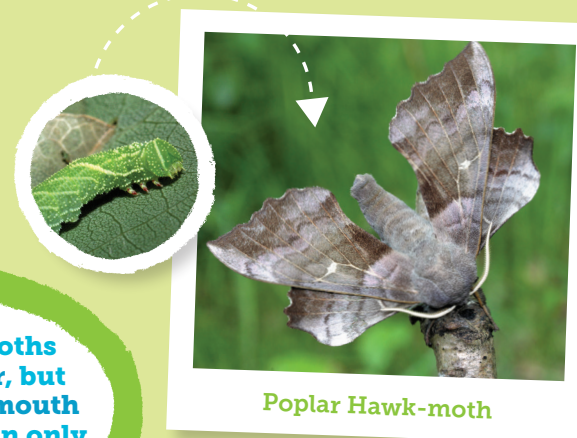
**Brimstone Moth**

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**

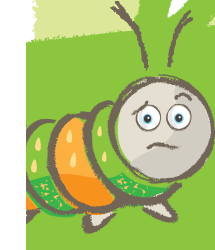
This is probably our commonest hawk-moth and has a distinctive shape when at rest, holding its hind wings forward of its front wings. The caterpillars feed on Poplar, Aspen and Willow.



**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.

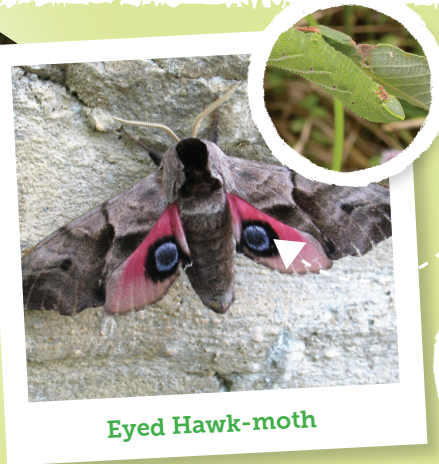
**Most adult moths feed on nectar, but some have no mouth parts so they can only live a few days**



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)

[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)





**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.**



**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.



**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.



**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.

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



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)

[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)



**Butterfly Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



LOTTERY FUNDED



**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!



**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.

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



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)

[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)



**Butterfly Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



LOTTERY FUNDED



**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.



**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.

## Tips for looking for butterflies and caterpillars...

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

- Different species of butterfly like different habitats. Check in a book before you go out to choose which area to look in.
- Many also fly at different times of year. You will need to look for different species in May to those you can find in September.
- Grassy meadows are very popular with a large variety of butterflies.
- 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.
- Take a guide to help identify any butterflies 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.



Holly Blue

This is the palest of the blue butterflies and can often be seen flying high up among the bushes. As its name suggests the caterpillars like to eat Holly, but they will also eat Ivy.

## Find out more about butterflies...

If you have enjoyed looking for the butterflies on this sheet and want to find out more about butterflies, moths 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 butterfly-friendly, send us records of moths you have caught or take part in a national survey to help our conservation efforts.

**Munching Caterpillars**  
[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)

**Butterfly Conservation**  
[www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

**The Big Butterfly Count**  
[www.bigbutterflycount.org](http://www.bigbutterflycount.org)

**The United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme**  
[www.ukbms.org](http://www.ukbms.org)

**The National Moth Recording Scheme**  
[www.mothscount.org](http://www.mothscount.org)

**Wild About Gardens**  
[www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk)

Visit our Website to find out more!



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)

[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



LOTTERY FUNDED

## Munching Caterpillars

Did you know?  
 There are around **60 species** of butterfly found in the UK

## Identify butterflies and their caterpillars

Butterflies like to fly when it is warm and still so choose a sunny day with very little wind to go out looking for them. Caterpillars can most commonly be found from April to September, but if it is very hot, very cold or very wet they will probably be hiding!



Red Admiral

The big, bold and beautiful Red Admiral is a common site in summer gardens. It is usually migratory but can hibernate over winter as an adult in sheds or garages. The caterpillars love to feed on nettles.



Small Tortoiseshell

The Small Tortoiseshell is one of our most widespread butterfly species. It hibernates in the UK and can be seen from early spring to autumn, making it a popular garden visitor. The caterpillars feed on nettles, preferably growing in a sunny spot.



Painted Lady

The Painted Lady is a migrant that flies all the way from Europe and North Africa. The caterpillars' favourite foodplants are thistles.



Peacock

The Peacock is one of our most recognisable butterflies with red wings and bright eyespots to scare off predators. Its caterpillar is another that loves to feed on nettles.

Butterflies can live in the adult stage from one week to one year depending on the species



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)

[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



LOTTERY FUNDED



Comma

This beautiful orange butterfly has a very distinctive shape as the wings have wavy edges. It has a white comma mark on the underside of its wings and its caterpillars like to eat nettles. They will also feed on hops, elms, currants and willows.



Brimstone

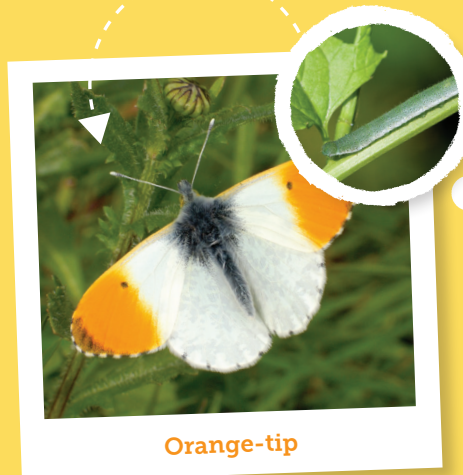
The delicate yellow Brimstone looks just like a leaf when its wings are folded together. It rests in this position to avoid being seen by birds that want to eat it. The caterpillars feed on Buckthorn and Alder Buckthorn.



Large White

The dark black wing tips distinguish this butterfly from its smaller cousin the Small White. Only the females have these spots on the wings, the male has plain white wings apart from the black wing tips. They are also known as cabbage whites because the caterpillars love to eat cabbages!

**A butterfly's life cycle is made up of four parts, egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and adult**



Orange-tip

Only the males have the bright orange wing tips, but both the male and female have a mottled grey-green underwing that can help distinguish this species from the Small White. Orange-tip caterpillars feed on Cuckooflower and Garlic Mustard.



Small White

The black markings on the wings are not as dark as they are on the Large White, but these butterflies can be confused with Green-veined Whites. The caterpillars feed on cabbages and Nasturtium.



Speckled Wood

The pale speckles on its brown wings and its habit of staying near shady woods and hedgerows give this pretty butterfly its name. It is a territorial butterfly and the caterpillars like to eat many different types of grasses.

**Butterflies have four wings covered in tiny scales, they often have brightly coloured patterns**



Marbled White

The Marbled White is most often found in flowery grassland but it may also visit gardens. Its black and white chequered pattern is very distinctive and its caterpillars feed on several species of grasses, particularly Red Fescue.



Gatekeeper

The Gatekeeper gets its name because it likes to live in hedgerows, so it can often be spotted around gates. The caterpillars feed on many different grass species and so this butterfly can often be found at the edges of fields and along woodland rides.



Meadow Brown

The Meadow Brown is one of the most common and widespread butterflies in Britain. It is another species that prefers grassland, as its caterpillars feed on several grass species. The adults can often be seen flying in dull weather when most other species would stay hidden away.



Ringlet

It can be easy to confuse the Ringlet with the similar Meadow Brown as they are both mostly brown and like to fly in grassy meadows where the caterpillars can feed on grasses. If you look closely the ringlet has small circles on the underwing which give it its name.



Small Copper

This butterfly may be small, but it is perfectly formed! The beautiful orange wings with tiny black spots really stand out on a sunny day. Its caterpillars feed on Common Sorrel and Sheep's Sorrel.



Common Blue

Only the male Common Blue is really blue. The female is brown with just a dusting of blue near her body. It prefers open grassland and the caterpillars feed on Common Bird's-foot-trefoil.

**Caterpillars have six true legs but may have several pairs of 'prolegs' along their abdomen to help them move along leaves or twigs**



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)  
[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)



Butterfly Conservation  
Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



heritage lottery fund  
LOTTERY FUNDED



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)  
[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org)



Butterfly Conservation  
Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



heritage lottery fund  
LOTTERY FUNDED