

Elephant Hawk-moth

Deilephila elpenor

Insects · On the wing May-Jul



Photo by jean pierre Hamon (14), CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

A large, striking hawk-moth in bright rose-pink and olive-green, with swept-back wings and a streamlined body. It is common in gardens, waste ground and damp woodland edge around Dumfries wherever rosebay willowherb or fuchsia grows. Adults fly at dusk and are frequently found at lit windows and moth traps in June.

BEHAVIOUR

The name belongs to the caterpillar: a large grey-brown larva with a tapering front end that it can retract, and two pairs of enormous false eyespots. Threatened, it swells the front of its body so the eyespots bulge, producing a startling snake-like effect that deters small birds. Adults hover at honeysuckle and other tubular flowers at dusk to feed, and can see colour in near-darkness.

WHEN TO SEE IT

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Hawk-moths (Sphingidae)
WINGSPAN	6–7 cm
STATUS	Native; common and widespread

Photo by jean pierre Hamon (14), CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons