

Garden Tiger

Arctia caja

Insects · On the wing Jul–Aug



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A large, bold moth with cream forewings blotched in dark chocolate-brown and scarlet hindwings spotted with black. Garden tigers were once a familiar sight in gardens and rough ground across Britain but have declined severely — by around nine-tenths since the 1960s — and are now a conservation priority. They remain possible in the Dumfries area on rough, weedy ground.

BEHAVIOUR

The scarlet hindwings are hidden at rest and flashed when the moth is threatened, backed up by a genuinely distasteful body chemistry. The caterpillar is the 'woolly bear' of childhood — a large larva densely covered in long black and ginger hairs, often seen crossing paths in spring. Its decline is thought to be linked to milder, wetter winters affecting overwintering larvae.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Tiger moths (Erebidae, subfamily Arctiinae)
WINGSPAN	5–7.5 cm
STATUS	A conservation priority; declined by around 90% since the 1960s

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