

Cinnabar Moth

Tyria jacobaeae

Insects · On the wing May–Aug · flies by day and night



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A striking day- and night-flying moth with dark slate-grey forewings marked by a crimson stripe along the leading edge and two crimson spots, and plain crimson hindwings. Cinnabar moths are common wherever ragwort grows around Dumfries — verges, waste ground, rough pasture and dunes — and are easily disturbed from the vegetation during the day.

BEHAVIOUR

The colouring is a warning: both moth and caterpillar are loaded with toxic alkaloids taken from ragwort, and birds learn quickly to leave them alone. The bright black-and-orange banded caterpillars feed openly and gregariously in mid-summer and can strip a ragwort plant to a bare stem. The moth flies weakly and is often flushed underfoot on a warm afternoon.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Tiger moths (Erebidae, subfamily Arctiinae)
WINGSPAN	3–4.5 cm
STATUS	Native; common wherever ragwort grows

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