

Emperor Moth

Saturnia pavonia

Insects · On the wing Apr–May



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Our only resident member of the great silk-moth family: a large moth with a prominent eyespot on each of its four wings. Males have orange hindwings and fly by day; the larger females are greyer and fly at night. Emperor moths live on heather moorland and scrubby heath, so the hills and moss ground around Dumfries and Galloway are the place to look.

BEHAVIOUR

The male's antennae are large and feathered, and can detect a female's pheromone from a great distance — a mile or more — which is why males are seen coursing rapidly in a zig-zag low over heather on warm April afternoons. Females barely fly until they have mated. The caterpillar is a striking green larva ringed with black and studded with orange warts, feeding on heather and bramble.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Emperor and silk moths (Saturniidae)
WINGSPAN	5–8 cm · females larger than males
STATUS	Native; local on moorland and heath

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