

Poplar Hawk-moth

Laothoe populi

Insects · On the wing May–Aug



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A large grey-brown hawk-moth with scalloped wing edges, patterned to look exactly like a dead leaf or a piece of bark. The posture is diagnostic: at rest it holds its hindwings forward of the forewings, giving an odd, lopsided, distinctly un-mothlike outline. It is one of the commonest hawk-moths in Dumfries gardens and along the river where poplars, aspen and willow grow.

BEHAVIOUR

Disturbed, it jerks its wings forward to flash a rust-red patch on the hindwing, then goes still again — a small shock designed to make a bird hesitate. Adults do not feed at all; they have no functional proboscis and live only long enough to breed. The caterpillar is a smooth apple-green with a pale diagonal stripe and a small yellow horn at the tail.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Hawk-moths (Sphingidae)
WINGSPAN	6.5–9 cm
STATUS	Native; common and widespread

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