

BIODIVERSITY on your Farm

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has set a challenge for farmers to record some of the amazing biodiversity found on your farm during the year. We have 40 species for you to record.

Are you up for the challenge?

Species: Garden Tiger

Scientific Name: *Arctia caja*

Irish name: Leamhan tíograch garrai

Group

1 of the 1,475 moth species recorded in Ireland and over 570 species of macro moth in Ireland.

A member of the Arctiidae family (Tiger moths, ermines, footman moths and allies).

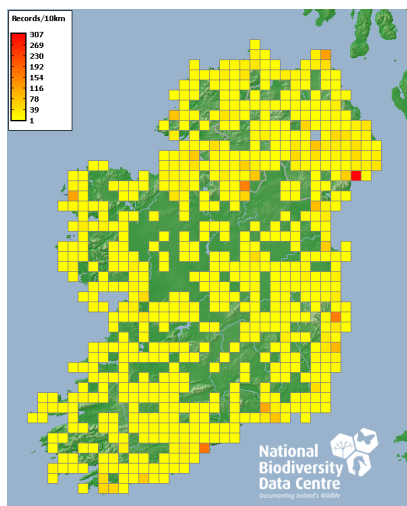
How common on farms

Biodiversity surveys were carried out across 40 farms within the National Biodiversity Data Centre's 'Protecting Farmland Pollinators' EIP project (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/projects/protecting-farmland-pollinators/>). The 40 farms were chosen to reflect farms of differing types and intensity levels. The Garden Tiger moth was recorded on 1 of the 40 farms.

The EIP Moth Monitoring project recorded it on 6 of the 40 farms ([Farmer Moth Monitoring Project - National Biodiversity Data Centre](#) (biodiversityireland.ie)).

Distribution

Widespread and common, although numbers appear to be declining in many areas.



Source: Garden Tiger records as viewed on Biodiversity Maps, 2023.



Ruth Wilson

Garden Tiger moth. Note: Forewings are dark chocolate with white patches/streaks.

Identification Tips

- Wingspan 45 to 65mm.
- Colourful, distinctive species, can be variable in colour.
- Forewings are dark chocolate brown with white streaks and patches, with orange hind wings, with deep blue-black spots.
- Abdomen is orange with black stripes like a tiger's tail.
- Mainly spotted as a caterpillar (larva).

Biodiversity Tip No. 21

Moths can indicate a healthy environment and ecosystem.

This Garden Tiger caterpillar feeds on docks and nettles too.



Conservation Status

Red Lists are an internationally recognised methodology for assessing conservation status. An Irish Macro-moths (*Lepidoptera*) Red List was published in 2016. The Garden Tiger moth was 'Least Concern' in the Red List [Ireland \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](https://biodiversityireland.ie)

Management Tips

Habitat for the Garden Tiger moth:

On the farm:

- Retain, maintain or create native hedges, hedgerow trees and wide field margins.
- Connect hedgerows across the farm, to provide corridors for moths and other wildlife.

Larvae (caterpillar) food plants:

- Nettles, Burdocks, Broad-leaved and Water docks, Hound's tongue (found on the east coast mainly).

In the garden:

- Plant larvae food plants, like raspberry, blackberry, viburnum, honeysuckle, erica, and broom.



Ruth Wilson

Tiger moth caterpillars are known as '**woolly bears**' or '**granny greybeards**'. They have short black hairs on their back, short orange hairs on their sides and are completely covered in long white hairs.

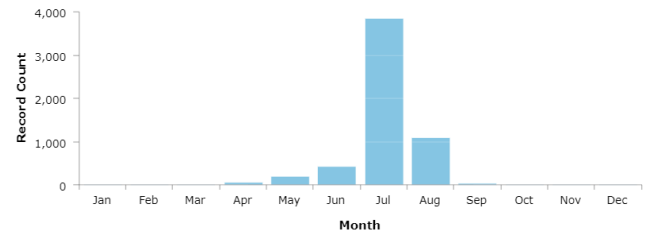
They're well protected against predators and their hairs are irritating to the skin.

When?

Adult Garden Tigers can be seen from June to August.

Caterpillars feed from September to June, then pupate from June to July.

Records per month across all datasets



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Garden Tiger, image, accessed August 2023, <[Garden Tiger \(*Arctia caja*\) - Detail - Biodiversity Maps \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/biodiversity-on-the-farm/)>

Where on the farm?

In open areas including damp meadows, hedgerows, in farm gardens and coastal sites. The caterpillar is mainly feeding on docks and nettles.

Value

- Night flying moths compliment the day time pollinators.
- Moths are indicators of a healthy environment and healthy ecosystems.
- Moths are an important element in the food chain and are prey for birds, bats and other insectivorous animals, e.g. Blue tits eat an estimated 50 billion moth caterpillars each year.

Affected by a change in climate?

Warmer winters and wetter springs may affect moth species like the Garden Tiger.

With extreme climatic events like drought can have longer lasting on the following years moth species.

Further Info

Moths have fascinating life-cycles. The transformation from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis is one of the wonders of nature.

To deter predators the Garden Tiger can make a rasping noise by rubbing their wings together, they can also exude a drop of bright yellow blood from the thorax.

The adults are seldom found by day, but appear frequently at night, attracted to light.

Eggs are laid starting in July. Large bluish-white clutches of eggs are laid on the lower surfaces of leaves. The caterpillars hatch in August. They spend the winter on the ground in protected places, feeding from September until June and then pupate from June to July of the following year.

Mainly seen as caterpillars (larvae), known as 'woolly bears' or 'granny greybeards'.

They are often seen wandering across paths and roads in search of a suitable pupation site.

The caterpillar of the garden tiger moth feeds on various kinds of non-woody plants, as well as bushes and trees. It is especially fond of nettles, docks, raspberry, blackberry, viburnum, honeysuckle, erica, and broom.

Similar species

Difficult to confuse with any other species.

Useful Links

Find out about Farmer moth project:

[Farmer Moth Monitoring Project - National Biodiversity Data Centre \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](https://biodiversityireland.ie/farmer-moth-monitoring-project)

Irish Moths species information:

[Irish moths - Garden Tiger, *Arctia caja*](https://biodiversityireland.ie/irish-moths-garden-tiger-arctia-caja)

Pledge your farm garden for pollinators, find out more here: <https://pollinators.ie/gardens/>

Record here

Your records will help us build a picture of farmland biodiversity in Ireland. If you're happy with your Humming-bird Hawk-moth identification, you can submit your record:

- On our website at the National Biodiversity Data Centre: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm>

Need some help with identification?

Just drop us a line, we'll be happy to help:
pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie

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An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
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