



Cinnabar Snapshot



The cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) is a distinctive and beautiful species of moth native to the UK. While it *is* nocturnal, it is easily disturbed during the day and will fly in sunlight until it settles. Its caterpillars are found on their foodplant ragwort and are equally distinctive: chunky, black-and-orange striped. We are passing through peak flowering season for ragwort, so now is a perfect time to do a quick cinnabar caterpillar survey.



Cinnabar moth; Image CC by 2.0. Flickr, orangeaurochs

We want to do more short-timescale, focused projects with the Buzz Club, and a cinnabar snapshot is a good place to start! The plan is to repeat this in future years, to build up a picture of how cinnabar populations are changing over time, and where in the country cinnabars are thriving.

The Project

To do this project, you need to **find some ragwort**, and count the **number of cinnabar moth caterpillars** present on the plants. You can do this anywhere there is ragwort present: in your garden if you have some; in a local green space; along a path – anywhere ragwort can be found.

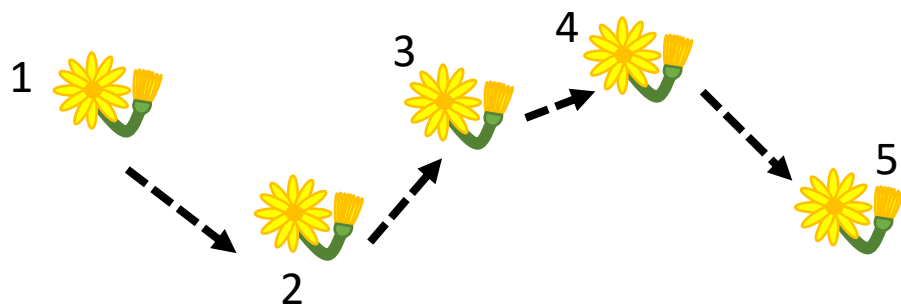


Flowering ragwort

Please try to find **at least five** plants, ideally **ten**. When you have counted caterpillars on the first plant, move on to the next closest plant and count there next.



Caterpillars on ragwort



The plants do not have to be the same size, but they should be **flowering** (or have flowered – the caterpillars might have eaten the flowers!). Counts should be completed **by the end of July**.

Recording data

Your name:

Postcode (where plants were):

Plant	Count of caterpillars	Adults seen?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Health and safety

Ragwort contains chemicals called alkaloids, which are poisonous to many animals if ingested (infamously to livestock, but also more widely e.g. to humans and dogs). Some people can have an allergic reaction or suffer skin irritation from the plant's sap on handling. The cinnabar moth caterpillars take up these alkaloids and store them to use as their own defence – warning potential predators with their bright colours. Handling the caterpillars may cause a rash in humans, although it is not common.

When doing this project:

- 1) Do not handle** the ragwort plant, or the cinnabar moth caterpillars. Just count!
- 2) Be aware** of your surroundings if you are in a public space.
- 3) Please do not use** ragwort on road verges or other hazardous places.
- 4) Ragwort flowers** are attractive to many insects, including bees and wasps. **Take care** around these potentially-stinging insects, especially if you have allergies.