

Silver Y *Autographa gamma* (Linnaeus)

The silver y-mark that gives this moth its name, is located on the forewings, which are typically patterned brown and grey, but the colouration and size of the forewings can vary greatly, depending on factors such as climate, and the diet of the caterpillars. The Silver Y rests with its wings in a tent-like formation, and from the side, the Y is usually clearly visible. Another noticeable feature of this moth is the presence of one or more crests on the thorax, diminishing in size towards the tip of the abdomen.

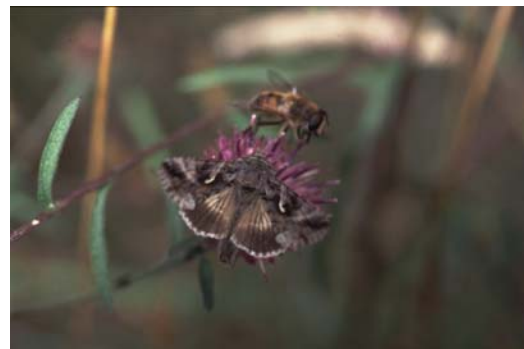


Photograph Butterfly Conservation

The Silver Y is in fact an immigrant to the UK, but it is recorded almost every year and sometimes arrives in swarms, so it is frequently considered to be a common moth in the British Isles. These numbers can be boosted in late summer and autumn through local breeding. This moth has been spotted throughout the year, but numbers are usually highest from May to September. The adults originate from Europe and North Africa, reaching far-flung places like oilrigs in the North Sea.

It is thought that the Silver Y keeps flying until its resources have been used, which may explain why this moth frequently passes over suitable habitat, where other individuals have stopped. The Silver Y frequently breeds upon arrival in the UK but it is thought that few caterpillars survive the winter. The caterpillars may be seen any time from spring to autumn and feed on many wild and cultivated plants, including bedstraws, clovers, nettles, and some garden vegetables.

The adults can be found in almost any habitat, coastal or inland, and may often be seen flying in groups in search of nectar sources such as a variety of garden flowers including Buddleia and Red Valerian. The adults can be seen flying by day and night, but are perhaps most easy to see at dusk hovering around flowers. The Silver Y has been recorded throughout most of the British Isles, including the Channel Islands and is widespread and usually abundant throughout much of its range.



Photograph Martin Warren/Butterfly Conservation