

## OAK PROCESSIONARY MOTH (*THAUMETOPOEA PROCESSIONEA*) - LIFE CYCLE



**Image 1**

Egg Plaques (approx. 3cm long) on twig

This is the most difficult stage to survey for, but in the absence of detailed information on typical hatch periods in Great Britain, a search of branches for egg masses during the winter months is recommended. May be found January to early May and then August to December.



**Image 2**

Egg plaques (Close-up shot) This egg plaque is approximately 2cm (20mm) long.



**Image 3**

1<sup>st</sup> Instar larvae

Larvae are very small (around 2mm long) when they hatch in April/May



**Image 4**

2<sup>nd</sup> Instar larvae (also known as L2)

Larvae are still less than 1cm long by the time they reach the third stage (L3). May be found mid-April through to mid-May.



**Image 5**

3<sup>rd</sup> Instar larvae (L3) feeding on oak leaves

May be found during the month of May.



**Image 6**

Feeding damage is quite distinctive and noticeable as the larvae tend to leave the leaves skeletonised, with the main veins remaining. Larvae can remain hidden in and around the soil at the base of the tree, and larval nests can be placed on the outside of pots or on adjacent packaging material. Therefore, any tree with defoliation but no larvae should be treated with suspicion and the soil, pot and adjacent material checked carefully.



**Image 7**

4<sup>th</sup> Instar larvae (also known as L4)

Fourth-stage and older larvae construct silken nests in which they remain for most of the day and are protected from chemical sprays, can be found in mid-May to mid-June.



**Image 8**

L4 transition to L5

Larvae spin bigger silken nests as they grow, and spend more time within these nests during the day.



**Image 9**

L5 in procession (May to beginning of July)



**Image 10**

Silk trail and nest



**Image 11**

L6 creating nest

June to mid July



**Image 12**

Pupal nest dislodged from mature tree

Eventually, the larvae moult (late June to early August) to the pupal stage, again within the nest.



**Image 13**

Rear view of unemerged nest showing pupal chambers



**Image 14**

Freshly emerged adult moth on nest

Adult moths emerge and fly around the middle of July to early September. Males are strong flyers, the females less so. Both sexes only live for 3 to 4 days as adults.



**Image 15**

Adult moth

Males can be trapped in traps baited with the female sex attractant pheromone



**Image 16**

Adult moth

Middle of July to early September

All photographs courtesy of Ralph Parks and Forest Research.

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