

Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae* (L.) (Lep.: Erebiidae, Arctiinae) larvae feeding on Coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara* L.

On 1 September 2018 during an entomological excursion to the interesting and extensive Carrifran Wildwood restoration site (see www.carrifran.org.uk), ranging from about 150m to 800m in altitude and situated some 10km NE of Moffat in Dumfries and Galloway, my attention was drawn by Zoe Gardner to a roughly 10 x 10m patch of *Tussilago farfara* on stony ground at about 210m that had been extensively eaten by larvae of *Tyria jacobaeae*. A week or two previously, Zoe and companions had seen a moderately large number of larvae feeding actively on the upper surface of the leaves, but on 1.ix.18, in drizzly weather, I could find larvae only on the undersides of leaves where they were resting rather than actively feeding. Clearly most had by then pupated and indeed the two larvae that I collected did so within a very few days. Plenty of *Senecio* existed in the general area, though the nearest plants seen were several tens of metres distant, and (although larvae had been present) no evidence of defoliation of that foodplant was seen anywhere on site.

It has been noted in the past that *T. jacobaeae* can feed on *Tussilago* (e.g., Porter, 1997. *The Colour Identification Guide to Caterpillars of the British Isles*, Viking) it appears not to be commonly seen. Two features (Plate 1) seemed of interest. First, the leaves were grazed on the upper surface only, the caterpillar



Plate 1. Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae* larva grazing the upper surface of Coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara* leaf. Note the accumulated faecal pellets at the base of the leaf. Photo taken in captivity, 4.ix.2018.

thereby avoiding the heavily downy underside. Second, the faeces of the feeding larva accumulate at the base of the leaf, offering a particularly easy visual and perhaps chemical cue for its discovery (even when it is resting on the leaf's underside, which in this species may happen particularly during bad weather). Of course, such an aposematic caterpillar as *T. jacobaeae* has relatively little need to keep its whereabouts secret, but it may be that the holding-up of faeces by the leaf would be deleterious to any more palatable upperside grazer, thus affording the plant additional protection to that provided by the downy leaves.

I am grateful to both Philip Ashmole for a guided tour and Ashley Buchan for arranging, with him, the visit on behalf of the Edinburgh Entomological Club.

MARK R. SHAW

Honorary Research Associate

National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF

(E-mail: markshaw1945@gmail.com)