



# Scarce Vapourer

*Orgyia recens*

Fact Sheet



**Yorkshire**  
Wildlife Trust



Butterfly  
Conservation



UNIVERSITY  
*of York*

Scarce Vapourer (*Orgyia recens*) is a day flying moth with a colourful, orange mohicaned larva, with males becoming brown with flashes of orange and white in adult form while females lack functional wings and are grey and downy and larger than males. Having once been widespread across the south and east of England, the species has suffered severe declines with its current range restricted to Norfolk and the Humberhead Levels in north-east England. They are associated with damp areas such as, lowland moors, fens and bogs, especially peatlands and areas with seasonal flooding, living in hedgerows and scrub.

Larvae primarily consume a variety of Willow species (*Salix*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus Monogyna*), Birch (*Betula* spp.), Oak (*Quercus* spp.) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) but may use others including Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and Wild Roses (*Rosa* spp.). Larvae grow up to 4cm long (males are usually smaller than females) before creating a cocoon and pupating. Once emerged from the cocoon, adults do not feed and the active males only live a handful of days, spending this time searching for a mate, flying on warm sunny days. Females can survive around 3 weeks and rarely move away from their cocoon owing to their lack of functional wings. The female secretes a pheromone to attract males and begin laying eggs soon after mating. While the average clutch of eggs is likely to be between 200-400, they have been known to be as large as 800. Eggs are laid upon the cocoon from which the female emerged with the female standing guard.

Scarce Vapourer have one generation per year, with overwintered larvae active from April and pupating in June. Adults emerge at the end of June and into July before the next generation of larvae begin feeding in August into Autumn. Larvae attach themselves to leaves where they spend the winter in diapause.

In flight they can be confused with their close relative Common Vapourer/ The Vapourer (*Orgyia antiqua*), a plainer brown moth which be found in some of the same habitats. The two species larvae are also similar, though Common Vapourer has yellow Mohican hairs. A third species larva can also appear similar, the Yellow-tail moth (*Euproctis similis*), though this lacks the mohican hairs and is clearly different in adult form.



**Number of Eggs:**  
Average 200–400



**Larva size:**  
up to 4cm



**Wingspan:**  
2–2.5cm



**When to see:**  
May (larva)  
–July (Moth)