

If you go down to the woods today....

Oak Processionary Moth

You may have seen in the local papers or TV or heard on the local radio about the spraying that was done in two areas of Sulham Woods in May. This was undertaken by the Forestry Commission. What was going on?

The Oak Processionary Moth has been spotted in Sulham Woods. Until recently these moths lived in Belgium, Holland and other European countries. Now there are a few places where they have been seen in southern England.

So what is it about the moth that means that the area where it has been seen needs to be sprayed in an attempt to eradicate it?

Well, this is what the moth looks like and it makes a big nest usually but not exclusively in oak trees.



When the time comes, usually in May, the larvae hatch out and turn into caterpillars. These caterpillars are usually to be found in clusters. Look carefully at the picture of them.

They are called processionary moths because when the caterpillars are on the move they form a procession - head to tail. They move from the nest up the tree and eat the oak leaves.



The creatures produce toxins which will cause the leaves of the oak tree to drop, and eventually the oak tree will die.

The spraying has taken place to kill the moths and caterpillars in order to save our native oak trees.

What you need to do if you see any of these caterpillars:

1

DON'T TOUCH THEM – they are very poisonous and will cause you to come out in a huge and painful rash

2

YOU DO need to alert the authorities that you have seen the caterpillars and where you have seen them.

This is who you need to tell:

www.forestry.gov.uk/opm to fill in an online form or send an email to opm@forestry.gsi.gov.uk. Or you can tell your local council.

3

You can find out more information on the Forestry Commission web page www.forestry.gov.uk/opm



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