# Brown tailed moth caterpillars raise health alerts in Cromer’s Sunken Gardens



Reports have emerged of brown tailed moth caterpillars being sighted in the Sunken Gardens on the West Cliff in Cromer, raising significant public health concerns. These caterpillars possess spiked and barbed hairs that are known to carry a toxin, posing risks for both humans and pets. Symptoms from exposure can range from skin rashes and headaches to respiratory difficulties, particularly if the hairs break off and disperse into the environment.

Identifiable by their brown bodies adorned with red and white markings, brown tailed moth caterpillars commonly inhabit “tents” formed from silk strands in trees and shrubs. North Norfolk District Council has acted in response, confirming that in line with advice from Natural England, there will be no comprehensive removal of these caterpillars. The council underscores that removal efforts are often unsuccessful and may inadvertently cause harm to the surrounding ecosystem.

While access to the Sunken Gardens and surrounding pathways remains open, clear warning signs have been posted to inform visitors about the potential dangers. Local authorities advise caution, encouraging anyone who may come into contact with the caterpillars to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and seek medical attention if symptoms persist or escalate.

This situation isn't unique to Norfolk; similar concerns have arisen in other parts of the UK and abroad, particularly in the United States. In Maine, for instance, health officials from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention have issued warnings about the spread of brown tailed moth caterpillars, which have been observed throughout all counties in the state. Authorities highlight the importance of avoiding contact and suggest wearing protective clothing while outdoors, especially on dry and windy days when airborne hairs can pose additional risks.

The life cycle of these caterpillars progresses swiftly; they are expected to begin entering their chrysalis stage in early June, with adult moths emerging in July. Given the rapid development and proximity to populated areas, educating the public on safety measures is paramount. Residents are advised to be vigilant, heed warnings, and take necessary precautions to mitigate health risks associated with these pests.

In summary, while the presence of brown tailed moth caterpillars can be an alarming sight, timely public information and awareness can help reduce the likelihood of adverse health impacts. Residents and visitors are encouraged to remain cautious as these creatures progress through their life cycle, ensuring that both they and their surroundings remain safe from potential harm.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraph 5
3. Paragraphs 2, 6
4. Paragraphs 2, 6
5. Paragraphs 6
6. Paragraphs 6
7. Paragraphs 2, 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25160929.brown-tailed-moth-caterpillars-seen-west-cliff-cromer/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-44093616> - This BBC article discusses the presence of brown-tail moth caterpillars along a coastal path in Norfolk, UK. The caterpillars' hairs can cause skin rashes, headaches, and breathing difficulties. In response to public concerns, the North Norfolk District Council plans to remove and destroy some of the caterpillars near the footpaths. Residents are advised to avoid contact, wash their hands with soapy water if exposed, and seek medical advice if symptoms are severe or persistent.
3. <https://www.bangormaine.gov/moth> - The City of Bangor, Maine, provides information on browntail moth caterpillars, highlighting their health risks due to toxic hairs that can cause skin rashes and respiratory issues. The site offers guidance on recognizing and removing winter nests, as well as precautions to minimize exposure, such as wearing protective clothing and avoiding outdoor activities on dry, windy days. It also provides updates on local browntail moth activity and resources for residents.
4. <https://news.thewindhameagle.com/2024/05/maine-recommends-taking-precautions.html> - This article from The Windham Eagle News reports on the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention's warning about the health risks posed by browntail moth caterpillars. The Maine Forest Service has observed infestations in all Maine counties, urging residents to take precautions when outdoors, especially between April and July. The article emphasizes the importance of avoiding contact with the caterpillars and their toxic hairs, which can cause skin rashes and respiratory issues.
5. <https://www.nbc.com/boston/news/local/troublesome-browntail-moth-found-in-nh-for-first-time-in-75-years/3388552/> - NBC Boston reports that browntail moth caterpillars have been found in New Hampshire for the first time in 75 years. The caterpillars' toxic hairs can cause skin rashes and respiratory issues. State officials advise residents to avoid handling the caterpillars without proper protection and to be aware of the health risks associated with exposure. The article provides information on identifying the caterpillars and the importance of taking precautions to prevent health problems.
6. <https://www.bangormaine.gov/371/Browntail-Moth> - The City of Bangor, Maine, offers detailed information on browntail moth caterpillars, including health concerns related to their toxic hairs, which can cause skin rashes and respiratory issues. The site provides updates on local browntail moth activity, guidance on recognizing and removing winter nests, and precautions to minimize exposure, such as wearing protective clothing and avoiding outdoor activities on dry, windy days. It also offers resources for residents to report sightings and learn more about the moths.
7. <https://www1.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/browntail_moth_faqs.htm> - The Maine Forest Service's FAQ page provides comprehensive information on browntail moth caterpillars, including details about their appearance, the timing of their toxic hair development, and the risks associated with exposure. The page offers guidance on when to clip overwintering webs, the types of trees the caterpillars feed on, and the timing of adult moth activity. It also addresses common questions about the caterpillars' behavior and provides contact information for further inquiries.